



The University of Sydney
Faculties of Health Sciences and Architecture

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Clearinghouse Project

Principles of Collaborative Authorship Credit and Order for HMinfo Publications

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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to outline the process of determining authorship credit and authorship order on collaborative publications between academic, research, general staff and students involved in the HMinfo Clearinghouse Project. Collaborations include those that are cross disciplinary and cross professional in nature, for instance, between university departments and between university and professional practitioners, the service sector and industry.

It is recommended that authorship credit and order decisions be based on the scholarly and professional contributions of the collaborators and that these abilities are assessed according to the specifics of each writing project. It is proposed that all collaborators participate in the authorship decision-making process at the start of the collaborative endeavour. Furthermore, it is stressed that collaborative efforts require ongoing negotiation as circumstances often change during the time between the initiation of an article and its final publication. A written agreement between collaborators is considered desirable as such a document provides the opportunity for all parties to assess the collaboration and can encourage a clear and concise statement of intent.

Introduction

This document addresses collaborative publications undertaken through the HMinfo Clearinghouse Project. The aim of this document is firstly, to explicitly acknowledge the importance of authorship credit and order, and secondly, to set out a guideline for the ongoing management of collaborative publication efforts between academic, research, general staff, professionals and students.

Authorship credit and authorship order are important matters within academic and applied settings. Decisions regarding academic promotion, tenure and salary are heavily influenced by the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals and by the number of first-authored publications. Likewise, for researchers, general staff and professionals, a strong record of publication is viewed as an indicator of competence and expertise. Similarly, students collaborating in publications are perceived as being more competent and experienced than their unpublished peers.

Collaborative authorship ventures, although recognised as being of great benefit to the collaborators, are also potential sites of disagreement where parties may feel exploited. These guidelines are designed to provide concise and clear recommendations to ease the process involved in establishing authorship credit and order on collaborative publications.

Acknowledgments

This document is a reassessment and précis of the article by Mark A. Fine and Lawrence A. Kurdek (1993). Reflections on Determining Authorship Credit and Authorship Order on Faculty-Student Collaborations. *American Psychologist*, 48 (11), 1141-1147. Collaborative authors wishing to gain further understanding of this matter are directed to the article and its reference list. Due acknowledgement is made to the Fine and Kurdek paper, however, it should be noted that this document differs from their analysis and recommendations on some points.

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Ethics

Ethical dilemmas arise when academic staff collaborate on publications with researchers, general staff, professionals and students. These problems stem from the nature of academic-general staff relations, and become more pronounced within academic-student relations.

Although collaboration between two professionals can occur on an egalitarian basis, the credentials and position of the academic may deem this unequal. Collaboration between academics and students are inherently unequal. With accreditations including degrees, prior publications, seniority, credentials, expertise and experience, academics are often placed in a supervisory position in relation to both general staff and students.

Two potential ethical dilemmas have been identified in academic-student collaborations (Fine and Kurdek 1993). These may also apply to academic-general staff collaborations.

- ▶ The first dilemma consists of academic staff taking authorship on the basis of seniority.

It is stressed that all authorship credit and order be assigned according to the professional contribution of the individual author on a particular article without regard to position.

- ▶ The second dilemma occurs when students or general staff are granted unwarranted authorship credit by the academic staff member.

Again, it is advised that authorship is granted on professional contribution. Parentalism of general staff or students – that is, false representation or promotion of their abilities – is an ethical issue. It does not fairly present the individual's scholarly expertise, it may give them unfair advantage over their peers, and they may be perceived as having a level of competence beyond their capabilities. Rather than enabling the individual to develop their expertise, parentalism restricts liberty and inhibits scholarly development.

Recommendations

The authorship decision-making process should be discussed at the commencement of each collaborative project.

Academic, professionals, researchers, general staff and students should all have the opportunity to participate in the process of determining authorship credit and order. As far as practicable, they should all be equally engaged in this process.

It is inappropriate for academic staff to assume a parentalistic role in this process with regard to either general staff or students.

However, it should also be recognised that academic, general staff and students are not equals in power, status and expertise. For this reason, level of authorship credit should be discussed and awarded to each collaborator according to specified professional contributions.

To help facilitate meaningful participation in the authorship decision-making process the following specific guidelines are recommended:

- ▶ At the beginning of the project the academic should provide collaborators with information on how authorship decisions are made, including:
 - What are deemed professional and non-professional contributions to publications.
 - The meaning and impact of authorship credit and order.
 - What contributions will be expected of each collaborator for a given level of authorship credit.

- ▶ The above information is provided in order that each collaborator can make an informed contribution to the authorship determination process, and decide whether they wish to participate in the collaborative publication.

- ▶ The collaborators should assess the specific contributions of each individual, including: the tasks undertaken, extent of supervision, special expertise, and appropriate expectations of degree of contribution.

- ▶ The collaborators should discuss and determine what specific tasks, contributions, expertise, and effort is required of individuals to justify authorship and to ascertain the order of authorship.

- ▶ The establishment of authorship expectations and their agreement early in the collaborative process sets up a system of informed consent between the project participants.

- ▶ Written consent agreements could be considered as a way of establishing a clear and precise documentation of the authorship credit and order and the tasks to be undertaken by each individual.

- ▶ It is necessary that the agreement is open to renegotiation in the case of circumstances arising that alter the original projected plan. These may include an individual's loss of interest in the project, inability to complete tasks, or a change in the level of expertise required to bring the publication to completion.

Professional Contribution

To be included as an author on a scholarly publication, all individuals are expected to make a professional contribution that is:

- ▶ Creative and intellectual in nature
- ▶ Integral to the completion of the article
- ▶ Requires an overarching perspective of the project.

Examples of professional contributions include:

- ▶ Developing the research design
- ▶ Writing parts of the manuscript
- ▶ Contributing or integrating theoretical perspectives
- ▶ Developing conceptual models
- ▶ Designing assessments
- ▶ Analysing data
- ▶ Interpreting results

The fulfilment of one or two professional tasks only does not necessarily warrant authorship accreditation. A full collaboration is generally recommended and the parties early in their discussions should jointly decide what combination of professional activities justifies a given level of authorship credit for a particular publication.

- ▶ Authorship decisions should be based on the scholarly importance of the professional contribution.
- ▶ The order of authorship credit should reflect the relative contributions to that specific publication, regardless of an author's role in the project.
- ▶ However, it may under certain circumstances be useful to adopt advantageous positioning of the order of authorship for publications where a particular member has an established reputation and therefore might attract a greater readership. Such a strategy should be discussed early in the project.
- ▶ Authorship should not be affected by whether an individual receives financial remuneration for their efforts. Payment is not a substitute for authorship credit.

Dissertations, Theses and Research Reports

Graduate students maintain copyright on dissertations, theses and Masters research reports.

- ▶ PhD dissertations require original and independent work by the student. An article that she or he writes based on the PhD should have the student identified as the author.
- ▶ A student ordinarily is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is based primarily on the student's dissertation, thesis or Master's research report.

- ▶ Academic staff may be acknowledged as co-authors on subsequent publications resulting from dissertations, thesis or research projects if they have made a substantial contribution to the article beyond basic supervision.
- ▶ It is important to note the varying levels of dissertation, thesis or research report. A PhD is expected to be an original contribution to knowledge and requires that the student undertake independent scholarship with more general guidance from the supervisor. Honours dissertations and Masters research reports are different in conception and the supervisor is normally involved in the development of methodological and theoretical frameworks. In the case that the supervisor has made a professional contribution to the development of the work, the ethical recommendation is to acknowledge the supervisor's input as secondary author on publications.

Editing

If the services of an editor are required for a publication, their professional contribution should be discussed early in the project.

- ▶ In the case that an editor makes a professional contribution to the publication through project conception, theoretical or methodological input, or if they require an overarching understanding of the project, then their contribution warrants authorship merit.
- ▶ Editorial based on the refining of a document does not constitute a professional contribution to the publication and therefore is not deemed to justify authorship status.

Acknowledging Contributions

In circumstances where a contribution is made to a publication that has enabled, benefited, supported or financed the project, but does not constitute a professional contribution, it is recommended that the contribution is made formal through acknowledgement.

For example, this document has made a formal acknowledgement of the article by Mark A. Fine and Lawrence A. Kurdek (1993), on which this document is based. Likewise it has acknowledged funding by the DADHC which provided the financial resources to employ a researcher to write this document.

For an idea of acknowledgement styles authors may wish to consult articles in journals such as: *HousingWorks*; *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*; *Occupational Therapy International*; *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*; *OTJR*.

Dispute Resolution

These guidelines are set out in an effort to establish principles of best and fair practice, however, if a dispute arises the following measures are suggested.

- ▶ In the first instance, any concern or dispute should be raised as soon as possible. It should be discussed with the other authors and a resolution should be sought through consensus agreement between the publication collaborators.

If a dispute cannot be resolved through amicable negotiation, then:

- ▶ It should proceed to the HMinfo Directors who may adjudicate if there is a clear case and if they are not involved in the publication. In more complex cases, the Directors may seek advice from their Advisory Board.
- ▶ If a resolution still cannot be reached, advice may be sought from the University Research Office. Such advice will be in writing and should be initiated by one of the HMinfo Project Directors.

Any precedent established through this dispute resolution practice should be documented and made available to parties and will form part of the best practice guidelines.

Contract of Agreement for Collaborative Authorship

I agree to abide by the HMinfo authorship principles.

My role in the _____ project will be to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I agree to deliver my contribution by: _____

Should I be unable to meet this contract, I agree to:

1. Notify _____
2. via _____ (email etc.)
3. at least _____ prior to the date of completion.

Signed: _____