UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
AUTHORSHIP PRACTICES POLICY

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Relevant related policies, procedures and guidelines	• UCT Policy for Responsible Conduct of Research • UCT Policy for Breach of Research Ethics Codes and Allegations of Misconduct in Research • UCT Research Ethics Code for Research Involving Human Participants • UCT Research Ethics Code for Use of Animals in Research and Teaching, • UCT Policy for Conflicts of Interest and of Commitment in Teaching and Research • Policy for the prevention and management of academic misconduct by students • Whistle-blowing policy • UCT Research Data Management Policy • UCT Policy Statement on Safeguarding in Research • UCT Open Access policy

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1. Introduction

The University of Cape Town is ethically and legally obliged to require of researchers that they publish scholarly and scientific results of research conducted under its auspices. Generally speaking, placing these research results in the public domain is an important facet of being a socially responsive institution. On the one hand, publication of research ensures that the public is informed and can act on such results as appropriate, while, on the other, further research that builds on reported results is made possible. Publication of scholarly and scientific research results means that the results (both positive and negative) should be made accessible in the manner consistent with the relevant standards of publication.

Publication must give appropriate credit to all authors for their roles in the research. Authorship allocates credit to those involved in the research and also allocates responsibility for the integrity of the research and its publication. Authorship practices should reflect the integrity of the research process by honestly indicating the actual contributions to the publication. The reputation of both the institution and individual researchers is negatively affected by poor authorship practices. When more than one person is involved in research, an ethical judgment must be made as to who should be included as an author and as to the sequence of names of the authors on the publication.

The distinction between disputes regarding authorship credit and allegations of professional or scientific misconduct, including plagiarism and fraud, must be clearly maintained. Many allegations made under the mantle of research misconduct actually stem from and involve disputes (i.e. differences of opinion) over authorship and should be handled according to the dispute resolution mechanisms prescribed in this policy.

Misconduct in authorship can include deliberate authorship omission or inappropriate gift authorship which is only identified after publication, plagiarism or other data-related fraud. These occurrences are better managed under the UCT research misconduct policy. If uncertain, advice should be obtained from a faculty research integrity advisor or the UCT Office of Research Integrity

Many publishers are now requiring the use of the CRediT Contributor Role Taxonomy when submitting papers for publication. This taxonomy encourages all contributors to specifically identify their roles, which may be multiple, according to 14 categories. UCT authors should familiarise themselves with this system as it is useful in determining what counts as 'substantial or meaningful contribution', an essential determination when deciding on authorship qualification.[1]

Core value
The governing **ethical value** underpinning this policy is **justice**, made manifest by processes that foster the **principles of fairness, transparency and reasonableness.**

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[1] https://credit.niso.org/

2. Responsibilities and expectations

This policy seeks to offer broad guidance on authorship matters across the university. It is accepted that the policy can provide only general indications of expected standards of professional conduct rather than rigid rules.

Nevertheless, the policy is **prescriptive** to the extent that

i. It requires researchers, especially principal investigators and research team leaders, to set a positive example by their actions and behaviour;

ii. It requires researchers to comply with the principles of fairness, transparency and reasonableness; and to be sensitive to social, cultural and ethical issues that have a bearing on their research;

iii. It requires researchers to strive for the highest levels of integrity and professionalism;

iv. It requires researchers to take responsibility and act in accordance with that responsibility when conducting or supervising research, including deliberating on matters concerning authorship;

v. It requires researchers, including trainees, to familiarize themselves with the principles that govern good research conduct including those that pertain to authorship;

vi. It requires the senior researcher(s) involved with a research project to take responsibility for anticipating possible disagreements concerning authorship credit and to initiate conversations on the matter before students and other participants are permitted to invest substantial time on the project;

vii. It places a special obligation on senior staff members to avoid first authorship or in certain disciplines co-authorship on papers generated from independent work by their junior colleagues or students; co-authorship should be allocated only accordance with the eligibility principles for authorship;

viii. It requires the allocation of responsibilities amongst researchers to be commensurate with their skill and training.

3. Principles for judging eligibility for authorship

i. Each person who makes a meaningful contribution to the research project should be credited appropriately either as an author or as a contributor.

ii. An author is someone who makes a **significant or substantial contribution** to the production of the publication. The precise meaning of 'significant or substantial contribution' may be discipline-specific but is commonly understood as requiring that **1) each author should have participated in formulating the research problem, or analysing and interpreting the data or have made other substantial scholarly effort or a combination of these; and/or 2) have participated in writing the paper; and 3) must have read and approved the final version for publication, and be accountable for the work in its published form.**

iii. The weight accorded to each of these components may vary according to the scholarly discipline or scientific field. Various conventions and customs exist and may be discipline-specific.

iv. A co-author does not have to be a current member of staff or student in order to retain allocation of or to be allocated authorship credit[2].

v. Co-authors should be party to discussions of, and understand the conventions regarding sequence of names and agree in advance, i.e. as early as possible in the research process, to the assignment of names in the sequence.

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[2] Posthumous allocation of authorship should only occur with permission from the next of kin.

vi.   In the case of interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research, the senior researcher(s) have a special responsibility to ensure that discussions about authorship matters and possible differences in conventions are initiated early and with all researchers that are involved.

vii.   None of rank, position, patronage, technical assistance, provision of research materials or facilities by itself is a criterion for authorship. Gift authorship, honorary or courtesy authorship is also unacceptable and not consistent with the governing values and principles of this policy.

viii. Provision of funding alone for a research group is not a criterion for authorship.

ix.   Any person who does not meet the eligibility criteria for authorship but who has made contributions to the project[3], should be acknowledged in the publication as a contributor. The manner of acknowledgement should occur according to the publication standards of the particular discipline.

4. Dispute resolution mechanisms

i.   Each faculty, department, division, unit or research team (as the case may be) must have a dispute resolution mechanism, described in writing and made easily accessible to all researchers.

ii.   The dispute resolution mechanism must provide for a graduated method of dealing with disputes about authorship, i.e., the first level should be that co-authors are expected to sort the dispute out amongst themselves. Failing resolution at this level, the matter must be referred upwards to the head of the research team, unit, division, department, or faculty (as the case may be) or to the Faculty Research Committee who should use the criteria as outlined in this guideline to attempt to resolve the dispute. Where a disputant is such a head, the matter must be referred upwards within the Faculty, if necessary, involving the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation (DVC: R&I). The Director, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) may also be consulted for advice. In cases where the dispute involves authors from different faculties, Deans, or their delegated authority, from respective faculties should consult as to the best way forward. It may be appropriate to involve the DVC: R&I early, so that processes including setting up an interfaculty ad-hoc dispute resolution committee if required, can be facilitated.

iii. In addition, each faculty, department, division, unit (as the case may be) must have a complaints process, described in writing and made easily accessible, especially to student and junior staff researchers.

iv.   The complaints process should be used when a student or junior staff member thinks s/he has been unfairly treated insofar as allocation of authorship credit is concerned.

v.   The complaints process should include protection in the form of utmost confidentiality for the student or junior staff member who lodges a complaint.

vi.   The complaints process should include recourse to someone other than the supervisor of the student, in the event that the complaint concerns conduct of the supervisor.

vii. Where authorship disputes involve collaborating authors that are not affiliated with UCT, UCT undertakes to provide support to UCT authors in resolving the dispute. Such support should be sought from either faculty structures as appropriate (e.g. Faculty Research Committee, or the Deanery) or from the Office of Research Integrity. In some cases it may be necessary to also involve the DVC: R&I and occasionally the Research contracts or legal office, as the case may be.

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[3] For example, participating in data collection only, not in the development of the research questions and data collection tool; running a specialised test as a laboratory technician on request.

5. Authorship and attribution

2024: Revisions to this document were completed by Dr Lyn Horn in consultation with the Senate Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC) and Faculty Research Ethics Committees (RECs).

This document is indebted in part to authorship policies from the following institutions:
- British Sociological Association; Duke University; Harvard University; Michigan State University; Murdoch University, Perth Australia; Stanford University; University of Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh; Yale University, most of which incorporate authorship principles developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).

Further assistance was gleaned from:
- Fine, Mark A and Lawrence A Kurdek 'Reflections on Determining Authorship Credit and Authorship Order on faculty-student Collaborations' American Psychologist (1993) 11, 1141-1147. Gawrylewski,
- Andrea 'Bringing Order to Authorship: How to resolve authorship disputes – and avoid them altogether' The Scientist Vol 21, 91.
- Jones, Anne Hudson 'Can Authorship Policies Help Prevent Scientific Misconduct? What Role for Scientific Societies?' Science and Engineering Ethics (2003) 9, 243-256.
- Murray, Bridget 'The Authorship dilemma: who gets credit for what?' APA Online (1998) 29 number 12 http://www.apa.org/monitor/dec98/credit.html [2008/07/23].

Annexure 1: Additional practical and procedural guidelines

Clear and careful planning and communication are central to the ethical research process, including the allocation of authorship credit and responsibility.

Most misunderstandings and resultant recriminations can be avoided if clear and fair communication occurs as part of the early stages of the collaborative research process.

It is expected thus that the appropriate practice is to deal with issues of authorship at the earliest practical stage of a research project. This kind of practice allows for early clarification of roles and minimising of (possible) disappointments amongst participants.

Discussion of authorship credit and responsibility should include questions like:
i.   Who will be named as an author or contributor if the research results are submitted for publication or presentation?
ii.   What sequence of names is envisaged? The decision should be made by the co-authors; if disagreement persists, the senior or lead author must decide.
iii. What are responsibilities and expectations for each contributor?
iv.   Are there intellectual property (IP) or confidentiality matters that may affect publication?
v.   When is the next meeting to discuss authorship matters? It is prudent to anticipate that personal circumstances may change eg birth, death, divorce, which may necessitate appropriate changes to authorship arrangements.

It should be noted that the question of determining authorship of a publication is completely separate from that of determining inventorship of an invention described or discussed in the publication. A person named as an author in a publication will not necessarily be an inventor for purposes of determining inventorship. Conversely and inventor will not necessarily be an author on a paper describing the invention.

One author must be designated as corresponding, senior or lead author. This role carries the responsibility of vouching for the integrity of the research process and the publication of the research as a whole. The role includes the responsibility for ensuring that all co-authors who meet the eligibility criteria are included and agree to be included; for communicating with the publisher and the other co-authors about the progress of review and publication; about any changes in co-authorship; about ensuring that all listed authors have approved the submitted version of the manuscript.

It is recommended that a written record of the authorship credit discussion and agreement be maintained.

Discipline-specific conventions, professional association and research journal conventions regarding variations to the usual conventions must be dealt with as early as practicable in the research process. **At no time, however, should the conventions be permitted to override the core value of justice.**

It is recommended that each faculty, department, division, unit or research team (as the case may be) draws up a set of **processes**, especially in relation to **collaborative staff/student publications**, that will clarify expectations concerning authorship for each student and staff member.

The **duality of the supervisor/researcher role** for staff members should be explicitly dealt with. For example, on the one hand, the staff member is obliged to assist the student to grow academically which would entail encouragement, mentoring and even possible co-authorship; on the other, the staff member has an obligation to present the student honestly and fairly to the research community, which means that a student's skills and abilities must not be misrepresented.

It is strongly recommended that each faculty, department, division, unit or research group (as the case may be) facilitates **regular discussion of hypothetical or real examples of difficult cases** of authorship credit so that good research practice is fostered and shared understanding of difficult situations is promoted.

It is strongly recommended that each faculty, department, division, unit or research team (as the case may be) undertakes **regular revision of their guidelines and procedures** (at minimum this should happen every three years) to keep them up to date and in line with changing practices.