

HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

SUBJECT: Guidelines on Authorship of Papers and Other Academic Documents

DATE: June 2025

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure is to provide guidance to faculty and students in determining inclusion as an author and order of authorship.

REVIEW:

This OP will be reviewed when changes are necessitated by new college or university policies.

POLICY

1. The College of Health and Human Sciences recognizes that faculty members hold a reasonable degree of autonomy in creating academic documents, notably refereed journal publications and creative works. The college also respects the variability in policies and typical practices found in varying discipline affiliations.
2. The college also recognizes that in matters of scholarly work involving multiple faculty members and/or students, the issue of authorship may be the source of misunderstanding and in dispute.
3. The college also acknowledges that faculty members are often in a position of authority and power with respect to students. Faculty members have an obligation to act in an ethical manner with respect to students and acknowledge the importance of the mentor and mentee relationship. Just as with other mentor/mentee relationships, there is a responsibility for the mentor to be clear with communication, enhance the development of the mentee, and for the mentor to not take advantage of their position.
4. The same ethical expectations exist for tenured and continuing appointment faculty members and untenured or pre-continuing appointment faculty members. The same kind of mentor/mentee power issues apply.
5. If this policy is in conflict with discipline/journal norms, the differences should be discussed with the department chairperson or school director, who can consult with the Associate Dean for Research if necessary to assure fair and appropriate authorship attribution.



6. Definitions*

- a. Author – creator of and/or contributor to a research/scholarly publication or creative endeavor
- b. Publication – a publicly shared piece of scholarship or creative work that relates new information and knowledge (includes books, journal articles, abstracts, websites, exhibitions, and performances of works of art or any work that can be explicitly documented)
- c. Authorship – a person shall qualify as an author provided the following conditions are satisfied
 - i. Participation in the conception and design of the creative work, study, review, analysis and/or interpretation of any data
 - ii. Participation in the drafting of the creative work or manuscript or in the editing of the creative work or manuscript
 - iii. Final approval of the version of the creative work or manuscript to be published
 - iv. Ability to explain and defend appropriate portions of the work or study in public or scholarly meetings

Potential authors should check with the journal-specific criteria concerning all aspects relevant to publication. If journal criteria are in conflict with the CHHS policy, the journal criteria would usually take precedence.

- d. Acknowledgments – contributions that do not justify authorship should be acknowledged in accordance with disciplinary standards (stipulated by individual journals). Contributions to a work that do not constitute authorship can include, for example, technical support or assistance in attaining funding.
- e. Lead Author and Order of Authors – The lead author (sometimes called corresponding author) is defined as the person who leads a research/scholarly effort or creative work and makes a major contribution to a multi-author work; the lead author is also responsible for gathering appropriate consents, validating the integrity of the work, leading the discussion of the order of all authors. Ideally, the order of authors should be decided prior to the initiation of the study.
- f. Accountability – EVERY author listed on a publication or creative endeavor is responsible for approving the final version of the manuscript and verifying the integrity of the research/scholarly/creative work performed.



PROCEDURE

1. Faculty members who plan to work together on a research/scholarly/creative activity should discuss among themselves the order of authorship and responsibilities of each individual before the project starts. As the project evolves, there may be a need to revise the original plan, but every member of the group should be involved in the discussion.
2. If the author group includes a student, special expectations may apply as provided below.
 - a. If the student is involved in the project as all or a major part of their thesis or dissertation, the student should always be primary author on any resulting publication even if the student did not do most of the writing.
 - b. If the faculty member who worked with the student uses the information generated from the thesis/dissertation research as the basis of further inquiry, the student would not necessarily be included as an author on that paper, but their work would be referenced in the article.
 - c. If a student is involved in the project as part of a larger group and does not make a significant specific contribution, that student would not necessarily be an author and certainly not primary author; this is typical in the case of an undergraduate student researcher.
3. If a dispute arises regarding authorship, the issue should be brought to the attention of the department chair or school director. If a resolution cannot be reached at the department level, the issue would go to the office of the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Student Services and be heard by a subcommittee of the standing CHHS Research Committee.
4. If the subcommittee of the CHHS Research Committee finds evidence of research misconduct in the course of hearing a dispute, the issue will be forwarded to the Associate Vice President for Research (Research Integrity).

The policies and procedures of the College of Health and Human Sciences function within the context of the larger institution and are designed to advance the overall mission of the university. Should conflict occur between the policies of the college and those of the institution, the operating policies and procedures of the university shall take precedence.

**Adapted from the Michigan State University Guidelines on Authorship*

Reviewed June 2025

