collaborative academic authorship

The Authorship Project: A Charlotte Initiative to Support Healthy Authorship Practices

Dr. Lisa Rasmussen, PI

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the authorship project
Supporting open, transparent authorship practices
in research collaborations.

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Pilot survey on authorship ethics at Charlotte

47% of trainees (**41%** of faculty) reported problems with authorship order

27% of trainees (**32%** of faculty) reported problems with wrongful author inclusion

26% of trainees (**28%** of faculty) reported problems with wrongful author exclusion

"The few times I have brought up these issues with new faculty, I was told to mind my own business and that I didn't 'understand how the system works'."

- student quote

Products of The Authorship Project:

- Charlotte Authorship Policy and Dispute Resolution Procedures
- Authorship Agreement
- Canvas course for students
- Short Canvas course for faculty coming soon

UNC Charlotte "Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures"

https://legal.charlotte.edu/policies/up-318

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE | Authorship Policy & Resolution Procedures

University Policy #318

Section I Policy Statement & Purpose

Research contributes to the public fund of knowledge when the results are published, presented, or otherwise disseminated. With that step, researchers take public responsibility for the work. This responsibility includes both credit and accountability, and is typically conveyed by being named an author.

However, the role authorship plays in careers, awards, grants, and the like means that the stakes are high, and authorship decisions can easily hamper and conflict among collaborators. This conflict may in turn negatively affect relationships between faculty and students or between collaborators within the institution, across the country, or internationally. Vulnerable groups, such as graduate students, post-doctoral students, junior faculty, or those underrepresented in the academy, can be most at risk in such conflicts. In the worst cases, these disputes can end projects or lead to publication retractions. Although many disciplines and journals articulate authorship standards, collaborators may not be aware of them and may even disagree about them (for example, due to different disciplinary authorship practices), leaving authorship assumptions among collaborators legally untested.

Because institutions have an interest in and are sometimes responsible for resolving authorship disputes, it is important to establish policy to support good authorship processes and address potential disputes. This Policy is part of UNC Charlotte's commitment to fostering a culture of transparency, openness, and research integrity. The Policy is intended to help reinforce healthy, transparent authorship practices that can prevent disputes and to offer clear processes to resolve them if they occur. It includes productive and historically successful approaches to co-authorship and mediating authorship disputes.

Section II Definitions

In cases in which a manuscript has been submitted for publication consideration, the Corresponding Author is the person who identified themselves as responsible for communicating between the publisher and collaborators on the project.

Generally, the designation of an individual as Lead Author refers to an individual who has taken a prominent role in the generation of ideas for and conduct of the research, as well as in drafting the manuscript in question, but the criteria for designation of Lead Author may vary by discipline.

In sponsored research, the Principal Investigator is the individual usually identified as such on the grant proposal for which the research is a part. However, an individual who leads a research project may occasionally be identified as a Principal Investigator even if the research project is not sponsored by external funding.

Section III Scope & Applicability

This Policy applies to UNC Charlotte faculty (as defined in University Policy 302.0), Tenure Policies, Regulations, and Procedures), staff, and students conducting research, scholarship, or other creative academic activity as part of their employment or enrollment at UNC Charlotte, as well as potential disputes between individuals in these categories (e.g., faculty/student or faculty/faculty collaborations). Authorship disputes covered by this Policy include disputes that occur pre- and post-publication.

This Policy is distinct from University Policy 309, Responding to Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Scholarship. Prior to initiating an authorship dispute process under this Policy in which research integrity might be implicated, the Research Integrity Officer and the Dean of the Graduate School should discuss the case to make a determination about the appropriate process to be applied.

This Policy is also distinct from University Policy 407, Code of Student Academic Integrity. Prior to initiating an authorship dispute process under this Policy in which student academic integrity is at issue, the Dean of the Graduate School should discuss the case with the Director of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity to make a determination about the appropriate process to be applied.

Policy Features

- Aims to foster good practices
- Provides for a dispute resolution process
- Acknowledges appropriate disciplinary variation
- Rehearses common requirements for authorship (e.g., “significant contribution”)
- Rehearses common prohibitions (e.g., guest/ghost authorship)
- Recommends positive practices (e.g., authorship agreements, frequent and open conversations)
- Provides for non-binding dispute resolution

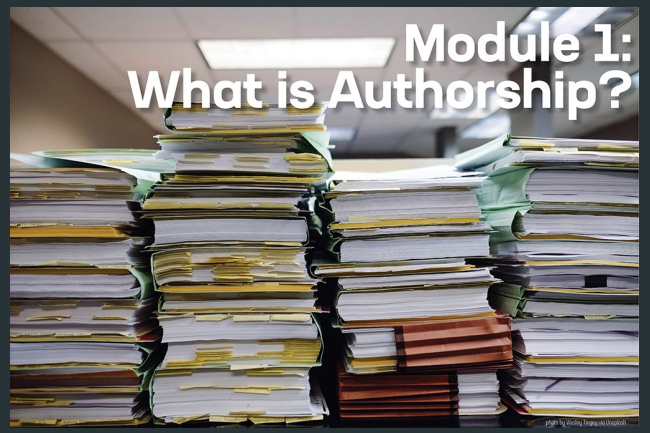
UNC Charlotte Authorship Agreement

FEATURES:

- Living document – not a contract
- Structured as prompts for discussion
- Emphasizes the need to discuss early in and throughout a collaboration
- Asks collaborators to articulate:
  - Dissemination goals and timing
  - Chosen authorship standards
  - Tentative author list and tasks

https://tinyurl.com/3uud5rmz

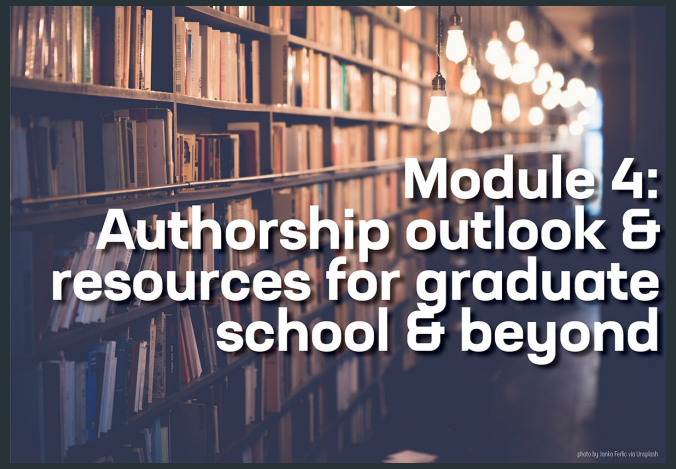
Authorship course: Canvas-based educational modules



Common terms, common authorship criteria, differences in conventions by disciplines.

Ethical authorship. Ethical concerns presented via podcast-style media—employs real stories captured in our survey; case studies.

Handling authorship challenges. Complexities in authorship decisions, how to justify decisions, identification of unethical practices. Interactive simulation allows for student practice.



Resources. UNC Charlotte Authorship policy, Authorship Agreement form

Our Requests:

- Recommend that Chairs and/or GPDs invite us to their units for a quick chat about authorship
- Consider how the authorship agreement might fit in Graduate School requirements.

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The authors do not speak for either institution.

I have no conflicts of interest or commitment to declare.