



آغا خان یونیورسٹی

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

## Research Policy

<i>Policy No. ORGS/001-2021</i> <b>AUTHORSHIP POLICY</b>	
<i>Revised and approved:</i>	August 27, 2021
<i>Contact Office:</i>	Office of Research & Graduate Studies
<i>Related Policies</i>	Code of Good Research Practice; Research Misconduct; Intellectual Property Rights, Publications Policy
<i>Approving Authority:</i>	University Research Council

## POLICY STATEMENT

This policy will explicitly determine authorship for scientific or humanities disciplines for scholarly publication, i.e. developing manuscripts, applying for grants, making presentations, and other electronic or non-electronic communications. This policy is applicable to all publications including, but not limited to review articles, case reports, and abstracts for scholarly publication.

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Authorship of scholarly, scientific or research publication is recognised to be the most significant indicator of academic merit at universities. Recommendations for merit and promotion are normally made on the basis of the number and quality of scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters and monographs. In this context, the immense pressure to publish can at times lead to conflict and confusion regarding appropriate authorship credit.
- 1.2 Many reputable institutions across the world have provided guidelines related to claims of authorship. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has developed guidelines recommending that to qualify as an author, one should have made:

- 1.2.1 Substantial intellectual contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
  - 1.2.2 Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual contribution
  - 1.2.3 Evidence of author approval of the final version of the submitted manuscript. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.
  - 1.2.4 Agreement to be accountable for accuracy and integrity of the work.
  - 1.2.5 Authors should have confidence in integrity of their personal contributions and that of their co-authors.
  - 1.2.6 Those not meeting the key criteria should be acknowledged.
- 1.3 ICMJE also states that: “Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. One or more authors should take the responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article.”
- 1.4 Some journals request that one or more authors, referred to as “guarantors”, be identified as the persons who take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article, and publish that information.
- 1.4.1 The American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual offers similar guidelines widely referred to in the fields of Social Sciences and Education. These guidelines also reserve authorship for those who have made a substantial contribution, and thus “receive primary credit and hold primary responsibility for the published work”. Substantial contribution is defined to include formulating the problem or hypothesis, developing the research design, organising and conducting analysis, interpreting the results, or writing a major portion of the paper. Supportive functions that do not meet these requirements (such as advising on analysis, collecting or entering data, or conducting routine observations are recommended etc.) should be acknowledged.
  - 1.4.2 Social Sciences and Medicine further recommend use of Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT)<sup>1</sup> to avoid conflict among contributors. That does not however change journal criteria for authorship eligibility, which should be based on substantial contribution to the research study.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 This Policy explicitly seeks to establish authorship requirements.
- 2.2 The policy should be followed by individuals associated or affiliated with the Aga Khan University and other collaborators and Partner universities to resolve authorship disputes.

---

<sup>1</sup> CRediT – Contributor Role Taxonomy for authors: <http://credit.niso.org/>

### 3. MODIFICATION

- 3.1 These guidelines will be reviewed periodically and modified as and when necessary.

### 4. AUTHORSHIP

- 4.1. An author is an individual who has made substantial intellectual contributions to a scientific investigation.
- 4.1.1. A substantial intellectual contribution would require an individual to have significantly participated in one or more of the following activities, i.e., formulating the research problem, designing the study, implementing the study, interpreting and/or analysing the results, and/or writing the manuscript. All authors should review the manuscript before submitting it to the publisher and must be prepared to take responsibility for the data, its interpretations, and conclusions made in it.
- 4.1.2. Authors have responsibility of ensuring their work is submitted only to credible journals. When in doubt about the publisher or journal, author should consult with AKU's library services.
- 4.2. Authorship issue/order should be discussed early in the phase of their work.
- 4.3. **For multiple authors**, the order of names normally should reflect the contributions made by each of them, with the most significant contributor listed as the first author, and least contributor as second last. The last authorship slot is reserved for the most senior author, who may be or not be the corresponding author. All authors must be ready to submit written documentation of their specific contributions. Co-writing is common in social science and humanities but this order of first author is not applied when two collaborate fully. Then it is common to simply use alphabetic order..
- 4.4. The study principal investigator is not always necessarily the first or corresponding author as authorship is based on overall contribution to the work and the publication.
- 4.5. The Corresponding Author should be decided through consensus between authors and will be responsible for communication with editors, journals, and other authors. The Corresponding Author will keep all other authors informed in case of revisions made in the manuscript before it is finally published.
- 4.6. In collaborative research projects resulting in publications, authors should have read, consulted and complied with the University's research policies and guidelines.
- 4.7. Individuals who are not members of the research group but make substantial contributions in the writing of a paper may be credited for authorship according to the criteria for authorship as set out in section 4.2 and 4.3.
- 4.8. Gift, Ghost, or honorary authorship is not acceptable. Ghost/Gift/Guest author is someone who is listed as an author without qualifying for authorship and also someone whose

name is included without permission but meant to be acknowledged. Gift authorship is defined as co-authorship assigned to an individual who has not contributed significantly to the research project. Senior researchers assign gift authorship as repayment for favours or for encouraging collaboration and maintaining good working relationships. Regardless of the cause, gift authorship is an unacceptable practice at AKU. Ghost authorship is defined as someone whose name is included without their permission, for e.g. senior member of the faculty, contributors who leave the project before its completion. Regardless of the cause, ghost authorship is an unacceptable practice at this University.

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

- 5.1. Team members who do not meet threshold for authorship requirements but have made substantial contributions to the paper, should be mentioned in the acknowledgement note.
- 5.2. Data collectors and those who provided laboratory/field/secretarial support, such as providing technical assistance or participating in data collection or helping in typing the manuscript should not claim authorship, but should be acknowledged, with their permission for their work. Field workers, or secretarial/administrative staff may be acknowledged with permission. Unless they have met the above requirements to be eligible for authorship.
- 5.3. All sources of internal or external funding should be acknowledged.
  - For e.g. "*Work undertaken at Aga Khan University*" should clearly specify if the author submitted or published the manuscript after leaving AKU or a student who has left the programme after graduation.

## **6. STUDENTS / RESIDENTS**

- 6.1 Students are expected to publish their theses or dissertations work.
  - 6.1.1 In those cases where a student explicitly chooses not to engage in the preparation of their thesis or dissertation research for publication, and the research has been done within a larger project, their supervisor may choose to prepare the work themselves and will provide appropriate authorship credit to the student in recognition of his/her contribution to the research. This should preferably be agreed upon with the student at the earliest possible moment.
  - 6.1.2 If the student prepares independent research under supervision that they do not publish, and a supervisor deems the data and findings publishable, a written agreement must be reached with the student.
  - 6.1.3 Authorship must be credited to the student who as co-author must read and approve the final manuscript as per authorship requirements.
- 6.2 The order of authors is decided in mutual agreement with the supervisor and/or the principal investigator. *See 4.2 and 4.3.*
- 6.3 A student can be the Corresponding Author with the approval of the supervisor.

- 6.4 Under no circumstance should anyone affiliated with AKU, whether as employee, student, or volunteer, publish data owned by AKU or AKU faculty without permission of Copyright Transfer.

## **7. COPYRIGHT TRANSFER**

- 7.1 Copyright of a manuscript is generally transferred to a publisher when the Lead Author or Corresponding Author signs a copyright transfer agreement on behalf of all authors after due consultations. Thereafter, the manuscript, and all contained content are no longer the property of authors and no part of the manuscript (including figures, tables, etc.) can be submitted or published by any author without prior approval of the publisher. In such cases, where the publisher and author/s reach a different agreement e.g. joint-copyright, the terms of agreement will guide execution of the copyright with assistance from AKU Legal Office.

## **8. DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

- 8.1 The PI is responsible for resolution of any disputes over order of the authorship, but in collegial consultation with the other investigators.
- 8.2 If a dispute or concern arises with respect to authorship, the following steps may be taken for resolution:
- 8.2.1 Resolve the dispute within the wider research team.
- 8.2.2 Consult with the research team leader or PI for an amicable resolution. If a discussion with the PI does not resolve the problem, several avenues of dispute resolution consultation within the relevant departments/entities may be undertaken in the following order:
- Head of department;
  - Dean of entity (school, college, institute);
  - Chair, University Research Council
- 8.3 If a paper is in the process of being published, and the above interventions do not resolve the dispute, a letter indicating a conflict of interest should be sent to the publisher by the PI/corresponding author for final determination on whether to consider work for publication or not.
- 8.4 The most desirable and effective approach in determining authorship is through mutual agreement, preferably at the beginning of the project/study. Agreements on authorship credit and order may be reviewed during the course of the project if necessary.

X----X----X

References:

- 1) Fleming, N. Sidelined: How to tackle authorship disputes. *Nature* 2021; 594(7863): 459-462
- 2) Ahmed SM, Maurana CA, Engle J, Uddin DE, Glaus KD. A method for assigning authorship in multi-authored publications. *Fam Med* 1997; 29(1): 42-4.
- 3) American Psychological Association. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed, 1994. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Washington, DC: USA.
- 4) Diguisto E. Equity in authorship: a strategy for assigning credit when publishing. *Soc Sci Med*, 1994; 38(1): 55-58.
- 5) Erlen JA, Siminoff LA, Sereika SM, Sutton LB. Multiple authorship: Issues and recommendations. *J Professional Nurs*. 1997; 13(4): 262-70.
- 6) Hemmings, A. Great ethical divides: Bridging the gap between institutional review board and the researchers. *Educational Researcher*, 2005; 35(4): 12-18.
- 7) *Intellectual Property Policy and Guidelines*. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (August 2011).
- 8) *Intellectual Property Rights Policy*. Kenyatta University, Nairobi: Kenya (May 2010).
- 9) *Intellectual Property Rights Policy*. Aga Khan University (February 2019).
- 10) International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Guidelines on Authorship. *BMJ*. 1985; 291: 722.
- 11) King CR, McGuire DB, Longman AJ, Carroll-Johnson MR. Peer review, authorship, ethics, and conflict of interest. *J Nursing Scholarship*. 1997; 29(2): 163-7.
- 12) Mowatt G, Shirran L, Grimshaw JM, Rennie D, Flanagan A, Yank V, MacLennan, G et al. Prevalence of Honorary and Ghost Authorship in Cochrane Reviews. *JAMA*. 2002; 287:2769-71.
- 13) Osborne, Jason W. and Holland, Abigail. What is authorship, and what should it be? A survey of prominent guidelines for determining authorship in scientific publications. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 2009; 14(15). Available online: <http://pareonline.net/pdf/v14n15.pdf>.
- 14) Prevalence of Honorary and Ghost Authorship in Cochrane Reviews. *JAMA*. 2002; 287: 2769-71.
- 15) *Research Policy Guidelines*. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. (August 2011).
- 16) Social Sciences Directory – Editorial and Publishing Policies. [http://socialsciencesdirectory.com/index.php/socscidir/pages/view/authors\\_policies](http://socialsciencesdirectory.com/index.php/socscidir/pages/view/authors_policies) retrieved May 7, 2012.
- 17) *University Research Council minutes*: “Students are not eligible to become principal investigator of a study.” October 13, 2011.