

Guidelines Authorship in Research

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English version for reference purposes only

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1. Principles

The University of Antwerp encourages its researchers to publish the results of the research done at the institution in various ways. One of the ways to publish research results is through academic publications (such as journal articles, monographs, abstracts, research reports, posters, etc.).

Whenever research results are shared, be it with peers, funders or the wider population, it is important that every researcher who has contributed to them is also recognised for their contribution. One explicit way to recognise an intellectual contribution is on the basis of authorship. Apart from recognition, the role of author also has certain responsibilities attached to it.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide a framework for researchers to define their own role and that of colleagues, as well as to take note of the corresponding responsibilities. The University of Antwerp is aware that there is currently no comprehensive definition of authorship. Furthermore, there are also discipline-specific differences when it comes to authorship that must be taken into account and the chosen journal or publisher may also have specific authorship guidelines.

These guidelines apply to all University of Antwerp staff who publish research with the affiliation of our institution.

2. Authorship

2.1 Criteria

In a scientific context, any individual who has made a substantial intellectual contribution to a publication is considered an author.¹ Furthermore, the University of Antwerp endorses the international guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). These guidelines stipulate that authorship must be based on the following criteria:

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- 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.

To be eligible for the criterion 'substantial contribution', as a researcher you must have made at least one of the following contributions. However, in most cases, an author is expected to make a combination of two or more contributions:

- Set-up and design of the project or publication
- Collecting research data, provided that this required substantial intellectual input (planning, design, actual data collection or content choices)

¹ This criterion for authorship remains valid at all times, even after the death of a co-author. In the case of this author, the date of death must be mentioned in a footnote in the final publication.

- Provide substantive knowledge that constitutes a substantial contribution
- Analysis or interpretation of research data
- Writing substantial parts of the publication or critically revising it with substantive impact on the interpretation

The ICMJE criteria are intended to monitor that the role of author is only awarded to researchers who deserve this honour and can take responsibility for the work. The criteria are not intended to exclude colleagues who could meet the authorship criteria from authorship by denying them the opportunity to meet the second or third criterion. Therefore, all those who meet the first criterion should be given the opportunity to participate in the review, drafting and final approval of the manuscript. This principle applies to all publications, regardless of the status of the persons concerned. A bachelor's or master's student who has made a substantial intellectual contribution must also be given the opportunity to contribute as a co-author to a publication based on that research.

The ICMJE authorship guidelines are general guidelines. As a researcher, it is therefore best to always inform yourself about discipline-specific guidelines and the expectations in this regard of the chosen publication medium.

2.2 Responsibilities

To avoid discussions about authorship, good proactive communication between the researchers involved in the project is crucial. By making proper agreements and taking on the necessary responsibilities, smooth cooperation can be guaranteed.

The [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) stipulates that

- All authors are fully responsible for the content of any publication, unless otherwise indicated.
- All authors agree on the order of attribution and acknowledge that authors are deemed to have made a significant contribution to the design of the study, the collection of relevant data and/or the analysis and interpretation of the results.

Specifically, the University of Antwerp expects researchers to assume the following responsibilities in their role as authors. These responsibilities are obviously not enforceable on co-authors from other universities or institutions, or other countries, but often these institutions have similar codes.

- Recognition of authorship and the order of authors must be applied in a consistent manner within each research group and also be in line with the usual practice within the discipline. Within a research group, the principles for attributing authorship are always communicated at a fixed time (for example at the start of a PhD or research project) and in a transparent manner. Junior researchers are explicitly given the opportunity to name their contribution and expectations, free from pressure or hierarchical barriers. Researchers within the group also propagate these principles in collaborations with authors from other institutions and train themselves where necessary on the principles of good research practice and authorship practices in particular.²
- At the start of a project or study, all researchers involved discuss the expectations in terms of collaboration, the chosen publication channel, the contributions that each individual will make

² To become familiar with the principles of good research practice, researchers from the University of Antwerp can use the online course Mind the GAP. This is available in [Blackboard](#).

and the translation of these into authorship as well as the order of authors. Where necessary, these agreements are adjusted throughout the project or study.

- All researchers involved in a publication consciously choose a publication channel that uses high-quality and transparent practices. This choice supports the credibility of the research and protects researchers from problematic practices that occur with publishers with a large number of special issues or very fast review processes, among others. In concrete terms, the University of Antwerp expects authors to:
 - Check in advance whether the journal applies reliable editorial processes, paying attention to signals such as excessive special issues, unclear quality control or unusually fast review times. The costs of publication should also be included in this exercise, whereby possible alternatives such as Diamond Open Access can be considered.
 - Rely on recognised aids (such as [Think. Check. Submit.](#), [Web of Science](#) or the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#)) to assess the quality of the channel and call on the expertise of colleagues, librarians and open access advisors if necessary.;
 - Critically review invitations to special issues and avoid them when transparency is lacking;
 - Consider the long-term impact of their choices, including potential reputational declines or declassification of journals;
 - Involve co-authors in a timely manner in the considerations that precede the choice of publication.
- To map the various contributions of the researchers involved, the [CRediT system](#) that defines fourteen different roles is preferred.³
- To ensure smooth authorship discussions, a corresponding author is appointed who acts as a formal point of contact in communication with the chosen publication medium, but is also in contact with all co-authors at all times. It is important that this 'corresponding author' has insight into both the content of the publication and the individual contributions of each author. The duties of the corresponding author include, but are not limited to:
 - Safeguarding the substantive and research integrity of the publication;

³ The following fourteen roles are defined, each with a brief description: Conceptualization (Ideas, formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims); Data curation (Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later re-use); Formal analysis (Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data); Funding acquisition (Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication); Investigation (Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection); Methodology (Development or design of methodology; creation of models); Project administration (Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution); Resources (Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools); Software (Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components); Supervision (Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team); Validation (Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs); Visualization (Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/data presentation); Writing – original draft (Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)); Writing – review & editing (Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre- or post publication stages.

- Ensuring that only researchers who meet the authorship criteria are credited as co-authors;
 - Delivering the manuscript in draft form to all co-authors, asking for their consent for both authorship and content;
 - Ensuring that data is interpreted completely, correctly and responsibly, and takes into account any specific guidelines of the journal.
- Agreements made in the field of authorship are recorded as early as possible in the research process and are always communicated in writing to all authors involved, at the latest before the drafting of the publication starts. Where necessary, these agreements can be revised at a later date, with a new version circulating among the authors each time. These agreements also clarify the concept of 'substantial contribution' that was used to determine authorship.
 - To interpret substantial contributions, researchers preferably use an Author Contribution Statement. An Author Contribution Statement does not have to be a formal legal document. It can take various forms, such as an Author Contribution Statement template from the institution, a form from the journal, a report of an online consultation or e-mail correspondence between authors, etc.⁴ However, an Author Contribution Statement must contain at least the following information:
 - the names of all authors;
 - the contribution of each author;
 - the agreed order of authors, in line with disciplinary standards and requirements;
 - the designation of at least one corresponding author, who takes care of the communication with the publisher and co-authors and keeps the appointments.

Because projects evolve, authorship must be reviewed regularly, especially when new researchers make a substantial contribution. The corresponding author therefore keeps track of any changes to the Author Contribution Statement. In this statement, the [CRediT system](#) can be used to interpret the contributions (see above) or [the NIH guidelines on determining authorship can be considered](#).

- In the case of a collaboration with researchers from another institution, a consensus is sought between the provisions of these guidelines and those of the other partners involved.
- Researchers who are listed as authors on a publication take their responsibility with regard to the integrity of the publication. This includes but is not limited to indicating both real and perceived conflicts of interest⁵, correctly disclosing funding obtained, careful [research data management](#), etc.⁶ In addition, if researchers are listed as authors, they must have taken note of the full content of the publication, as well as agree with the final version.
- Only staff members or students of the University of Antwerp, or those who were or are

⁴ The University of Antwerp has its own Authorship Agreement Form template.

⁵ A real conflict of interest arises when personal, financial, or professional interests can directly affect the objectivity of an investigation. A perceived conflict of interest arises when others get the idea that a researcher may have been influenced, even if that is not the case. Objectively, the research integrity remains intact, but it can raise doubts about neutrality among colleagues, media or the public. The difference lies in the actual influencing versus the idea of influencing (AI-generated definition, Microsoft (2025). *Copilot* (30 September 2025 version)).

⁶ To become familiar with the principles of scientific integrity and good research practice with regard to, among other things, the declaration of conflicts of interest and research data management, researchers from the University of Antwerp can use the online course Mind the GAP. This is available in [Blackboard](#).

affiliated to the institution as a volunteer staff member, guest professor or emeritus with (occasional) assignment when the research in question was carried out, may mention on a publication that they are affiliated to our university.

- To ensure a correct allocation of publications to the right researcher, every researcher within the University of Antwerp creates an [ORCID](#) , links the ORCID profile to the institutional repository, and keeps the publicly accessible publication list on ORCID complete and up-to-date.
- In situations where a co-author can no longer be contacted or cooperates dutifully, and has not yet made a substantial contribution, the other authors may decide to no longer involve this co-author in the process. If necessary, the person concerned appropriately acknowledged by other means (e.g. by means of a mention in the acknowledgements). All reasonable efforts will be made to inform the person concerned of the decision.
- It is common for collaborative projects to result in additional publications, especially in large or complex projects. Without clear agreements, such follow-up publications could potentially lead to discussions about authorship. That is why it is advisable to immediately come to agreements about follow-up publications during the discussions about authorship. These agreements must also be recorded in writing. A common agreement can be:
 - Direct follow-up: If the new publication is a direct result of the current work, all current authors discuss whether they want to contribute and how their contribution will be recognised.
 - Derivative publication: If the new publication builds on the current work, the current authors may be invited to participate; otherwise they will be recognised.

2.3 Author order

The University of Antwerp is aware that differences may occur between disciplines when it comes to determining the order of authors. For example, there are disciplines that work in alphabetical order, but there are also disciplines that provide certain positions for authors who have made larger contributions to the publication. The University of Antwerp respects the individuality of the various disciplines, but believes that it is also important to reach clear agreements here. However, the agreed authorship order must always be at least in accordance with the applicable disciplinary standards and requirements of the publisher. In the absence of such conventions, the author order should always reflect the relative contribution of the collaborating researchers. Each author must also always be able to explain the reasoning behind the agreed author order.

A specific case here is the use of a shared position, in particular a shared first author position. In the event that authors have contributed equally, this will be stated as such on the publication. This is not apparent from the order of authors. It is important to note that shared author positions cannot or cannot easily be registered in several bibliographic systems, including the institutional repository of the University of Antwerp.

2.4 Practices to avoid

Considering the above and the general standards of good research practice, the University of Antwerp believes that the following practices should be avoided:

- Gift authorship: a colleague is unfairly added to a publication to which they have not contributed, in some cases with the expectation that the colleague will return the favour. A particular form of gift authorship is the granting of authorship without the knowledge of the person in question.
- Ghost authorship: a person who deserves authorship is not included in the authorship list, either because that person was forgotten or ignored, or for strategic reasons, e.g. to avoid mentioning a conflict of interest.
- Ghost writing: the writing of a scientific publication is (partly) outsourced to a commercial or third party without disclosing this.
- Enforced authorship or honorary authorship: this refers to the inclusion of authors for a hierarchical reason, e.g. the head of the department where the research was conducted. Note that having acquired funding is not in itself a sufficient condition to justify authorship.

2.5 Acknowledgements

Individuals who contributed to the research but whose input is not sufficient to be credited as an author based on the previously stated criteria should be credited in the publication's acknowledgments. In the acknowledgements, they are then referred to as collaborators and not as authors. It is important to always indicate which concrete contributions were made by each employee.

2.6 Artificial intelligence and authorship

Because they cannot bear responsibility for the content and integrity of the work, AI tools cannot be included as (co-)authors of a publication. When Artificial Intelligence is used in the development of the scientific basis of a publication – such as in the collection, analysis or interpretation of data – this should be mentioned in the methods section or in the acknowledgements. Researchers remain fully responsible for the originality, validity, reliability and integrity of their research results at all times, even when AI is used. It is important to always consult the AI guidelines of the publisher where you want to publish.

3. Discussions about authorship

The University of Antwerp believes that provided the above responsibilities are respected, authorship disputes can be minimised. In the event that an authorship dispute does arise, the institution recommends that an open and collegial discussion be held in the first instance. This can include looking back at previous agreements made around authorship. If desired, a neutral party with knowledge of the discipline can be called upon to attend the discussions.

Should it not prove possible to reach a consensus on the basis of a collegial discussion, the first point of contact is the chair of the department or of the discipline.⁴ If this party is involved, the dean of the faculty or the institute chair can be contacted. Doctoral students can also contact the confidential counsellors for doctoral students. If desired, the institution's scientific integrity contact point or the central ombudsperson can also always be contacted.

4. References and further information

The following guidelines were used as inspiration for this document:

- <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/publication>

- <https://onderzoektips.ugent.be/en/tips/authorship-10-best-practices-01656/>
- [Guidelines on Authorship | Research Integrity \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)
- <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/integrity/practices/publication-and-authorship/authorship>
- <https://www.bu.edu/researchsupport/forms-policies/guidelines-for-authorship/>
- <https://www.brown.edu/research/Authorship>
- <https://provost.yale.edu/policies/academic-integrity/guidance-authorship-scholarly-or-scientific-publications>
- <https://research.fas.harvard.edu/links/guidelines-authorship-and-acknowledgement>
- <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/Authorship-Guide.pdf>
- <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/authorship/>
- <https://www.jcu.edu.au/policy/academic-governance/research-management/authorship-procedure>
- <https://policy.vu.edu.au/download.php?id=661&version=1&associated>
- https://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/160589/integrity03_authorship.pdf
- https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1605369/Authorship-Procedure-V1-12-Jul-2021.pdf
- <https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/editorial-policies/authorship>
- <https://publicationethics.org/>
- [White Paper on Publication Ethics - Council of Science Editors \(councilscienceeditors.org\)](#)
- [Policies and Ethics - AIP Publishing LLC](#)
- [Author-Guide-V9.pdf \(iop.org\)](#)