

METHODOLOGY CENTER PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT GUIDELINES

Guidelines document 4 AUTHORSHIP

4.1 Introduction

Assigning authorship on scientific papers, such as technical reports, journal articles, and book chapters can be delicate. Here some guidelines and expectations are offered. However, every situation is unique.

Perhaps the single most important guideline is to talk openly and frankly about authorship with your collaborators at every stage of a project.

Everyone who works on a project is responsible for making sure that no misunderstandings about authorship occur. If you are not 100 percent sure, **BRING UP THE SUBJECT.**

4.2 Expectations for established, independent investigators

The Center is a collaborative environment, and we have always been free with sharing ideas and input. Naturally, there is no expectation that everyone in the Center will be an author on every paper. However, collaboration among Center investigators, particularly across disciplinary lines, enriches the Center and, by extension, all of us. If someone shows a particular interest in something you are doing, and you think the individual could make a contribution, consider inviting the person to be an author. In general, be on the lookout for opportunities to collaborate with Center colleagues, especially those with whom you have not collaborated previously. If you propose a research topic for a student or post-doc, try to clarify authorship expectations early in the project.

Established investigators have a special obligation to make sure that no misunderstandings about authorship occur and that people working in their lab are treated fairly. They should set a standard of openness about authorship and other aspects of professional conduct.

4.3 Expectations for students and post-docs who are working in an investigator's lab

Students and post-docs working in an investigator's lab make important contributions, but they must recognize that they are carrying out the investigator's research agenda. This usually applies to theses and dissertations supervised by the investigator as well as other scientific products. As a result, the investigator is nearly always entitled to authorship on the papers that come out of his or her lab and often will be entitled to first authorship.

Students and post-docs should remember that being first author on a technical report or conference presentation does not necessarily guarantee that they will be first author on a

later related journal article submission. They also should remember that the sheer number of hours of work invested is a less important determinant of authorship than intellectual contribution. In an interdisciplinary environment like ours, researchers need to value the different types of intellectual contributions that those from other disciplines can make.

Students and post-docs are encouraged to be proactive about discussing with their supervisors whether projects can be identified that will result in a peer-review journal article on which they will be first author. Usually the investigator will be more than happy to identify such projects, to collaborate on them, and to offer substantial guidance and input.

In general, a student who writes up a Masters thesis or dissertation for publication in a timely way will be first author on the article unless other arrangements were made in advance. The investigator who supervised the research should be an author as well, and other lab or committee members may be included as authors where appropriate.

Students may not publish work based on a Masters thesis, dissertation, or other related research project that was supported in any way by the Center without including the supervisor as an author, unless the supervisor explicitly declines the authorship invitation.

If a student fails to write up a Masters thesis or dissertation for publication within a reasonable period of time (generally, one year), and the work received any Center support, the investigator who supervised the work may take over the project and write it up for publication. In this case the student will be an author, but likely not first author. Supervisor and student should decide together what constitutes a “reasonable period of time” before the student finishes the thesis or dissertation.

No one whose training is being supported by the Center should publish on any topic that is related to Center research without giving appropriate colleagues at the Center an opportunity to be involved. For example, if you work in Dr. X’s lab on development of a new statistical procedure, it is inappropriate publish on this topic without involving Dr. X. If you have an idea for an article, discuss it with your supervisor. If you have a question about this, consult the Director or Scientific Director. **In addition, if Dr. X mentions a research topic, a student should not work on the topic without informing Dr. X, as that supervisor still ‘owns’ the original scientific idea.**

4.4 Expectations for newly independent investigators who were trained in the Center: Making the transition appropriately

The Center invests a lot of resources in the training of graduate students and post-docs. Our return on that investment comes in two forms: the success of trainees in professional life, and peer-review publications.

Collaborative work is typically ongoing when students and post-docs graduate or move to a first professional job. Newly independent investigators should remember the following as they complete this collaborative work and establish their own research labs:

Work done in the context of the Center was, by definition, collaborative. Thus you should offer appropriate individuals an opportunity to collaborate on preparing any publication on this work after you leave the Center.

Eventually, newly independent investigators are likely to begin research projects that do not involve Center scientists. Naturally, they are not expected to involve Center colleagues as authors on work that was begun in their new location. However, they should cite the work of the Center as appropriate.

In general, if the work was started while you were at the Center, then your mentor and possibly other Center researchers should be included as co-authors. If the work began after you left the Center, then including Center scientists as co-authors is optional. However, exceptions to this rule may exist.

During the first few years after leaving the Center, investigators should be highly sensitive to authorship issues. For example, a former mentor of a newly independent investigator may feel entitled to the opportunity to collaborate on work the new investigator plans that is very closely based on work in the center (e.g., a parametric extension of a simulation; reanalysis of data adding more predictors). In addition, if the new investigator pursues work closely related to work conducted by others in the Center, inviting the researchers involved to collaborate is often appropriate.

As always, open discussion, preferably before any work is actually done, will prevent misunderstandings.

4.5 Keeping co-authors “in the loop”

Any co-author on a paper or technical report has a right to review and comment on a manuscript before submission, and particularly publication. Co-authors should provide comments in a timely way, so as not to delay submission of a manuscript.

When distributing copies to co-authors for their review, the first author may include a note saying “In order to submit this manuscript in a timely way, I need your comments by *** (date). If you wish to comment but cannot comment by that date, let me know what

would be a reasonable deadline for you. If I don't hear anything from you by *** (date), I will assume this draft is OK with you as it stands.”

4.6 Acknowledgements

All individuals who are not authors of a manuscript but contribute to the work in some significant way should be mentioned in the acknowledgement section. These individuals could include colleagues who reviewed an earlier version of the manuscript, groups of individuals who provided comments on a talk about the material, or those who provided statistical advice.