



Authorship Guidelines at FHS

Policies vary across disciplines, countries and across institutions about criteria governing authorship of academic publications. All agree, however, that authors listed on a given material are taking full responsibility of that “intellectual product”. For every produced material, there is a process for deciding on authorship **credit** and authorship **order**.¹ This decision should follow a certain set of criteria based on ethical principles and the extent of professional contribution by members of the project/research team. Decisions on authorship should be based on the scholarly importance of the contribution regardless of the time and effort made.²

Below is a proposed set of criteria developed by the Research Committee (RC) at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) to guide faculty, students, research assistants and other collaborators in making decisions regarding authorship credit and order and to serve as a reference document if disagreements on authorship credit arise.

Definitions of Authorship

The FHS RC has decided to adopt the following criteria for assigning **authorship credit**:

“Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content. Authorship credit should be based only on substantial contributions to:

- a. Conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data; **and**
- b. Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; **and**
- c. Final approval of the version to be published.”³

Authors should meet conditions a, b and c, and anyone who does not meet **all three** of these criteria should be credited for their contribution in the acknowledgements. While

¹ <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/integrity/authorship.html>

² Fine & Kurdek (1993). Reflections on determining authorship credit and authorship order on faculty-student collaboration. *American Psychologist*, 48 (11): 1141-1147.

³ <http://www.rhmjournal.org.uk>

the criteria are copied from those specified in the Reproductive Health Matters Journal, almost all other journals and web sites concur with these guidelines. For example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) in their latest version of recommendations (in 2001) provides similar guidelines. Additionally, the ICMJE states that “Acquisition of funding, the collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, by themselves, do not justify authorship”.⁴

Authorship Criteria

All co-authors should meet the criteria set out above in the definition of authorship. The following statements are made to encourage a culture of ethical authorship within FHS with guidelines made aware to all.

1. Students: Undergraduate and graduate students should be credited authorship for publications arising from their theses/projects work, even if the paper is developed/finalized post graduation.
2. Advisors: Advisors, co-advisors and members of committees for undergraduate and graduate students’ theses/projects should be credited authorship for publications arising from their students’ work, even if the paper is developed/finalized post graduation.

A general principle concerning faculty-student research (1 and 2 above) is that it is the responsibility of the person who initiates the publication process – whenever that occurs – to inform all individuals involved in-depth in the research project (student or advisors) about the intent to publish and to determine their interest in co-authorship.

3. Graduate and Research Assistants/Associates: GAs and RAs may be granted authorship credit depending on the quality of and their extent of contribution. The Principal author(s)⁵ will be the person to judge whether their contribution warrants authorship credit.
4. Other collaborators (field worker, interviewers, etc.): Upon the discretion of the principal investigator(s) and/or principal author(s), other collaborators or people facilitating the research should be mentioned in the acknowledgements section of the publication, depending on the quality of and their level of contribution.

⁴ <http://www.icmje.org>

⁵ Principal author is defined as first or corresponding author

Authorship Order

The order of potential co-authors should be a joint decision of all co-authors. It is highly recommended that such discussions take place at the beginning of the project/research and that written minutes are kept.

In the case of publications that come out of student theses/projects, both the student and the advisor should be credited as principal authors.

Suggestions for Good Authorship Practice

These are some tips to prevent disputes arising from authorship issues as set in the COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) report, 2003 ⁶:

- a) Discuss authorship in the planning stage of research: raise the subject at the start, make a list of all possible publications and gather views of all team members.
- b) Decide on authorship credit and order before you start writing an article: decide with your team on who will do what and credit that with authorship order for each article.
- c) Continue discussion as the project evolves and new members get involved. Keep written records of all discussions and decisions.

Presented to the faculty by the FHS Research Committee on May 30, 2009

Research Committee

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By invitation:

Nasser Yassin (CRPH)
Zeinab Slim (Research assistant and ex-GA and Ms. Student)

⁶ Alber T & Wager E. (2003) How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers. The COPE Report.