Authorship and Responsible Research Publication Guidelines
March 2023

Authorship, Acknowledgements, and Process Guidelines for
Faculty, Postdocs, Graduate Students, Researchers, Principal Investigators (PIs) and
Collaborators (hereinafter referred to as 'Researchers')

Purpose of Guidelines:
Maintaining scientific credibility depends on complete and correct authorship, as well as
accuracy in reporting the research results. To support a culture of integrity and trust,
researchers must not take credit for the published or unpublished works of others or refer
to such work without proper attribution and/or permission (i.e., engage in plagiarism). This
plagiarism standard applies to all forms of publications, including, but not limited to the
following: articles, papers, reports, books, presentations, posters, abstracts, and grant
applications.

The NYU Authorship and Responsible Research Publication Guidelines provide minimum
requirements for Authorship and Acknowledgements. Many of these suggested guidelines
have been developed based on those established by the International Committee of Medical
Journal Editors (ICMJE). See “Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors.” According to
these ICMJE guidelines, “All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship,
and all those who qualify should be listed.” NYU recognizes that many journals may have
additional requirements. An author must comply with any additional authorship
requirements of the journal to which a manuscript has been submitted.

Authorship Criteria:
The process of determining authorship should be fluid and begin very early in a
collaboration project where publication/s are likely to occur. Whenever possible,
authorship discussions should be conducted in a transparent manner, and through
face-to-face meetings with all potential authors and be revisited as the project develops, as
circumstances can change before completion. Communication about the discussions should
be shared with all potential authors.

The criteria for authorship are that an author must have made a significant or substantial
intellectual or technical contribution to the research and must have made an effort to
understand and critique the contributions of all the other authors. All authors are
responsible for recognizing and disclosing to the other authors any financial or
non-financial conflicts of interest that might bias their work.

 Guidance published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) or
the American Physical Society (APS) provides a helpful baseline, and thus is a good starting
point for authorship determinations. Many journals have standards consistent with ICMJE
guidance, which requires ALL of the following criteria to be met in order for authorship to
be warranted:
• Substantial contributions to the conception, design or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; AND,
• Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND,
• Final approval of the version to be published.
• 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.

Researchers who merit authorship should have an ascribable role in creating the research output. CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) provides a useful reference to help identify such roles. The NIH also offers authorship contributor guidelines on their website.

Acknowledgments vs. Authorship:
If authors are included that do not meet those criteria, carefully document the basis upon which such other authors were included. Individuals that contributed to the research but do not meet authorship criteria may be acknowledged in accordance with journal standards.

Many elements essential for a publication should be credited, but do not warrant authorship. People who provide facilities or resources, for instance, may be credited in the Acknowledgments section. The following activities are not sufficient to warrant authorship:

• Participating solely in acquisition of funding
• Participating solely in collection of data
• Proofreading and editing services
• Supervising the overall activities of the research group

Authors have the ethical responsibility to acknowledge all of those who made the research and manuscript possible. Because agreement with the contents of a manuscript might be inferred, it is good practice to obtain the permission of anyone who is acknowledged in the manuscript.

Acknowledge the funding:
No one would dispute the necessity to cite references when using other people’s (or your own) prior work. Equally important is to properly cite funding sources – with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or the National Science Foundation (NSF) this is a must, but all funding should be declared, including any funding from external entities whether domestic or foreign, in addition to any financial conflicts of interest that might appear to affect or influence the research results.

Data Publication:
Researchers should also aim to publish data (subject to restrictions or requirements that may apply to the specific data set) along with the publication early in the process and be sure to communicate those to the journal. In all cases, the principles of NYU’s Commitment to Open Access for Research should be met and when supported by an extramural funding source, funding agency policies on open access and data sharing must be followed.

a. NIH Policy for Data Management and Sharing
b. NSF Policy
c. NYU Data Management Resources
Considerations for Order of Authors:
Researchers should keep good documentation of discussions and determinations on authorship from the outset, so that if there is a question downstream (including after a journal is involved), the understanding between the collaborators and the process used is clear. It is recommended that such documentation includes a record of the discussions and agreement on areas of responsibility, tasks, supervision, budgets, fiscal control, and individual contributions, all of which are relevant factors in determining authorship.

Ideally, decisions about authors and the order in which their names appear should be discussed as early as possible, even before any work begins, and should be part of an ongoing dialogue that is revisited throughout the length of the project under the guidance of the Principal Investigator.

Many journals require each listed author to sign certain forms prior to publication that verify their role and contributions. It is critical to make sure all listed authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Designating the first author (or co-first authors), the last author, and the order of authors can have differing importance to different Researchers, depending upon background and perceptions. These determinations can often create friction points; thus, these decisions should be made through a deliberative and inclusive process that is transparent, and well documented. It should be noted that the established practice for the order of author designation may differ between different academic disciplines. For example, alphabetical designation may be widely accepted in one discipline, but not in other disciplines, where the order is determined based upon contribution.

Similarly, designation of the corresponding author should be a deliberate decision made through a transparent process that is documented.

Ghost and Honorary Authorship:
“Ghost-writing” is a practice whereby a commercial entity writes an article or manuscript and a researcher, clinician, or otherwise recognized expert in a particular field of study is named as an author. NYU researchers may not participate in publications or presentations that are controlled by industry or that contain substantial portions written by someone who is not identified as an author or who is not properly acknowledged (i.e., that are ghost-written). This includes papers or presentations featuring data that were simply presented to the named author (without the opportunity for that person to analyze directly, perform calculations, review and/or question the data). Making minor revisions to an article, manuscript, or presentation that is ghost-written does not justify authorship.

Guest, honorary, or courtesy authorships, where the named author did not contribute consistent with the criteria for authorship listed in this guidance are contrary to the principles of this guidance and, as such, are also prohibited.

Authorship Disputes:
Significant friction can arise when a researcher’s efforts or contributions rise to the level of authorship which is disputed by other authors and collaborators in the project. Where a deliberative process concludes that a particular individual’s efforts or contributions do not reach that level, care should be given to then consider whether the efforts or contributions
should be included in a specific acknowledgement, and the best means of expressing that acknowledgement.

When a Researcher believes there is a dispute regarding these issues that cannot reasonably be managed at the work group level, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Division Chair for the Department and/or the Dean for the School as soon as possible. Authorship disputes do not by themselves fall under NYU’s research misconduct policy. However, if these matters involve allegations or evidence of research misconduct, they must immediately be brought to the attention of the Research Integrity Officer (RIO).