
GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING AND RESOLVING AUTHORSHIP DISPUTES

As of June 1, 2017

Customs governing authorship often vary widely by discipline and even by research group. Below are some general principles that all authors will find useful, regardless of their area of study.

Guidelines for Conducting Responsible Authorship

Adhering to the following guidelines will help to prevent situations that may lead to new authorship disputes:

1. Discuss Proactively

There should be early discussions of who will be an author and the possible order of authors. Criteria for authorship should be discussed before beginning to prepare a manuscript, and possibly even before starting a project.

Each party should have an understanding of what kind of work merits authorship, with the knowledge that, as the research project progresses, who is an author and the position of a name in a list of authors may change. Each party should also have an understanding of who among many authors will have primary responsibility for the writing, submission, and editing work required for a paper. This can be extremely important when a project involves collaborations between labs.

2. Be Consistent

Determination of authorship and authorship order should be **consistent**, both within the research group and with the norms for the field.

3. Understand the Rules

All authors should be aware of institutional and journal-specific policies and guidelines regarding authorship. All Thomas Jefferson University authors should review and follow the institution's [Authorship Policy](#).

4. Communicate

The criteria for authorship should be discussed and agreed upon in writing as part of the initial planning process for the research project.

As the project and/or the manuscript evolves, authorship should be revisited as needed. There should be discussion and agreement as to the critical elements/data that will be included in the publication.

Resolving Disputes

Typically, authors should first attempt to resolve disputes about who should be an author and the authorship order within the research or work group. For instances when you are a subordinate or a student, resolving authorship disputes can be particularly difficult. When possible, discuss the issue with a supervisor, laboratory chief, advisor, or mentor. Try to resolve the issue within the research or work group. If there is a persistent disagreement regarding authorship, it may help to discuss the issue with a senior colleague outside of the research or work group. If that is not effective, refer to Section VII, Dispute Resolutions of the University's Authorship policy (**Policy No. 110.04**).

Failure to adhere to this criteria when granting authorship, for example: unequal application of authorship criteria, granting of authorship to undeserving individuals, and/or omitting individuals who deserve authorship, are serious concerns and should be avoided.

Prepared by the Office of Research Conduct and Compliance, Thomas Jefferson University

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