Authorship Guidance for Inclusion Matters

The Inclusion Matters Team respects researcher's academic freedom and their right to select the most appropriate route and method for dissemination of results. The Inclusion Matters Team also recognise that decisions about authorship and acknowledgement may follow disciplinary norms and will usually result from ongoing communication with interested parties. As part of this process of ongoing communication, the Inclusion Matters Team expects its researchers to remain professional and reasonable when communicating on the subject of authorship and acknowledgement of others in published works. The key to minimising authorship disputes is being clear at the outset of projects and (especially) publication development about everyone's role within the process and what that means in terms of acknowledgement; author, contributor etc.

Why authorship matters?

Authorship on publications can be a sensitive issue in disciplines where co-authorship is common practice. It can often raise disputes amongst research teams and with those who have contributed to the outcomes of a research project through less direct means.

Interdisciplinary research can present additional complications or challenges, where disciplinary norms may vary and commonly held assumptions may be misunderstood or miscommunicated.

Correct authorship

- Confers credit (can be used to assess academic productivity).
- Carries responsibility and accountability for what is published.
- Provides transparency for readers to be able to identify who has done the research.

Denial or omission of authorship

- Denies recognition and academic credit for authors and institutions.
    - This may have academic (damage to an individual's promotion or progression opportunities), social or financial (for the author and, where publication and citation forms part of research assessment or university ranking exercises, for the institution) implications.
- Misleads readers and editors and may obfuscate conflicts of interest.

Misrepresenting authorship

- Confers undeserved credit for work that has not been done.

Some publishers, funders and universities (for REF and promotion) now require an indication as to the contributions of each person named as an author or contributor.

Planning for authorship

Because of the sensitivities authorship can present, all researchers working on the Inclusion Matters award are advised to raise the question of authorship and acknowledgement at an early stage, and to engage in open discussion with colleagues and collaborators, so as to avoid problems arising at a later date.

As roles and contributions are likely to change over the duration of the award it is advised that a record of any resulting decisions and agreements be kept, so that these can be revisited if required at a later date.

Some journals and publishers have specific rules regarding who can or should be recognised as an author; it is therefore important to check with co-authors and against previous agreements before any submission to a journal is made, so that these can be revisited if required.

What is an author?

No universally accepted set of standards exists to define who should be credited as an author to a work. The Inclusion Matters Team recommends the use of the [ICMJ definitions](#); whilst these are widely used, authors should be aware there may be additional standards or practice common in their discipline, or specific to the intended venue of publication, which this recommendation does not exclude or diminish.

The ICMJE definitions recommend that authorship be on four criteria:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work;
   AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
   AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published;
   AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Those designated as authors should normally meet all four criteria for authorship. Anyone who meets some, but not all, of these criteria should receive an acknowledgement, but may not necessarily be credited as an author.

An example of where disciplinary norms may be preferential to these definitions could include situations where a paper in a particular field would not uncommonly have in excess of 100 authors, and it would be impractical to expect all authors to formally approve a final version for publication or revising the content critically; these roles may, by agreement, be delegated to a subset of those who would be credited as authors, and this may not be considered inconsistent with norms of publication in that discipline.

Where no recognised journal or discipline-specific norms apply, authorship and acknowledgement criteria should be agreed upon by all parties at an early stage in the research.

Responsibilities of authorship

Credit for authorship also requires authors to take on responsibility for the publication, which should include (but may not be limited to):

- Being able to describe their specific contributions to the publication if required to by a publisher, funder, their university or other stakeholder or regulatory body.
- To acknowledge any funding where appropriate.
- To declare as early as possible, and in line with any publisher policies, any conflicts of interest to the editors of the publication.
- To take all appropriate steps to avoid plagiarism and redundant publication.
- Be able to take public responsibility for the content of the publication, including where any accusations of plagiarism or fraud may be identified as a later date **even if they were not aware of and/or did not actively contribute to such misconduct**.
- To ensure that the author's affiliation to their university is included on the publication in an appropriate format, in line with author's home university policy on author affiliations and any requirements of the publisher.
- To abide by any agreements around premature publication or public announcements of the forthcoming publication.
- To contact the Inclusion Matters Communication Team as early as possible to identify and agree the most appropriate means of publicising the work in line with University policy.

- Where approached by the media, to be aware of the media policies of their publisher, funder and home university, and to provide as balanced account of the work as possible and ensuring that they offer clarity as to where evidence ends and speculation begins.
- To ensure that the publication meets all requirements as applicable to any relevant intellectual property rights.
- To ensure any requirements around open access publication from a funder or the university are met, including the deposit of an accepted, peer-reviewed manuscript in all the relevant university repositories in line with each university's policy on open access.
- To ensure any underlying data and supplementary materials are clearly identified, and guidance as to if and how a reader might access these are provided, in line with each university's policy on research data.

Non-author contributors

Contributions to research and the resulting publications should also be discussed at an early stage with partners so that contribution short of authorship can still be acknowledged appropriately, where allowed by the publisher.

Those who might fall under consideration for requiring acknowledgement could include students, research assistants, technical officers and individuals and organisations which have provided data or other forms of support which contributed to the research findings being reported, in line with any disciplinary norms.

Acknowledgement should be careful not to imply endorsement by acknowledged parties, and the Inclusion Matters Team would advise that the corresponding author should, where practical, obtain a record of permission to be acknowledged from all acknowledged parties.

Problems with authorship

Disputes over authorship generally fall into three categories, and can often be avoided by early discussion and keeping records of agreements around authorship and acknowledgement.

1. **Misrepresentation or 'guest' of authorship:** where an individual who has not contributed substantially or met the accepted authorship criteria within the norms of the discipline is listed as an author. There may be various reasons for this occurring:
   a. 'Quid pro quo' arrangements between authors, or favours for colleagues and associates in return.
   b. The belief that including the name of a respected author in the field will increase the chances of acceptance.
   c. The addition of senior colleagues (e.g. Heads of Department) by customary practice within an institution, or by request.

2. **Denial or omission of authorship:** where an individual who has contributed substantially or has met the accepted authorship criteria within the norms of the discipline is either (1) not listed as an author or (2) denied the opportunity to contribute to a publication which reports the research they have contributed to. There may be various reasons for this occurring:
   a. Personal or professional disagreements between researchers, including academic rivalry.
   b. Attempts to obfuscate the contribution of a third party (e.g. commercial funder) to present the appearance of independence or hide conflicts of interest.

The Inclusion Matters Team advises authors to avoid all of the practices described above, in line with the Research Integrity Policy and Code of Good Practice developed by member universities (e.g. see Durham University's Research Integrity Policy and Code of Good Practice).

3. **Ordering of authors:** where a perception (real or otherwise) exists as to the importance or status of where an author appears in an order list, with particular emphasis on the positions of first, last or corresponding author.
   a. Authors may face different pressures and incentives from employers and funders as to where they appear in a list of authors on a publication.
   b. Some research assessment exercises (for example, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the UK) or university ranking methodologies (such as the QS World University Rankings) take account of the position of an author's name within a list of authors, and may require additional justifications of the author's contribution, or discount the publication entirely.

How authorship disputes are handled within Inclusion Matters?

Staff are encouraged to try and resolve any disputes on a peer to peer level and this guidance is designed to help them to do so. It is recognised that there are occasions where this is not possible and in theses case the escalation process is outlined below. At any point support and advice can be accessed from the Chair of the Publication Committee, Professor Louise Bracken (L.J.Bracken@Durham.ac.uk).

Stage one - Informal

It is expected that most disputes can be resolved at this stage.

1. Advice should be sought from your designated ethics contact in your home institution in the first instance. At this stage it is expected that the interaction will still be between members of the research team.
2. If the dispute cannot be resolved here then it should be escalated to the Work Package (WP) lead for the project. At this point it may be necessary for the WP lead to open direct dialogue with their counterparts at the other institution, and it may be useful to discuss the issue with the publishers as well. The onus remains on an amicable / mutually agreeable solution but if a resolution cannot be found here then it is escalated to stage two.

Stage two – Formal

1. The WP lead should provide a summary of the issue to Inclusion Matters Publication Board.
2. Both sides of the case should be written by the relevant parties, and circulated to the members of the Publications Board, minus anyone directly involved in the disputed work.
3. The Publications Board will either vote directly, or appoint one of its members to investigate further and provide a recommendation.
4. If a consensus is not reached by the Publications Board, the Chair of the Board (Professor Louise Bracken, Durham University) may engage in dialogue with WP leads to affect a mutually agreeable solution. However in cases where this is not possible then, taking advice from Legal and other services as required, a unilateral decision may be made.
5. The decision of the Chair of the Publications Board is final.

Useful Links

- **UKRIO's Good Practice in Research: Authorship**
  - http://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Guidance-Note-Authorship-v1.0.pdf
- **COPE's International Standards for Authors** (*Section 6: appropriate authorship & acknowledgement*)
  - http://publicationethics.org/node/11184
- **ICMJE guidelines on Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors**
  - http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html
- **Nature Journal authorship policy**
  - https://www.nature.com/authors/policies/authorship.html

- **Academy of Management Code of Ethics (Ethical Standards 4.2.2)**
  - https://aom.org/About-AOM/AOM-Code-of-Ethics.aspx#general
- **British Psychological Society: Statement of Policy on Authorship and Publication Credit**
  - https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/statement-policy-authorship-and-publication-credit-2017
- **British Educational Research Council: Ethical Guidelines for Education Research (2018) [PARA: 78-83]**
  - https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018
- **Council of Science Editors: White Paper on Publication Ethics (2.2 Authorship and Author Responsibilities)**
  - https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/resource-library/editorial-policies/white-paper-on-publication-ethics/

Additional Sources

The below may be useful for authors to see the guidance provided by other institutions within the UK which might apply to co-authors on papers they contribute to.

NIHR: https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/information-for-authors/authorship/

UCL: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/research/integrity/policies-and-guidelines/publication-and-authorship

Sheffield: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/publication

Glasgow: https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/arts/research/researchintegrity/

Birmingham Biomolecular NMR: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/nmr/access/authorship.aspx

Leicester: https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/researchsupport/integrity/code-of-conduct/5-after-research/5-2-authorship

Brunel: https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/documents/pdf/Research-Integrity-Code-of-Practice-2017-v1.4.pdf

Salford: http://www.salford.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/820569/GoodPracticeAuthorshipResearchPublicationsUserGuide.pdf

Cambridge Clinical School of Medicine: https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-integrity/guidelines/guidelines-authorship

Oxford: https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/publication