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## Authorship Guidelines for Faculty Collaborating with Students and Professionals Collaborating with Other Professionals

The NBASLH Advisory Council on Ethical Conduct


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Publications and presentations are the primary means for disseminating scholarly information and advancing research. Authorship establishes professional credibility and delineates the individuals responsible for developing and implementing the research. Publications and presentations are often a major determinant of advancement in the academic setting. The issue of authorship in collaborative research endeavors between faculty and students, therefore, is of interest and concern.

Authorship and other publication credits reflect actual scientific or professional contributions, regardless of an individual's profession, job, or institutional status. Graduate and undergraduate students are frequently members of research teams; however, they are not in a position to advocate for the recognition of their scholarly contributions to work conducted with and/or supervised by more senior level researchers or academicians. The most serious outcome of this situation is that the students carry out the work, but do not receive recognition for their efforts in the form of authorship.

### ***Purpose of Guidelines***

These guidelines will help those who contribute to the development of a scholarly manuscript or presentation to be aware of what constitutes the responsibilities of being an author, and the criteria for students receiving credit for authorship. The primary purpose of these guidelines is to encourage open discussion and proper crediting of authorship based on substantive contributions to a paper or presentation submitted for review by other professional peers.

Fine and Kurdek (1993), who have written on these issues, offer the following remarks on faculty-student publications, "To be included as an author on a scholarly publication, a student should, in a cumulative sense, make a professional contribution that is creative and intellectual in nature, that is integral to completion of the paper, and that requires an overarching perspective of the project. Examples of professional contributions include developing the research design, writing portions of the manuscript,

integrating diverse theoretical perspectives, developing new conceptual models, designing assessments, contributing to data analysis decision, and interpreting results..." (p. 1145).

### ***Ethical Issues in Determining Authorship Credit on Faculty-Student Collaborative Projects***

The ethical dilemmas that arise when faculty collaborate with students on projects that result in a publication or presentation stem from the unique nature of the faculty-student relationship. Although collaboration between two professionals can occur on an egalitarian basis, collaboration between faculty and their students is inherently unequal. Fine and Kurdek (1993) believe that there are several potential ethical dilemmas in faculty-student collaborations. The primary dilemma arises when faculty take authorship credit that was earned by the student. Many of the authorship-related issues identified in the literature, or by students, concern faculty taking a level of authorship credit that was not merited and not giving students appropriate credit. Another dilemma, which is opposite to the first, occurs when students are granted undeserved authorship credit. There are three reasons why this dilemma is an ethical one. First, a publication that is not legitimately earned may misrepresent the student's scholarly expertise. Second, if, because they are now a published author, the student is perceived as being more skilled than a peer who is not published, the student is given an unfair advantage professionally. Finally, if the student is perceived to have a level of competence that they do not actually have, they will be expected to accomplish tasks that may be outside their range of expertise.

### ***Ethical Principles in Determining Authorship Credit and Order on Faculty-Student Collaborative Projects***

Two ethical principles may be relevant to ethical dilemmas that arise with regard to authorship on faculty-student collaborative projects: beneficence and justice (Fine & Kurdek, 1993). These principles, from which codes of ethics have been developed, may provide guidance when the codes themselves are inadequate (Kitchener, 1984). To be beneficent is to do good for others, to do no harm. In the context of

the authorship issue, beneficence implies that faculty should grant students authorship credit and first author status when they are deserved. Justice, the second ethical principle, refers to the ethical duty to treat others fairly and to give them what they deserve. Kitchener (1984) states that the formal meaning of justice is “treating equals equally and unequals unequally but in proportion to their relevant differences” (p. 49). If an individual is to be treated differently, the rationale for this difference must be clear. In the authorship setting, if students are not considered to be meaningfully different from professional colleagues, then they should be awarded authorship credit and order on the same basis as those of nonstudent colleagues.

#### ***Determination of Authorship Credit and Order on Faculty-Student Collaborative Projects***

Authorship should be discussed early in the development of the project work and reviewed periodically for changes in participation and contribution of relevant parties to the work and any subsequent publications or presentations. Students should be considered as the principal author on any multiple-author article that is substantially based on the student’s dissertation or thesis (or other research project) – *except in instances where the student voluntarily agrees not to be first author*. Any professional dissemination of work completed by a student should be worthy of either authorship or other acknowledgement.

#### ***Authorship Guidelines for Publication of Research from Doctoral Dissertations and Master’s Theses***

Although guidelines for authorship on publications resulting from doctoral dissertation research are listed by selected institutions, they generally are not published or formally addressed by institutions. It is generally assumed, however, that the doctoral candidate who holds the copyright on the dissertation will be the lead author on publications based on the dissertation research. The dissertation is often the primary culminating research experience for many doctoral students, and publication of the resulting

research is an important component of that experience. It is appropriate for the doctoral candidate to be the sole author on any research publication resulting from the dissertation. In many instances, the doctoral candidate will ask their faculty mentor to co-author a publication based on the dissertation. It is important to acknowledge that this is an option, not a requirement. What is most important is that the doctoral student is the lead author. The only time this is not the case is if the doctoral candidate simply will not or does not take the initiative in publishing the research. In some situations, a doctoral student may not be able or willing to prepare a manuscript for publication. In these situations, faculty mentors may assume a leadership author role in publishing the research. In such cases because the student holds the copyright on the dissertation, legally they must give permission to the faculty author(s). The expectation is that this would be an atypical occurrence (Wiley, 2019).

Copyright control also applies to manuscripts for theses. The expectations regarding publication will typically differ for master's theses and doctoral dissertations based primarily on the stage of scientific development for the student researcher. After completing their master's thesis, some students may decide not to pursue a research career and have little or no interest in publishing the results of their theses. These masters-level students may be qualified to submit a manuscript as a first author alone or with faculty mentors as collaborative authors. Then again, some masters-level students may not be adequately prepared to develop a manuscript for publication on an independent basis or even as a first author on collaborative research published from a thesis. The hope would be one that the thesis writer serves as the first author for any manuscript that results from the thesis research. If this is not possible, and the possibility has been methodically thought through and discussed, then a faculty mentor may serve as the first author. If this is done, the acknowledgments should clearly state that the manuscript is based on the research from the master's thesis of the author of the thesis and is being put forward for publication with their consent (Wiley, 2019).

***Options for Students Denied Authorship Credit***

If a student member of NBASLH believes that they have been inappropriately denied authorship credit by a university faculty member or other researcher, there are several options they can take to possibly remedy the situation.

1. Discuss the facts with their mentors or other faculty members.
2. Discuss the facts with the chair of the department.
3. Submit a grievance against the faculty member involved through the grievance process at their university.
4. If the faculty member is either certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) or licensed by the state in which they work, submit an ethics complaint to the ASHA Board of Ethics and/or the state licensing body.

Once again, if authorship has been discussed early in the development of the project work and reviewed periodically for changes in participation and contribution of relevant parties to the work and any subsequent publications or presentations, this outcome may be avoided.

***Determination of Authorship for All Professionals***

Authorship disputes are not uncommon. For a researcher or academician, career advancement often depends on a publication record. Individuals want to receive due credit for the work that they have done, and in this case, in the form of being a named author on a presentation or published paper. During research collaborations, questions arise about authorship, such as who qualifies as an author? Is the supervisor of a laboratory or division included in the author list? How does everyone receive the appropriate amount of credit, while ensuring no unethical behavior occurs?

The same fundamental rule about authorship applies regardless of the professionals conducting the research or the setting in which the research is conducted. Authorship should be discussed early in the development of the project work and reviewed periodically for changes in participation and contributions of the relevant parties to the work. Notes should be kept about these discussions. The order of authorship may not necessarily indicate the magnitude of the contributions of the individual authors. Authors should adhere to the norm of their discipline and the publisher's guidelines (North Carolina A&T University, 2019). The following are suggestions for determining order (North Carolina A&T University, 2019, p. 6):

- The person who has made the major contribution to the product and/or taken the lead in writing should be first author.
- Authors who have made major contributions to analysis, interpretation or writing may be listed immediately following the first author.
- The person who has general responsibility for the project is frequently listed last.
- Individuals who fulfill the criteria for authorship may be listed in alphabetical order.

It is not appropriate or ethical to deny authorship to any contributor who carries out a substantial amount of a project's data collection, data analysis and/or drafting of the work the final presentation or publication is based on.

### ***Examples of Authorship Misconduct***

Fraudulent authorship and misrepresentation are generally considered to be misconduct. The following scenarios are examples of authorship misconduct (The Royal Society Blog, 2022):

**Ghost authorship:** when someone who actively participated in the research, and who meets the authorship criteria, is not included in the author list.

**Guest authorship:** when researchers (typically those who are senior) are included in the author list because of their respect or influence, in the hope that this will increase the likelihood of acceptance of the presentation or publication.

**Gift authorship:** when an individual who did not contribute to the manuscript is listed as an author for some personal reason or possible financial gain.

Should this authorship misconduct occur, it is recommended bringing to all co-authors' attention that fraudulent authorship is considered to be scientific misconduct by most journal editors and professional associations (Committee on Professional Ethics, 2023; The Royal Society Blog, 2022).

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### Additional Resources

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