University Recommendations on Authorship

Introduction

A key expectation of faculty, staff, and students at a research university is that they will author publications, creative work, and other scholarly products. Recognizing that authorship issues can be complicated, and norms can vary between disciplines, Stony Brook University encourages its faculty, staff, and students to engage in proactive discussions of authorship.

Applicability

These recommendations apply to all participants at Stony Brook University engaged in the publication of research, defined broadly as all forms of scholarly investigation or creative work.

Academic units are encouraged to develop additional “best practices” recommendations regarding authorship for their faculty, staff, and students that address discipline-specific issues.

The term "publication" as used in this statement is meant to include any manner of report, paper, manuscript, article, book, patent, chapter, treatise, lecture notes or slides, video or multimedia presentations, exhibit, creation, composition, performance, or other publishable/publicly presented product whether printed or digital in format.

Purpose and Expectations

Authorship assignments should honestly reflect actual contributions as a function of the ethical conduct of scholarship. Authorship explicitly assigns both credit and responsibility for intellectual and creative works.

These recommendations support those scholarly values. They are intended to eliminate authorship assignment rooted in power inequities (i.e., prejudiced by academic position, rank, or other hierarchical considerations), inappropriate practices, and conflicts of interest in the presentation of scholarly findings.

Participants are expected to engage in the idea generation, scholarly activities, and publication development process in open and clear communication about the assignment of authorship roles with their potential publishing colleagues. To reduce ambiguity and conflict arising later in the publication process, it is recommended that written agreements be established early in the scholarship process. These agreements should specify the details of authorship and expectations of individual contributions are recommended to reduce ambiguity and conflict later in the process.

Participants should also keep in mind that, depending on the nature, complexity and longevity of the project, new participants may be added as the project unfolds. For that reason, changes in authorship (additions, deletions, and order) may become necessary. If one collaborator seeks a change in authorship (either inclusion, exclusion or ordering of authors) participants should engage in an open discussion. If an authorship agreement exists, it should be revisited with the inclusion of all relevant parties.

Attribution of Authorship

Authorship should be limited to those who meet both of the following criteria and expectations; all those who meet these standards should be included as an author:

* Significant sustained intellectual contribution to a project through conception and design, or data acquisition, data analysis, or interpretation of findings; and
* Ability to identify their own contribution, and accept responsibility for its integrity and credibility, and defend the major aspects of the project presented in the publication, although not necessarily all the technical details.
* In addition, it is expected that all authors will be aware of the writing process and agree on the division of responsibilities. Authors should be given adequate opportunity to participate in the drafting of the manuscript (or substantive revision of its scholarly content). They should also have the opportunity to approve the final version of the manuscript to be published, preferably in an explicit fashion.

Sole provision of logistical, financial, administrative input without significant intellectual support or other contributions (as indicated earlier in this document) should not constitute a valid basis for authorship. Recognition of these types of input is appropriate for the acknowledgements section of a publication.

Practices Inconsistent with These Recommendations

The following are examples of acts that are inconsistent with these recommendations.

* Exclusion of a person as author who meets the criteria defined above in the Attribution of Authorship section.
* Acceptance or ascription of an honorary authorship. Honorary (guest, courtesy, or prestige) authorship is granting authorship out of appreciation or respect for an individual, or in the belief that the expert standing of the honored person will increase the likelihood of publication, credibility, or status of the work even in the absence of significant intellectual contribution.
* Acceptance or ascription of a gift authorship. Gift authorship is authorship granted within the context of an anticipated benefit (e.g., reciprocal gift authorship or enhanced citation counts) to an individual who has not appropriately contributed to the work.
* Acceptance or ascription of a ghost authorship. Ghost authorship is the failure to identify as an author someone who has made substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript. This includes circumstances, for example, in which someone might be hired to create or improve a product with an understanding that no author credit will be assigned.

Dispute Resolution

A person who believes their authorship rights have been violated or who wishes to report other improper authorship practices should first attempt pursuing informal/collegial resolution of the issue within the research group, through discussions with a senior colleague/mentor external to the research group, through facilitated discussion with a disinterested party such as the institution’s Ombuds officer and/or through departmental or collegiate channels (e.g., supervisor, graduate program director, thesis committee chair, departmental chair, dean or equivalent within their units).

If informal resolution does not succeed, procedures for formal resolution may be found in appropriate university publications (e.g., the [Undergraduate Bulletin](https://www.stonybrook.edu/sb/bulletin/current/policiesandregulations/policies_expectations/responsibilities_integrity.php), [Graduate Bulletin](https://www.stonybrook.edu/sb/graduatebulletin/current/regulations/academic_probation/appeals.php), and the [Research Misconduct Policy](https://research.stonybrook.edu/research-misconduct)).

Note: These recommendations are adapted and modified with permission from Iowa State University.