

Authorship and Postgraduate Researchers: Guidance for Staff and Postgraduate Researchers at the University of Huddersfield

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Key principles for authorship in research involving PGRs	1
3. Who should be an author?	1
4. How should the order of authors in a multi-authored publication be determined?	2
5. References	3

1. Introduction

1.1 Authorship of research outputs is a key indicator of academic success. As such it is vital that authors are identified and acknowledged fairly and accurately, in a manner that represents their contribution to the work. It is the responsibility of supervisors and others working with Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) to ensure that they understand how authorship is decided and indicated in their discipline. While differences in expectations between disciplines make detailed guidance on all aspects of authorship for all subjects impossible, there are some general principles which the University would expect to see applied to all PGRs. We will highlight these first, before looking specifically at what needs to be considered regarding who counts as an author, and how author order should be determined.

2. Key principles for authorship in research involving PGRs

2.1 Decisions about authorship for PGRs should never be based on their PGR status. Rather, they should be treated the same as any other research collaborator in terms of whether their contribution warrants inclusion as an author of a work, and where they should be placed in the author list.

2.2 In works published jointly with their PGRs, supervisors should explain all authorship decisions to them clearly and obtain their explicit approval, preferably in writing, for the author order.

2.3 Supervisors should, where appropriate to the discipline, expect to be given the opportunity to be included as co-authors on works arising directly from their PGRs' research.

3. Who should be an author?

3.1 In short, a researcher (including a PGR) should be included as an author if they have made a substantial contribution to the work submitted for publication.

Professional bodies' and journal publishers' advice varies somewhat with regard to how they define "substantial contribution". Nevertheless, the following activities are widely seen as potentially conferring the right to be included as an author:

- 3.1.1 conceptualisation and design of a piece of research;
 - 3.1.2 data collection, analysis and/or interpretation;
 - 3.1.3 drafting and/or significantly revising a publication.
- 3.2 The level at which a researcher has made one or more of these contributions influences how likely they are to be considered for authorship. In the case of work deriving wholly or substantially from a PGR's thesis it is very difficult to see any circumstances in which they would not have made a contribution worthy of claiming authorship.
- 3.3 In line with many codes of practice (e.g. BERA, 2018; BPS, 2017; COPE, 2014) we take the view that supervisor status does not automatically confer the right to be included as a co-author for a publication. Rather, supervisors should also be expected to make a contribution to the writing process, through drafting and/or revision of the piece. Equally, PGRs should not without good reason refuse supervisors the opportunity to contribute in such a way as to be included as co-authors.

4. How should the order of authors in a multi-authored publication be determined?

- 4.1. Again, there are disciplinary differences in this. In particular, in medicine and the health sciences the person who made the largest contribution to the actual publication would be first author, while the (usually senior) person who guided the overall project is last author. In many other disciplines, authorship is in order of contribution or where contributions are deemed to be equal, alphabetically by surname.
- 4.2. In most cases of co-authorship with a PGR, where the work is based wholly or substantially on research conducted for their thesis, the expectation should be that the PGR will be first author. In exceptional circumstances where the PGR is not first author – for example, where they have explicitly stated they do not want any involvement in preparing the material for publication – there must be a clear record kept that they agreed to this.

5. References

British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition, London. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>

British Psychological Society [BPS] (2017) Statement of Policy on Authorship and Publication Credit, Leicester. <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/statement-policy-authorship-and-publication-credit-2017>

Committee on Publication Ethics [COPE] (2014) What Constitutes Authorship? COPE discussion document. https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/Authorship_DiscussionDocument_0_0.pdf