

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

AUTHORSHIP POLICY



Research Management Office

©February 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

Determining authorship of research publications is fundamental to upholding research integrity, recognizing substantive scholarly contributions, and giving credit for original intellectual work. Individual actual contribution(s) must be fairly and conscientiously reflected in line with global best practices guiding academic publishing. Many peer-review journals and institutional publishing houses have statutory standards with key principles for authorship.

Traditionally, international best practices for academic publishing demonstrates that, clear communication of guidelines and key principles at the inception of projects helps to promote successful collaborative publishing devoid of potential conflicts of interests. In practice, undue gratifications and inducements have fostered authorship practices that fall short of these standards. Whereas plagiarism, publishing in predatory journals, and gift authorship characterize some unprofessional and substandard practices, there is a growing need for Universities to clearly communicate policies and guidelines to improve the credibility of intellectual work, promote competitiveness for publication or funding, improve visibility through readership and avoid interpersonal conflict.

It is important that collaborators discuss general requirements for authorship of manuscript(s) that will result from any joint research or project. However, the decision on who will, or will not be an author must be in accordance with global best practice. Where there are misunderstandings or grey areas, it is recommended that the group(s) seek clear guidance from policy documents and/or institutional units with the responsibility to articulate directions. It is not uncommon for disagreements to arise regarding who should be named as a contributor to, or an author of intellectual work and/or the order in which authors should be listed. Often, such disputes are as a consequence of failed communication and being oblivious of standard expectations.

This Policy document is meant to serve as guidelines that are shared by the University of Lagos' academic community, to facilitate awareness of standard principles, encourage open communication, and promote compliance through adherence to global best practices. The guidelines herein shall apply to all intellectual products emanating from University of Lagos faculty, published or created for local use and/or for international dissemination. Discussion concerning the principles of authorship outlined in this document should be integrated into all courses regarding responsible conduct of research, and publishing at the University of Lagos.

1.1 Applicability

These Guidelines apply to all faculty members, undergraduate students, postgraduate students (including postgraduate taught – MSc/MA and postgraduate research students – Ph.D.), researchers (including research fellows, and postdoctoral researchers), and staff.

- 1.1.1. Legal ownership of research data and materials produced in the course of University of Lagos research activities resides with the University and not with the individual investigator.

- 1.1.2. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigators (PIs) to design an ethical, unbiased, and transparent approach to authorship and publication of manuscript resulting from a research work
- 1.1.3. The University of Lagos (UNILAG) acknowledges and appreciates that versions vary considerably across disciplines and institutions regarding authorship order. However, where the collaborators agree on an order at variance with UNILAG's customary way of deciding the order of authorship, the collaborators should endeavor to collectively sign a no conflict of interest document before proceeding with the publication. The Research Management Office shall also be communicated with clear justifications for the agreement.
- 1.1.4. It is strongly recommended that researchers follow instructions from the authors guidelines section of the journals in which they planned to publish as well as follow guidelines for publication set by the funders of their research.

1.2. Criteria for Authorship

UNILAG recommends that authorship be based on the evidence of substantial contribution to the conception, design, and implementation of the work; including data acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND drafting of manuscript or critical revision of manuscript for important intellectual content.

- 1.2.1. For work conducted by research groups, authorship criteria must be discussed and agreed upon by all members of the group as early as possible.
- 1.2.2. Where there is potential for continuation of the work in the future and the possibilities of additional publications from such continuation, authorship credit/criteria should involve explicit discussion of expectations for continued collaboration by members of the group.
- 1.2.3. Where a contributor who would under normal circumstances be considered an author leaves the project or institution during the conduct of the work, the group must decide if the contributions made so far by such a member is sufficient enough to earn an authorship position on the publication.
- 1.2.4. Research groups may consider having a written guiding document in place, and ensure to include the clear communication of such mutually binding documents in its orientation of new group members.
- 1.2.5. Faculty members, staff members or researchers who are in collaboration with groups in other institutions are expected to adhere to good publication practices, including maintaining research integrity in academic publishing, and ensuring that significant contributions are made to warrant their expectations of authorship.
- 1.2.6. UNILAG authors must be open to being accountable for all aspects of the work claimed as contribution(s) and ensure that responsibility is taken regarding the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work indicated as their contribution.

1.3. Gift and Ghost Authorship

Individuals who have made valuable contribution to the work but do not meet the requirements for authorship, should be acknowledged for their role and contribution to the publication.

- 1.3.1. Gift authorship should not be conferred on individuals who have not made contributions to the work, or whose intellectual contributions are not significant enough to justify being listed as an author. For example, referral of participants to participate in a study, supporting the data collection and management processes, making minor edits to a completed manuscript, are activities unlikely to merit authorship.
- 1.3.2. While individuals who make such modest efforts (as cited in 1.3.1) do not qualify as co-authors, their efforts could be appropriately acknowledged in the completed paper or presentation.
- 1.3.3. Ghost authorship involves intentionally not identifying, acknowledging (or not listing) someone as co-author despite the person's substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript. It also includes hiring authors with the understanding that they will not be mentioned as authors on the published manuscript. The University of Lagos is against the practice of Ghost authorship and confirmation of any allegation of Ghost authorship might attract penalties.
- 1.3.4. Under no circumstance should any individual be added as co-authors based on the individual's profile, public reputation, or popularity as an attempt to increase the likelihood of the manuscript being accepted or credibility of the work.
- 1.3.5. Senior faculty members should not be named as co-authors on work independently generated by their junior colleagues if they have not made major and meaningful intellectual contributions to the research and manuscript preparation.
- 1.3.6. Authorship is not a right that is tied to a position or a profession (such as Dean) or association with the first author (Principal Investigator) but by intellectual input into the work.

1.4. Order of Authorship

The order of academic authorship vary widely between disciplines, research groups, and countries. Some authorship policies reflect descending order of contribution, placing the Lead author (or Principal Investigator) first and the most experienced contributor last, while others use alphabetical or random order.

- 1.4.1. The UNILAG Promotion Committees' scoring system for the assessment of publications recognizes the order of authorship (please see section 6 of this document) as interpretations of the respective contributions of individual authors are inferred from the order of authorship.

- 1.4.2. A description of the contributions of each author and how they have assigned the order in which they are listed should be specified in their manuscript to enable readers interpret their roles correctly.
- 1.4.3. The lead author is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the work as well as ensuring that co-authors meet all requirements for authorship as well as itself.
- 1.4.4. The University expects that faculty who are co-authors are responsible for considering their role in the project and that their role merits attribution of authorship.
- 1.4.5. External Collaborators who meet the criteria of authorship should be listed as co-authors irrespective of their institutional affiliations or acknowledged in final publication.

1.5. Acknowledgements

- 1.5.1. Individuals who have provided some small-scale contribution to the work but who do not meet the necessary requirements to be listed as co-authors should be acknowledged for their role as appropriate to the publication.
- 1.5.2. Authors should acknowledge the source(s) of funding and support in all scholarly publications. This includes, but not limited to: research grant (local or international grants), contract, laboratory access, gift support, and other than intangible support.
- 1.5.3. Where the research was supported by more than one funding agency, the different agencies should be mentioned in the acknowledgment section, and the grant numbers specified.
- 1.5.4. Where there are any concerns that the provision of details regarding funding information or support from agencies may compromise the anonymity dependent on the peer review policy of a desired journal house, the information should be withheld until the final accepted manuscript is submitted.

2. STUDENT ATTRIBUTION OF AUTHORSHIP

- 2.1. A student may be the first author on manuscripts derived from their thesis - where significant intellectual contribution has been made by the student; such as having a leading role in the conception, design, analysis, and interpretation of data.
- 2.2. A student and supervisor must reach agreement, in writing, regarding the authorship on any publication from the student's thesis. The confirmation and expectations of authorship must be discussed and agreed by both parties prior to the award of the degree.
- 2.3. It is important to distinguish between work that is produced from (or part of) a student's research/work, and work that is produced for publication from a related study indirectly involving the student as part of the student's professional development or mentoring. The

distinction should be clearly communicated to the student. However, in any situation the student's contribution, if significant, shall justify inclusion as a co-author.

2.4. It is the responsibility of the student to publish any work undertaken in part fulfilment for the award of a degree. In essence, students must be the first authors of their thesis or other similar work required for a qualification.

2.5. In most cases, especially in academic publishing, the first author on a published article is usually the one who has conducted the research, developed the manuscript and edited the paper. While co-authors often contribute in a lesser capacity, this is not always the case for all disciplines. To this end, supervisors should encourage the prospective first author (student) to fulfil the criteria for first authorship as it pertains to making the most significant contribution.

2.6. Supervisors contribute intellectually to a student's research, and as such, their co-authorship with the student should be recognized. The University of Lagos recognizes joint publication between a student and supervisor as an expected output from the supervisory relationship

When staff and students work collaboratively on a publication, it is recommended that:

- (i) The supervisor's co-authorship correlates with the contribution made
- (ii) The UNILAG staff member/supervisor shall be the corresponding author.

3. AUTHORSHIP MANAGEMENT

3.1. All research undertaken by UNILAG researchers or members of staff, when published, must include the institutional affiliation - "University of Lagos" and the name of the relevant Department, Research Institute, or Centre.

3.2. All collaborating researchers (including students) must discuss authorship and the order of authorship, and reach a consensus at the initial stage of the project.

3.3. The University recognizes that the order of authorship may vary between established conventions of the discipline and the publisher's imperative. It may also be in the order of contribution from each listed author, or in some instances as an alphabetical listing. However, it is important to note that the University's promotion committee would customarily accord level of recognition to order of authorship in a descending order (i.e first authors are perceived as having made the largest contribution), and allotted the highest score in assessment.

3.4. Decisions pertaining to authorship order must be reviewed as and when necessary, and collectively agreed by members of the team before submission for peer review, and/or final publication.

3.5. All authors must retain a copy of all discussions, documentations, decisions and disputes, as well as acknowledging authorship (either by signing an electronic or hard copy of copyright form), and no conflict of interest form.

3.6. All authors offered discounted Article Processing Charges (APC) or a complete waiver of APC, who require Institutional Support Letters (ISL) as a proof of affiliation to the University of Lagos, can obtain the ISL (signed by the Director) from the Research Management Office.

3.7. The University of Lagos is strongly against faculty and/or researchers publication of plagiarised materials

3.8 Recycling of one's own published materials (manuscripts) is objectionable and shall be treated as unacceptable duplication of publication.

3.9. In the event an author is deceased or cannot be contacted (despite all reasonable efforts to do so), the publication process is allowed to proceed on the condition that all other authors have no grounds to believe that the person would have raised any objection to their inclusion as an author.

3.10. Should there be any reason to communicate with the Research Management Office, the corresponding author responsible for all communications and record keeping with the journal house or publisher shall also act as the corresponding author with the Research Management Office.

3.11. All authors must ensure that all publications are recorded in the University's electronic/online database of Publication repository managed by the University. This information system in turn ensures that research publications are made available online and enhances the University's research visibility.

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN PUBLISHING

4.1. Conflicts related to authorship

Conflict of interest related to authorship are not uncommon and could arise at any time during the research or scholarly process. In the event of conflicting interests, UNILAG recommends adherence to the following procedures:

4.1.1. Amicable resolution and mutual agreement is strongly encouraged through open collegial discourse.

4.1.2. The current policy document and documented customary practices in the relevant discipline should be explored.

4.1.3. An invitation could be extended to a mutually agreed upon academic party outside the group; who is familiar with publication norms in the field to informally serve as a neutral facilitator.

4.1.4. Alternatively, the Research Management Office (RMO) is open to serving as a neutral facilitator to review any prior decisions among authors, including verbal or written agreements and recommending solutions.

4.1.5. Should disputes arise over position of first authorship or order of authorship, the Director, RMO and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics and Research) [DVC-AR], should in the first instance, facilitate negotiation among the parties. If the dispute is not resolved, the DVC-AR or the Director, RMO shall appoint an independent mediator. Outcomes of the negotiation must be consistent with this policy.

4.1.6. Where the partnership involves members from a single (same) department, department-level resolution should be initiated before exploring the options stated above (in Sections 4.1.4 & 4.1.5). In this case, the authors should engage their Head of Department (HOD) to facilitate a resolution of the dispute in a way and manner acceptable to all parties, provided that the HOD is not a direct party to the dispute and does not otherwise have any conflict of interest.

4.1.7. If multiple departments from the same Faculty are involved in the dispute, the parties may opt to seek the guidance of the Dean of the Faculty or the Provost (if in the Faculty of Medicine) before exploring the options stated above (in Sections 4.1.4 & 4.1.5).

4.1.8. The Research Management Office is a resource available to all members of the University of Lagos and can act as a neutral party where necessary to mediate disputes at any point in the process. The Office may invite the concerned authors/researchers involved to assist them in amicably resolving issues around conflict of interests or disputes with publishing.

4.1.9. If the dispute involves a Ph.D. student and his/her Supervisor, the student should first consult the Postgraduate School dissertation committee. If the conflict is not resolved at this level, then the Dean of the PG school should be notified for necessary action. If it remains unresolved, the Director of the Research Management Office should be contacted to facilitate resolution.

4.2. Grievances prior to publication

4.2.1. If amicable resolution is not reached in an authorship conflict involving collaboration with other institutions, the dispute will be managed by the institution of the Principal Investigator. The Director of Research at the University of Lagos shall be informed and kept in the loop if the dispute is being managed by an institution outside UNILAG, and informed of the resolution when reached.

4.2.2. If the Co-authors are all members of staff of UNILAG from different disciplines, the matter should be referred to the Dean of the Faculty of the First Author/Principal Investigator or Lead Author. However, where the dispute involves who becomes the First (or Lead) Author, the matter shall be referred to the Director, Research Management Office who will review the matter and attempt to resolve it. The process should take no more than 2 weeks (10 working) days and an official letter on the outcome of their review shall be communicated to the authors. A copy of letter shall be retained at the Research Management Office.

- 4.2.3. Where the dispute involves ownership of a patent and/or innovation, the Director (or Deputy Director) Innovation and Technology Management Office shall be involved in the dispute resolution, and a copy of the Letter retained at the Innovation and Technology Management Office.
- 4.2.4. If the Director, Research Management Office is unable to resolve the grievance, the Director shall refer the matter to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics & Research) [DVC (A&R)] or to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Development Services) [DVC (DS)] where the matter relates to Patents/Innovation.
- 4.2.5. To enhance an objective resolution, relevant supporting documents must be presented. These include but not limited to copies of key documents that show how each author has met the criteria for authorship attribution and evidences of contribution(s) made by each author. The DVC (A&R), DVC (DS) will review the presented documents and make definitive verdict which may include removing those researchers that are deemed as failing to meet the authorship criteria or acknowledging their contributions, if appropriate. The DVC (A&R), or DVC (DS) may seek advice from an independent expert (as required) to assist them in making their final decision.
- 4.2.6. Under no circumstance should the research output be published without all authors agreeing on the authorship (or order of authorship) of the publication.

4.3. Authorship disputes post publication

- 4.3.1. If an individual has concerns regarding the authorship of an existing publication (either involving the individual as co-author or not involving the individual), they should refer their concern through a formal memo to the Director, Research Management Office.
- 4.3.2. The Director, Research Management Office will consider the matter and will either proceed as above or refer to research misconduct committee.

5. AUTHORSHIP AND RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

5.1 Authorship concerns and disputes do not constitute an allegation of research misconduct except in cases where there has been a deliberate and/or reckless breach of the Academic Authorship Policy.

5.2. Authorship research misconduct is ascribed if there is the intentional attribution of authorship to those that do not meet the criteria for authorship. It could also be ascribed where there has been deliberate omission of authors who had made significant contribution.

5.3. All allegations of research misconduct in relation to the attribution or omission of authorship shall be reported as outlined in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

6. ASSESSMENT OF PUBLICATIONS FOR PROMOTION

6.1. Recognized Publications

Council approved that recognized publications are those which are refereed or peer-reviewed. They are:

- I. Articles in recognized Learned Journals or Journals located in Universities or Research Institutes of equivalent status
- II. Books that are reviewed in Scholarly Journals (with evidence attached)
- III. Recognized Conference proceedings
- IV. Edited books from which not more than two articles should be credited to each author/contributor

6.2. Assessment of Non-Professorial Cadre:

Council also upheld the extant regulation on recognized publications as contained in the Condition of Service Governing Senior Staff Chapter II, Section 4, subsection (d) (i) and (ii) which categorized publications as follows:

- i. Non-Professorial Grade: recognized publications are:
 - (a) Matters published in scholarly journals or by academically recognized publishers only
 - (b) Manuscript already accepted for publication, and
 - (c) Conference papers published in proceedings of the conference

N.B: The faculties concerned should be highly selective in deciding which of the published conference proceedings qualify under (c) above

6.3. Professorial Grade

Recognized publications include published books adjudged to be of high standards, and articles already in learned journals.

6.4. Listing of Authors

Council further approved that the listing of authors correspond to percentage contribution to the publication. It is important to note that an “author” is generally considered to be someone who

has made substantive intellectual contribution to a published study. Hence, authorship credit should be based on:

- i. Substantial contribution to conception, design of study, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data
- ii. Drafting of the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content
- iii. Contributing to the final approval of the version to be published

N.B: authors should meet conditions (i), (ii), and (iii) above

6.5. Minimum Points that must be scored under Publication

Council approved that the following points must be scored under publication and they are as follows:

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|-----------|
| i. | Professor | 70 points |
| ii. | Associate Professor | 50 points |
| iii. | Senior Lecturer | 30 points |
| iv. | Lecturer I | 10points |

The interpretation of the above as approved by the Council is that the minimum score of 70 points (as in the case of a Professor) is now equivalent to the minimum point of 24 out of 30 as currently practiced.

6.6. Minimum Quantum of Publications/Distribution

Council approved that the Minimum Quantum of Publications/Distribution is as follows:

- (i) Professor – Minimum of 22 publications out of which at least 6 must be international Publications
- (ii) Associate Professor – Minimum of 18 publications out of which at least 3 must be international publications
- (iii) Senior Lecturer – Minimum of 12 publications out of which at least 1 must be an international publication
- (iv) Lecturer I – Minimum of 5 publications

6.7. Criteria for Selecting Publications for Assessment

- 6.5.1. The Council of the University of Lagos approved that in considering publications for professorial appointments, the candidate **MUST** be the lead author in at least 30% of his publications (in the case of Professor); and 25% (in the case of

Associate Professor). The Lead Author should be the first listed author (where it is not so indicated in the publication).

- 6.5.2. In the case of a Senior Lecturer, the candidate MUST be the lead author in at least 15% of his publications
- 6.5.3. Not more than 30% of publications should come from one journal
- 6.5.4. Maximum of two (2) chapters in a book or volume of a journal
- 6.5.5. The maximum score obtainable in a publication is 5 points

6.8. Scoring of Publications with Joint Authorship

The Council approved that scoring of publications with joint authorship will be as follows

- (i) First Author:
First Author shall score up to a maximum of 80% of the score for the publication
- (ii) Second Author
Second Author shall score up to a maximum of 70% of the score for the publication
- (iii) Third Author
Third Author shall score up to a maximum of 60% of the score for the publication
- (iv) Fourth Author
Fourth Author shall score up to a maximum of 50% of the score for the publication
- (v) Fifth Author
Fifth Author shall score up to a maximum of 20% of the score for the publication

PROPOSED SCORING TEMPLATE

Authorship order vs Collaboration	Single Author***	Single discipline + Same Institution Co-author(s)	Single discipline + Multi-institution Local Co-author(s)	Multi-disciplinary + Same Institution Co-author(s)	Multi-disciplinary + Multi-institutional Local Co-author(s)	Same/Multi- disciplinary + International Co- author(s)
First Author	50%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%
Second Author	NA	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%
Third Author	NA	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%
Fourth Author	NA	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%
Fifth Author & beyond	NA	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%

***Except in Arts & Humanities where a score of 80% is allowed here