



Academic Authorship Policy

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ACADEMIC AUTHORSHIP POLICY

1. Introduction

This Policy outlines the principles for determining authorship of publications and other outputs that are the result of research undertaken at the University of Wolverhampton ("the University").

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure:

- Researchers who participate in investigation and other academic activities are equitably acknowledged and their contributions are fairly represented.
- The work of others is cited and referenced appropriately and acknowledgement of authorship is given to those making a substantial scholarly contribution to the output.
- The criteria for attribution of authorship of all research outputs are clarified and appropriate steps to confirm authorship are taken prior to any submission of research outputs for publication; and
- The University complies with all relevant external guidelines relating to the attribution of authorship.

3. Principles

The implementation of this policy is in accordance with the University's ARIA staff charter values:

- **Accountable**; we take pride in what we do and how we do it, take responsibility for our actions and operate with transparency and integrity.
- **Resilient**; we have a positive outlook; we are adaptable and recover from setbacks.
- **Inclusive**; we are welcoming, respectful, collegiate and supportive.
- **Ambitious**; we are imaginative, confident, innovative and deliver excellence.

4. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Author	The creator, single or joint, of any research output who has made a substantial intellectual contribution to its creation.
Authorship	The intellectual participation in conceiving, executing or interpreting at least part of a research, scholarly or other academic output in the author's field of expertise, sufficient for the author to take public responsibility for that output.
Contributor	Participant in creation of the output where the criteria for authorship is not met

5. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Research and other academic outputs distributed by both traditional and web-based publications such as, but not limited to, journal articles, books, reports, chapters, conference papers data, software and code.
- All researchers including academic, professional staff, students, volunteers, fellows, visiting academics and students and any other person(s) involved in joint publications with researchers at the University.

6. Authorship Criteria

Responsible authorship practices should be inclusive and ensure that all contributors who meet the criteria are recognised, regardless of job title. The [CREDiT taxonomy](#) should be used to categorise contribution, where possible.

To be eligible to claim authorship the contribution must be substantial, and the following criteria must be met:

- a) Contribution to the project and/or concept design, research data acquisition, analysis and interpretation, and research data management
- b) Drafting or revising of components of the work; and/or
- c) Approval of the final version and signing of authorship agreements where required.
- d) Accountability: authors must be able to identify their contribution and accept accountability for any part of the output.

Where a contribution is made that does not fulfil the criteria above, acknowledgement should be given instead.

The criteria should not be used to unfairly exclude someone from receiving recognition as an author. For example, it would be inappropriate to prevent someone from taking part in the drafting or revision process and then deny them authorship because they did not contribute to the writing.

7. Use of Generative AI

AI or AI-assisted technologies should not be listed as authors or co-authors on outputs, as they cannot meet the requirement for accountability. Any use of AI in research, including in the drafting or revising of the output must be declared and clearly explained, just as with other tools or methodologies. Authors remain responsible for ensuring their work is original, properly cited, and does not breach plagiarism policies.

8. Student Attribution of Authorship

Unless other conventions or conditions apply a student may be the first author on any work arising from their thesis where they have made a significant intellectual contribution, such as if they had a leading role in the conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data.

A student or student's supervisor should only be included as an author when they meet the criteria for authorship. A student and supervisor should reach agreement, in writing, on the authorship on a publication arising from a student's thesis. The expectations and confirmation of authorship must be agreed and discussed by both the student and supervisor prior to the award of the degree.

9. Authorship and Output Management

Authorship and authorship order must be discussed and agreed as early as possible by collaborating researchers, inclusive of current or past students. It is recognised that authorship order will vary between the established written conventions of the discipline and/or publisher and may be in order of contribution, proportion of input from each named author or in alphabetical order.

Decisions pertaining to authorship and authorship order must be reviewed at appropriate times and agreed prior to peer review, appearance on the public record and/or final submission (e.g. if relative or anticipated contributions change).

All authors must retain a copy of all documentation, discussions, disputes, concerns and decisions on acknowledging authorship (either electronic or hard copy).

In the event there is a group of authors, one author will be appointed as the "Corresponding Author", the single point of contact responsible for the management of all communication with the publisher, internal and/or external parties.

All researchers offered authorship must accept or decline the offer and agree to the authorship order, in writing, to the Corresponding Author. A publisher's signatory document will satisfy this requirement. If the Corresponding Author is not a University of Wolverhampton researcher their employer may have an alternate process for recording authorship which may be applied to satisfy this requirement.

All authors must review and approve the manuscript or research output prior to submission for publication. The Corresponding Author will maintain a copy of all review and approval documentation.

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

When handling manuscripts with deceased authors, publishers might request that the next of kin

or the executors of the deceased person's estate confirm that the person agreed to be an author and substantially contributed to the work. For legal reasons, however, publishers might not be able to include deceased individuals as authors, even when there is an alternative author available to sign a publishing agreement on behalf of the authorship team. In these cases, institutions and publishers can recommend that the author is included in the acknowledgements section instead.

The Corresponding Author is responsible for all communications and record keeping pertaining to the research output, agreed authorship discussions, authorship orders, written agreements and disputes, concerns or complaints relating to the designation of authorship on publications.

The corresponding author is generally expected to be the primary point of contact for post-publication queries, and their email address is provided in the published article so enquiries can be directed to them.

Where the Corresponding Author is no longer part of the University, any disputes or concerns will be brought to the attention of the relevant Associate Dean (Research and KE) where possible.

All authors must ensure all scholarly outputs are recorded in Elements, the University Current Research Information System (CRIS), and ensure that research publications are made available online via WIRE, the University's institutional repository. To ensure an author's publications are accurately attributed to them, all authors should register for an [ORCID](#) (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) a free, unique, persistent identifier for individuals to use to help tie together their publications as they engage in research, scholarship, and innovation activities.

10. Acknowledgements

All those who contribute to a work but do not meet the criteria for authorship should, with their permission, be named in the acknowledgements, with their contributions described. This includes technical or support staff and those that have critically reviewed the manuscript.

Since acknowledgment may imply endorsement of the study's findings, anyone who does not give their consent should not be included.

Where the research has been funded, funding agencies should be acknowledged as per the terms and conditions of the individual funder and contract. Additionally, data sourced from third parties, facilitation to access data and the use of equipment or samples must also be appropriately cited or acknowledged.

11. Affiliations

All research undertaken at the University in any capacity (including web-based content), when written up and/or published, captured or deposited, must include in their affiliation the “University of Wolverhampton” and the name of the relevant Faculty, Research Centre or Department.

Only staff or students of the University, or those who have a formal affiliation to the University (or those who were University staff or students or had a formal affiliation when the research in question was conducted), should state in any journal submission that they are affiliated to the University.

An organisation should only be listed as an author’s affiliation if the work was conducted at, or formally connected to, that organisation. The primary affiliation should reflect where the research was actually carried out.

If an individual has since moved to a different organisation but is publishing work arising from research completed at their previous one, they should list the previous organisation as their affiliation. The research was conducted under its auspices and should be attributed accordingly. Some publishers allow for both primary and secondary affiliations to reflect the author’s current position while maintaining accurate attribution of the research.

12. Competing Interests

According to Nature Portfolio journals' policy on competing interests, competing interests are:

“...financial and non-financial interests that could directly undermine, or be perceived to undermine the objectivity, integrity and value of a publication, through a potential influence on the judgements and actions of authors with regard to objective data presentation, analysis and interpretation”.

Authors must declare all potential or actual financial or personal competing interests that could potentially influence the research or its interpretation. This declaration should be made in the output’s acknowledgment section or where required by the journal’s submission guidelines.

13. Authorship Grievances

A concern, complaint or dispute may be raised by any one or more of the co-authors at any time prior to publication or post publication and may be related to the inclusion, exclusion or order of authorship. Co-authors are encouraged to attempt first to resolve the matter through direct dialogue with each other.

Co-authors (preferably via the Corresponding Author) are encouraged to consult with the relevant Associate Dean (Research & KE), who is independent of the project, to seek assistance to resolve the issue and provide advice regarding the interpretation of the Academic Authorship Policy and any other applicable guidelines.

In the event the co-authors are unable to arrive at a mutual resolution the applicable grievance

procedure (Section 14 or Section 15 below) is to be followed.

14. Grievances Prior to Publication

If the authorship grievance has not been resolved between co-authors and there is collaboration with other institutions the dispute will be managed by the institution of the Corresponding Author. The relevant Associate Dean (Research & KE) should be advised if the resolution is being managed via an institution outside of the University and informed of the resolution when reached.

If the Co-authors are all affiliated with the University the matter will be referred to the relevant Associate Dean (Research & KE) who will review the matter and attempt to resolve this at Faculty level. This process should take no more than 10 business days and a written response on the outcome of their review will be provided to the co-authors.

If the AD (Research & KE) is unable to resolve the grievance they will refer the matter and all applicable documentation to the Faculty Dean, with a copy to the University's Research Integrity Lead (the Dean of Research Culture & PGR). The following information will need to be provided:

- a) A copy of the documentation used for acknowledging authorship.
- b) Copies of any key documents that show:
- c) how each author has met the criteria for authorship attribution.
- d) the final approvals of the version to be published.
- e) a list of all authors that are considered to be valid and the reasons why.
- f) a list of any other authors believed to have contributed to the publication and evidence of why they should be fully acknowledged.

The Faculty Dean will review the material presented and make a determination which may include:

- a) Removing those researchers that are deemed as failing to meet the authorship criteria and/or acknowledging their contributions, if appropriate.
- b) Including all researchers that are deemed to have met the authorship criteria; and
- c) Revising the authorship order on the publication.

The Faculty Dean may seek advice from an independent expert (as required) to assist them in making their determination.

The research output can only be published when all valid authors agree on the authorship of the publication.

15. Authorship Disputes Post Publication

If an individual has any concerns in relation to the authorship of an existing publication they should refer their concern in writing to the relevant Dean of Faculty.

The Dean will consider the matter and will either proceed as above or via the University Procedures for dealing with allegations of misconduct in research.

16. Author Corrections and Retractions

A correction is a formal notice issued to address errors or inaccuracies in a published research article that do not invalidate the overall findings. Often, the original article is not replaced, but a bi-directional link to a correction notice is published by the journal. However, this will depend on the nature of the inaccuracies and journal policy. The presence of a correction alone should not be used as an indicator of the quality of a published work.

A retraction is a formal statement that a published article is withdrawn from the scholarly record. Retractions ensure that the research record remains accurate. They do not indicate the reason a paper may be withdrawn, which could be a breach of integrity or an honest error. The research community should consider retractions as a means to protect the reputation of authors and the trust and reliability of research.

Authors do not all have to agree for a manuscript to be retracted, but it is their responsibility to be aware when their publication should be retracted. As authors agree to be accountable for the work, they cannot withdraw from authorship to avoid retraction (unless they were listed without their permission). Generally, authorship issues alone do not justify retraction. One exception is when an article is stolen, as this is a form of plagiarism, not an authorship dispute. Another exception is when data underlying the research is used without permission.

Some co-authors might ask for their names to be removed from an article when it is retracted. Such requests are generally not appropriate unless it can be shown that the individual was added to the authorship list without their knowledge. If an author has been added to an author list without their knowledge or consent, it could result in the article being retracted. Such an inclusion would infringe UK law – specifically, Section 84 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, which protects individuals from false attribution of authorship (see CDPA 1988, Section 84). Anyone responsible for false attribution is open to legal challenge.

Authors may be removed after publication by a formal correction, provided all the authors agree. However, such requests can signal deeper concerns about an article, as a wish to disassociate typically reflects serious issues that outweigh the credit gained from being listed as an author.

In rare cases, a correction or retraction might be due to research misconduct which is out of scope of this Policy and will be managed according to the [Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research](#)

17. Authorship and Research Misconduct

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity recognises inappropriate authorship as a form of research misconduct. This is because it constitutes a misrepresentation of:

- *“involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution*
- *publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication”*

In practice, this would include:

- **Misuse of affiliations** - the unethical, inaccurate, or deceptive listing of institutional connections by authors. For example, claiming a connection to an institution where they do not work or have not conducted research; or failure to disclose a primary affiliation, often to hide potential conflicts of interest.
- **Denial of authorship** – Excluding individuals who meet established authorship criteria. For example, orphan authorship - the unethical exclusion of contributors, frequently early career researchers, due to power imbalances.
- **Inclusion of individuals whose contribution does not meet authorship criteria** – This includes guest, gift, honorary or purchased authorship, where someone is named as an author despite having made no qualifying contribution.

Typical examples of non-qualifying contributions include providing access to published data or resources or serving in a leadership position such as head of department or PhD supervisor. Recipients may suffer reputational damage if their lack of contribution is exposed, especially if they have not reviewed the work, verified the data, or are unfamiliar with the co-authors. When these inclusions are exposed, it can lead to a loss of credibility, ethical and legal consequences, distorted authorship metrics, wasted research funding, public distrust of research and conflict.

Allegations of research misconduct in relation to the attribution or omission of authorship must be reported as outlined in the Procedures for dealing with allegations of misconduct in research.

18. Data Protection Requirements

When personal data is expected to be used under this policy, staff must adhere to applicable data protection laws. These are outlined in the University's Data Protection Policy and related policies (<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/wlv-policies/>). Any use of personal data should be detailed in the relevant privacy notice and processed in accordance with all data protection principles.

For processing activities that may carry high risk; completion of a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) may be required. This is determined by answering a series of screening questions included in the DPIA template. The Data Protection Team is available to provide assistance and guidance with any part of this process, please contact them via email: dataprotection@wlv.ac.uk.

Please note that whilst the Data Protection Act does not cover aggregate data, it must be ensured that

small numbers held within aggregate data sets do not inadvertently identify individuals.

19. Exceptions

There are no exceptions to this policy.

20. Amendments

This Policy was approved by the University's Academic Board June 26. The University may change this Policy at any time, and where appropriate. Where a policy is not due for review, but is found to require updating, it will remain published, unless the reasons for review render it obsolete.

21. Supporting Policies & Procedures

This policy operates alongside the following policies and procedures ([WLV Policies - University of Wolverhampton](#)), both in terms of outlining the University expectations relating to research governance and conduct:

- [Code of Good Research Practice](#)
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Policy on Consultancy
- Intellectual Property (IP) Policy for Staff
- Intellectual Property (IP) Policy for Students
- Research Data Management Policy
- Procedures for dealing with allegations of misconduct in research
- Elements Usage Policy
- [UoW Library Publishing & Sharing Research Guidance](#)

22. Relevant External Guidance

Researchers are advised to seek guidance on practice within their own discipline and to consult guidelines set by the funders of their research and the journals in which they hope to publish.

Examples include:

- National Information Standards Organization (NISO) - [Contributor Role Taxonomy \(CRediT\)](#)
- Academy of Management, [Code of Ethics 2023](#)
- British Educational Research Association (BERA), [Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research](#) (2024)
- The British Psychological Society (BPS), [Statement of Policy on Authorship and Publication Credit](#) (2017)
- Medical Research Council (MRC), [Good Research Practice: Principles and Guidelines](#) (July 2014)
- Nature, [Nature journals' authorship policy](#) (2018)
- Wellcome Trust, [Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (2022)

More general guidance is provided by the following groups:

- UKRIO [Good Authorship Practice](#) (2025)
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, [Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals](#) (2026) - A set of guidelines that has been adopted by a number of medical journals.
- [Council of Science Editors, White Paper on Publication Ethics](#) (2024) - A paper designed to offer general guidance across the sciences.
- [The Committee on Publication Ethics](#) – COPE provides advice to publishers and editors on publication ethics and has produced a Code of Conduct for journal editors and guidelines on handling authorship disputes.

23. Contact

For general queries regarding Research Policies, Procedures and guidelines contact Jill Morgan, Senior Officer Governance & Integrity, by email: J.Morgan4@wlv.ac.uk

For general queries, please contact the University Corporate Compliance Team via email: compliance@wlv.ac.uk.

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