

Duke University Guidelines for Authorship and Authorship Dispute Resolution

INTRODUCTION

Duke University has instituted authorship guidelines and dispute resolution procedures to supplement its policy on Misconduct in Research (see Appendix P, Faculty Handbook). A separate but complementary policy was deemed advisable because many allegations of misconduct actually stem from and involve disputes over authorship. Because disputes over authorship rarely involve research misconduct, the Misconduct in Research policy is usually not the appropriate mechanism for resolving such disputes.

Some departments and divisions at the University already provide guidelines for authorship to faculty and students, and expectations are clear on all sides. However, too frequently this does not happen, and bitterness and accusation may result. This policy on authorship, therefore, is designed to fill in the gaps and offer broad guidance across the University.

COMMUNICATING RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Within the academic environment there is often some level of expectation regarding authorship or acknowledgement on the part of those contributing to a work. As a result, it is an appropriate practice to address questions of authorship at the earliest practical stage of a research project. Such communication can clarify roles, spur motivation, and minimize disappointments among the participants. Major questions that should be addressed are the following:

- Who will be named as an author or acknowledged as a contributor if the study is submitted for publication or presentation?
- What will be the order of authorship?
- What are the responsibilities and expectations for each contributor to the study?
- Are there any intellectual property or confidentiality issues involved that may affect publication?

It is important to recognize that roles often change during the course of a project and it may not be possible to appropriately evaluate each author's relative contribution to the work until the manuscript (or presentation) is actually written or even finalized for publication. For this reason, it is important for all involved parties to re-discuss authorship whenever significant changes occur and make it clear to all participants from the start that final decisions about authorship can be extended until the time of submission.

It is also the expectation that the senior investigator(s) associated with a given research project is(are) responsible for anticipating possible disagreements concerning authorship

credit and for initiating conversations on the matter before students and other collaborators have invested substantial time on the project.

RECOMMENDED PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORSHIP

A salient fact about authorship is that markedly different traditions of joint authorship exist among different disciplines. Given these variances, specific and universal rules cannot apply. However, a set of general principles should serve as a guide for authorship inclusion across the University.

- Authorship should be restricted to those individuals who have met **each** of the following three criteria: 1) made a significant contribution to the conception and design of the project, or the analysis and interpretation of the data, or other substantial scholarly effort; 2) participated in drafting, reviewing and/or revising the work; and 3) approved the final version for publication.
- Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take full responsibility for his or her contributions to the content.
- As a practical matter, with multi-authored publications it is usually important to designate or acknowledge one individual as the Lead Author, who takes responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole. This Lead Author often also serves as the corresponding author.
- The Lead Author has responsibility for 1) including as co-authors all those who meet the three criteria defined above; and 2) obtaining from all co-authors their agreement to be designated as such.
- The order of authorship should be a joint decision of the co-authors. If a decision cannot be reached, the Lead Author should have final say.
- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of a research group does not justify authorship unless the individual also fulfills the above three criteria.
- Anyone who does not meet the above authorship criteria but who has made other substantial contributions (such as technical help, writing assistance, etc.) should be acknowledged in the final product.
- Honorary or courtesy authorships are inconsistent with the principles of this policy and, as such, are unacceptable.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Disputes over authorship are best resolved at the local level by the authors themselves or in consultation with the laboratory chief, chair or head of department(s), or dean, as appropriate.

If resolution at the local level cannot be achieved, the matter can be referred to the Authorship Dispute Board in one of two ways. If the matter is taken to the Authorship Dispute Board with the mutual agreement of all parties, the decision of the Board will be binding on all parties. If the matter is taken to the Authorship Dispute Board without the mutual agreement of all parties, the decision of the Authorship Dispute Board is not binding, but the Board will make a written recommendation that will be provided to all parties of the dispute and can be made public by any of the parties involved.

COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORSHIP DISPUTE BOARD

The Board shall consist of the following:

- One chair and three faculty members jointly appointed by the provost and the dean of the School of Medicine and approved by the Executive Committee of the Academic Council.
- Two *ex officio* members of the administration, the vice provost for research and the vice dean for research.
- One graduate or professional student appointed by the Graduate and Professional Student Council
- One postdoctoral fellow appointed by the Duke University Postdoctoral Association
- If appropriate, the Board may call upon the expertise of other members of the Duke University faculty.

Any member of the Board involved in attempted resolution of the complaint prior to its consideration by the Authorship Dispute Board will recuse him or herself.

This policy is indebted in part to authorship policies from the following institutions: Harvard University, University of California-San Diego, University of California-San Francisco, University of Pennsylvania, and the Washington University-St. Louis. This policy incorporates authorship principles developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. More information can be found at <http://www.icmje.org/>.