

Co-authorship Considerations and Guidelines

Faculty of Archaeology (Leiden University)

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Valid per 1-6-2021

I Background and Considerations

At the Faculty of Archaeology (FA), a number of incidents related to issues of authorship occurred in recent years call for an explicit set of guidelines. A basic set of Faculty co-authorship guidelines, applicable to 'humanities', 'heritage' and 'science' types of archaeological research, has been designed. These guidelines are a tool, designed for Faculty of Archaeology staff, aiming to 'protect and empower' (junior) researchers when discussing and negotiating co-authorship issues with senior staff and external (co-authoring) partners. It is recommended to act in the spirit of the Faculty guidelines, even when participating in a publication initiated by an external party.

The guidelines offer guidance in how and when to develop Research Output Plans and co-authorship agreements, and how to handle conflicts. The guidelines aim to manage expectations of all involved by agreeing upon an 'output and co-authorship plan' at the start of the project or program, well before the actual writing process. The key is in the plan, it determines what happens later - monitoring compliance to the agreements will be done by the participants. The plan can also be used in negotiations or to resolve disputes later on. A written agreement is specifically of importance in an unbalanced power relationship. By outlining all participants roles and associated tasks and responsibilities, as detailed as possible, and turn this into a document signed by all, clarity is provided.

The guidelines are valid per June 1, 2021, and will be evaluated after one year, in June 2022, within the Faculty PhD- and postdoc community and senior staf.

1. Co-authorship definition¹

Authors are writers, but where collaboration is the norm, writing is not always the only criterion for being included as an author. The listing of authors on the by-line of an article can lead to conflict. Young researchers do not always have much to say in the matter, and their contribution to the work may not receive the credit it deserves. Ghost authorship might also be an issue. Co-authorship is

¹ The text presented under the title: "Co-authorship definition" is partly a summary of the [PhDOnTrack](#) website.

sometimes handed out by supervisors or senior scholars to other (internal and external) collaborators for political purposes and /or for social capital, without the knowledge or consent of more junior co-authors.

The main problem of co-authorship is that some people may have contributed to the publication, but not enough to be on the by-line as an author. This has led to the establishment of a system where co-authorship is argued - based on nature and intensity of the contribution. Such a system would specify the individual contribution, and this information can be made available in the published work. Some journals have already implemented this for quite some time although it is by no means universal or a cure all. Contributors that do not fulfill the criteria for authorship should be mentioned in the acknowledgements instead. It is a step in the right direction as it requires co-authors to specify in print what their actual contribution was.

2. Ethical guidelines ²

The [Vancouver Protocol](#) (by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, ICMJE) defines the role of authors and contributors, and offers requirements and recommendations for the conduct, editing, and publication in medical journals. The ICMJE recommendations have become a standard in the medical discipline and are applied widely also to non-medical sciences. They are intended to ensure that contributors who have made substantial intellectual contributions to a paper are given credit as authors, and that authors take responsibility for what is published.

In social sciences and humanities, co-authorship is based on participating in the actual writing of a publication. Co-authors are usually listed alphabetically. A person that gives some kind of contribution to documentation, formulation of ideas for the analysis, comments on the writing, or technical help would not (always) qualify as an author, unless the person has also contributed substantially to the writing of the work, and are often mentioned in the acknowledgements.

For further information on co-authorship: see the [Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees](#) website, and American Psychological Association [guidelines](#).

2.1 Handling authorship disputes

Guidelines governing co-authorship vary between disciplines and even research groups. However, there are some general principles that you should be aware of in order to avoid authorship disputes, and how to resolve such disputes if they occur. Authorship disagreements tend to fall into two categories: *disputes* and *misconduct*. Disputes arise about whether someone's contribution is substantial enough to be included on the by-line (often a matter of individual interpretation). Such

² The text presented here is partly a summary of the Ethical guidelines paragraph on [PhDOnTrack](#) website.

disputes can often be solved by negotiation with the other members of the group to reach a consensus agreement.

Misconduct cases are those where someone is proposing an order of co-authors in a manner that does not conform with the guidelines of the journal, or that deliberately misrepresent the contributions of the involved parties. This may also concern the unjustified addition of an author who has not contributed substantially to (writing / editing of) the output (often the PI of a program). Another type of misconduct is to wrongly omit a person who has substantially contributed to the publication. One solution could be to explain to co-authors that the author list does not follow the guidelines of the journal, involving a risk that all authors could be considered guilty of misconduct.

In case of unresolved disputes, suspected misconduct, or violation of academic integrity:

- The [Confidential Counselor for PhDs](#) at the Faculty is the initial contact for PhDs to report conflicts or unsatisfactory outcomes of co-authorship discussions / agreements.
- Other staff can contact the LU Confidential Counselor. [The confidential counsellor for academic integrity](#) is the first port of call for any questions or situations relating to academic integrity. All meetings with the confidential counsellor are confidential.
- At Leiden University the [Academic Integrity Committee](#) investigates suspected violations of academic integrity by employees of Leiden University. The Committee is composed of professors from all faculties. Contact: Prof.dr [F. Koning](#).

For other action, see below: Guidelines Faculty of Archaeology, VI: Procedures and Monitoring.

II Co-authorship Guidelines Faculty of Archaeology

May 2021

The Faculty of Archaeology expects that all its researchers (including PhD students) underwrite and adopt the following guidelines³. Obviously, all (co-)authors should maximize awareness of journal- and publisher-specific guidelines.

I Definition of authorship: who will (not) be included?

Authorship is limited to those who have made a significant intellectual contribution to the tasks that lay at the basis of a publication: conceptualization (design), selecting / collecting data, interpreting and/or analyzing data, writing, commenting. At the start of the research project, conditions for co-authorship with external partners have to be discussed in detail, and an agreement is made, explicitly stating roles and tasks of co-authors.

- A person who has provided (access to) samples, provided technical help, or contributed to the documentation would not qualify as an author, unless the person has also contributed in other ways to the work (see table at the end of these Guidelines).
- Heads of research (lab) facilities are not automatically a co-author of every article based on research done in the lab he/she runs. The lab head may be included as author but substantive effort to the article is still required.
- Proofreading of the text before it is sent to the publisher is considered to be a mandatory task for all authors involved.
- Administrative and economic responsibility alone do not qualify for authorship. Research project PIs and PhD supervisors are not necessarily co- authors simply because they obtained the funding that permitted the research to be conducted. They have to provide some sort of substantial intellectual contribution to the actual manuscript (beyond their contribution to the 'conception and design' of the research project / program).

See Table 1 at the end of this document, where the fundamental tasks are listed. This Table is a tool. Ticking the boxes (yes / no contribution to a specific task) will help determining in a logical and appropriate (and fair) way who should and who should not appear as a co-author.

II Order of co-authors and corresponding author

The order of authors and who will be offered co-authorship should be agreed upon in advance, also to reflect the degree of expected work and contribution. The researcher who made the largest

³ The Faculty of Archaeology Guidelines are partly derived from the criteria, see [PhDOnTrack](#) website.

contribution to the publication should appear as first author, followed by the person who has done the second largest contribution and so on. However, standards vary and may be prescribed / imposed by the publisher or editor.

- In the so-called 'hard sciences' the use of co-first authors (2 or more authors who contributed equally), and other similar constructions are increasingly common.
- For many scientific publications the last author is the lab head (or research group head) who has designed the research (for the publication the second most-important person).
- Corresponding author is often the first or last author, but this should be discussed at the start of the writing process.

III Research Output Plan at the start of a large research program

At the start of a multi-year research program (eg. NWO- or ERC funded projects), involving PhD- and/or postdoc researchers, the P.I. is recommended to discuss and write down a general research project **Output Plan** in cooperation with all researchers involved in the program. This Output Plan involves strategic planning of all academic and societal output, with a timeline of what to produce when. It is advised to establish this Output Plan both with Faculty staff as well as external individuals – and have all involved sign for agreement / keep a copy.

The Plan remains open for periodic or incidental adjustments and will be consulted for each writing project. Point of attention: group dynamics and interpersonal issues can have a huge impact on a project. Often it will be useful to address problems directly by involving a neutral third party in the process, implementing a more formal process for mediating disputes.

IV Author Agreement Form at the start of a writing project

Co-authors should try to have a common understanding of what kind of work merits authorship and who has the main responsibility for writing, submitting and editing. In order to ensure transparency and manage expectations, at the start of any specific writing project (or other type of research output), a written agreement is drafted, initiated by the lead author. This agreement includes both internal and external partners. Use the Faculty of Archaeology **Author Agreement Form**' (see appendix 1). Authorship agreements should include:

- A list of those who will be recognised as an author;
- The order of authors;
- The contribution that each author will make;
- The corresponding author;
- A list of those who will be recognised through acknowledgement.

The agreement is flexible. Review the agreement regularly as the work moves forward. There may be changes in the number and order of co-authors.

All co-authors should check the final version of a publication before it is submitted, and it should be possible to withdraw your name if you disagree with the interpretation of the results.

If you are on the author list without your consent, or if you have been wrongly omitted: inform the other authors. In some instances, it is possible to contact the journal for a correction after an article is published, but an editor is unlikely to add your name unless all authors agree.

V PhD and Postdoc Output Plan and Author Agreement Form

At the start of the PhD or/ Postdoc position, the supervisors / PIs will discuss output and co-authorship matters with the researcher. Agreements are written down in the Faculty co-authorship agreement form (see appendix 1).

Postdoc researchers

- When a Postdoc who is not the PI, an Output Plan is drafted by the Postdoc and the PI.
- Per publication an Author Agreement Form will be written at the start. This agreement remains open for adjustments and might change. This Output Plan is a working document and is only effective when mutual agreement also on alterations is reached and recorded.

PhD track specific guidelines:

An Output Plan and (if relevant) an Author Agreement form will be added to the personal PhD Graduate School *Training & Supervision Plan* that is drawn up in the first months of the PhD project and requires agreement from the Director of the Graduate School.

- To evidence research independence, amongst the options also writing an article independently - without supervisor(s) serving as co-author(s) - could be discussed.
- For PhDs defending with a collection of separate scientific treatises, co-authorship of the supervisor(s) is not the default but should always be determined and agreed upon per publication.
- A PhD supervisor should never be lead author on articles that form part of the PhD dissertation.
- Depending on the role played by the PhD supervisors (see Table 1 below), they will be granted co-authorship or will appear in the acknowledgements.
- A database usually is a group effort, and not 'owned' by one member of the research group. For publication or other use of data that have not been published yet, it should be discussed with all involved whether this is appropriate.
- It is not allowed for the PhD supervisors to use unpublished data (analyses, interpretations) of data that have been (exclusively) collected by the PhD researcher and that are data the PhD (heavily) relies on in their research.
- After the PhD graduation: the supervisor and researcher will design a new agreement regarding future publications concerning the completed PhD research project, use of data, and insights gathered during the PhD project, respecting the intellectual property of each party. Unless explicit, mutually agreed upon, and written plans state otherwise, supervisors are not allowed to publish (parts of) the research.

Table 1: designed as a tool to help determining the co-authors.

Authorship Criteria	Possible research roles				
	Individual researcher / PhD candidate	PhD supervisor	PI / Grant holder	Lab or fieldwork director	Lab or fieldwork team
Person participated in the conception and design of the research output?					
Person participated in the drafting or writing of significant parts, or has critically reviewed it so as to contribute to the interpretation?					
Person participated in the data acquisition where the acquisition has required significant intellectual judgement, planning, design, or input?					
Person participated in the interpretation or analysis of the data on which the research output is based?					
	Included as Co-author? YES if two or more cells are ticked NO if less than two cells are ticked				

When planning for a specific publication, all people involved need to establish the nature of their contribution by ticking off the corresponding boxes. Ticking the boxes will help determining who should (not) appear as a co-author. Depending on the number of roles, i.e. “ticks”, entitlement to co-authorship can be decided. Attribution of authorship depends to some extent on the discipline but, in all cases, must be based on a substantial contribution to **at least two of the above activities**.

VI Procedures and monitoring

- The Faculty Board bears responsibility for the content and status of these Guidelines.
- The Research Office files the Research Programme - and Postdoc Output Plans.
- The Graduate School keeps the files of PhD project Output agreements (in GSM).
- Disputes? Contact the [Confidential Counselor for PhDs \(Mariana Francozo\)](#) or the LU [confidential counsellor for academic integrity](#), Prof.dr F. Koning.

Leiden University Faculty of Archaeology

Authorship agreement form

May 2021

The details on this form should be regularly reviewed between collaborators. Review will be necessary, for example, wherever there is a change in the research project or personnel that may affect authorship. All authors should maintain a copy of this completed form. This form is provided as a resource to support compliance with the Faculty of Archaeology Guidelines on co-authorship.

First author (Faculty of Archaeology):

Corresponding author:

Title of proposed research output:

Proposed authors and order of authors for this publication

(Add rows as required)

	Name	Affiliation
Author 1		
Author 2		
Author 3		
Author 4		

Details of substantive intellectual contribution or proposed contribution

(Add rows as required)

Author 1	
Author 2	
Author 3	
Author 4	

List of individuals recognised through acknowledgement in the research output

Confirmation of agreement with listed authors and the order of authorship

(Add rows as required)

Author 1	Signed	Date
	Name	
Author 2	Signed	Date
	Name	
Author 3	Signed	Date
	Name	
Author 4	Signed	Date
	Name	