

# Research integrity and authorship: Resource to assist collaborators

Updated August 2014

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## About

This document and the attached authorship form is a resource that can be used by researchers who are planning to collaborate on the preparation of a research output. This should be considered an optional resource and is intended as a prompt for the discussion between collaborating researchers. This sheet should be read in combination with Research Integrity Resource Sheet #2 *Publication ethics and the associated research integrity considerations*

## National and University guidelines

The national guidelines and integrity principles that apply to the dissemination of the results of research and authorship can be found in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (2007). The University has implemented, and clarified our implementation of, the [Australian Code](#) with the release of the [Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

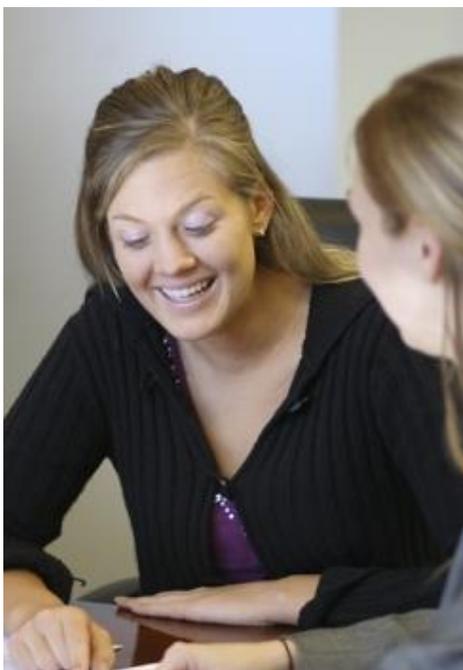
Disagreements about these matters is regrettably not an uncommon cause of disputes and allegations of a breach of the [Australian Code](#)/research misconduct. In many cases the dispute can be traced to a misunderstanding about such matters as who will be listed as authors, the acknowledgement of the contribution of others, and / or what will happen with regards to subsequent publications.

**Consequently, it is extremely important that researchers consider these matters as early as possible in a collaboration and have a shared understanding of the approach to these matters.**

## Agreement as to who can publish

Research can frequently involve collaboration between teams of researchers and others, who might inform the design of a project, play a role in the various stages of data collection, and/or contribute to the analysis of the data. This collaboration might be brief or could continue through the various stages of the work.

Whilst there are criteria that inform who can be listed as the authors of a publication / report on the results, it is important to ensure upfront that all the various people who make a contribution to the design, conduct and analysis of a project have a clear and shared understanding of who can publish results from the work. Ideally, prior to an individual's involvement in a project, there should be an email exchanged with the project leader, which articulates who will be able to publish based on the results of the research. This might be expressed in terms of a finite number of publications and should speak to future related publications that might further explore the theories / concepts / experience discussed in the initial publication



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**Who can be listed as an author?**

The [Griffith University Code](#) provides criteria that can be used to evaluate whether a contributing individual can / should be listed as an author.

Essentially, to meet these criteria include that an author must have done a combination of:

- i) Made (as appropriate to the research discipline and its established conventions) a substantial scholarly contribution to the creative or scholarly work including –
  - a. the conception and design of the research project, and/or
  - b. the analysis and interpretation of research data
- ii) Made a meaningful contribution to the writing, refining and / or final editing of the output (e.g. publication).
- iii) Be prepared to take public responsibility for the published work

**A person who does not meet these criteria must not be listed as an author**

The right to authorship is not tied to position or profession; ghost, gift, or honorary authorship is unacceptable. Authorship should reflect contribution to the work being published. Acquisition of funding, the collection of data, general supervision of the research group, provision of technical assistance or materials do not, by themselves, justify authorship.

Consequently it is possible for an individual to make a contribution to the research or publication without necessarily being an author (see **Recognising other contributions**, see below).

During the conduct of a research project, or otherwise during the drafting of a publication, the initial assessments about authorship may change (e.g. another person turns out to have made a more significant intellectual contribution to a research project and is willing to play a role in the writing of the publication).

**Order of authorship**

Many disciplines have well established conventions for the order of authorship. Similarly some publications have their own requirements about the order of authorship (e.g. after the lead author alphabetical by surname of the other authors).

Where no such conventions exist the order of authorship should reflect the relative contribution of the researchers who collaborated on the project and research output. The attached form includes a matrix to assist in the assessment of the significance of the contribution. Subsequent authors are listed in order of decreasing contribution. The matrix suggests a numerical system by which the order of authors can be determined. The executive/corresponding author is to compile the Authorship Acknowledgement for the output, have all authors sign the Acknowledgement and lodge it with the executive/corresponding author (see below) for recording as above.

## GGRS Contact

[griffith.edu.au/hdr/services-support-resources](http://griffith.edu.au/hdr/services-support-resources)

The Griffith Graduate Research School is responsible for implementing the strategic direction for higher degrees by research, research education and training. GGRS assists the academic elements in maintaining distinctive standards of recruitment, admission, candidature management and assessment of research students.

GGRS is currently development a new professional development program for HDRs and Supervisors. This new program will be implemented in early 2014.

For workshop details and resources, visit the URL to the left.



## Who is the executive/corresponding author?

One collaborating author (by agreement amongst the authors) should be nominated as executive or corresponding author for the purposes of administration and correspondence for the publication.

The executive/corresponding author is often (but not always) the lead investigator for the research project that underpins the output. This is especially the case when the output is to be the primary dissemination of the results of a research project. There can however be factors associated with the discipline, the research design and output where such an arrangement is not appropriate. In such cases, reference to the order of authorship matrix (see above) might be a useful way to identify who should be listed as the first author – i.e. the researcher who makes the largest contribution, in terms of intellectual content. Another approach is to consider the responsibilities of executive/corresponding authors (see below) and consider which of the collaborating authors is best placed to undertake that role.

## Recognising other contributions

In some cases there will be individuals who do not meet the criteria above to warrant them being listed as an author but should still be clearly acknowledged for their contribution (e.g. in an end note).

Examples include:

- the authors of earlier work that suggested the line of enquiry explored in this new work;
- persons who assisted with the data collection, but did not otherwise meet the authorship criteria;
- key informants who identified issues that the authors then explored; and
- persons who designed the data collection tool (e.g. survey questions), but did not otherwise meet the authorship criteria.

Griffith University researchers are urged to take an inclusive approach to the persons who should be acknowledged in a research output – if only as a measure of collegiate courtesy and goodwill.

## Responsibilities of collaborating researchers

Section 9.3 of the [Griffith University Code](#) lists the responsibilities of collaborating researchers, which include:

- promptly accepting or declining offers of authorship;
- offering authorship to all (including HDR candidates) who meet the authorship criteria above;
- only listing persons as authors if they meet the authorship criteria;
- appointing an executive/corresponding author, acknowledging all authors and contributors; and
- promptly agree to the submission of the final version of the output.

## CARMS Contact

Corporate Archives and Records Management Services

Contact CARMS for further information with regards to the University's disposal schedule, advice with regards to the implications for the data / materials for a specific research project, and making use of the University's central arrangements for the archiving of research data and materials.

Please also refer to [this web site](#).

**Corporate Information Officer**

Gabrielle Ingram  
ext: 57806  
g.ingram@griffith.edu.au



Collaborating researchers must also completely and accurately report the results of the research.

## Responsibilities of the executive/corresponding author

If the executive/corresponding author was not the lead investigator for the research project he/she must obtain the agreement of the lead investigator for any output that is based upon that project. The lead investigator should have details of all contributors to the research, the significance of their contributions and any agreement with regards to outputs.

When initially planning an output, the executive/corresponding author should also confirm that the lead investigator has made reasonable efforts to inform all the investigators of planned papers, presentations and other outputs. The executive/corresponding author should initiate the discussion in terms of the authorship order for the output. This discussion should be based upon the attached matrix. Even though all authors should be involved in this discussion, ultimately the final decision rests with the executive/corresponding author.

Coordinating the review, refining and editing of the draft output is one of the responsibilities of the executive/corresponding author. If the person consulted is not currently an author, the executive/corresponding author should consider whether her/his input is significant enough for them to either be included as a named author or acknowledged for their contribution to the output.

It is the responsibility of the executive/corresponding author to liaise with the potential publisher/distributor of the output. This includes coordinating the response to any editorial or other review feedback and the provision of the final version to the publisher/distributor.

The executive/corresponding author must keep all authors, and the lead investigator, informed about the consideration of the submitted output.

## Responsibilities of co-authors

All authors should treat collaborators (irrespective of whether they are authors) honestly, with integrity and respect.

Any part of an article that is critical to its main conclusion must be the responsibility of at least one author. An author's role in a research output must be sufficient for that person to take public responsibility for at least that part of the output in that person's area of expertise.

## Subsequent publications

It is not unusual for additional publications to arise from collaborative research projects (especially large and multi-faceted projects). Experience suggests that without preparation such subsequent projects can be a source of authorship disputes (see below).

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**Web site**

[www.griffith.edu.au/research/research-support](http://www.griffith.edu.au/research/research-support)  
select 'Research Integrity'

**On the site you will find:**

A link to the Australian Code

A link to the Griffith Code

The Information Sheet series

Links to animal ethics and welfare resources

Links to human research ethics resources

Other resources

Contacts

Further resources are being developed so check this site regularly

With this in mind the executive/corresponding author should coordinate a discussion with the other name authors about the approach that will be taken for subsequent publications.

A typical agreed approach might be:

1. If the subsequent publication is directly related to the current output all the current authors will be advised to discuss – whether they are being invited to collaborate in that publication; her/his interest in collaborating; and/or how the current output and her/his collaboration will be acknowledged.
2. If the subsequent publication draws upon the current output the authors of the current output may be invited to collaborate in that publication, but if not, will be acknowledged.

All contributing authors should express their agreement to this approach (e.g. via email). The executive/corresponding authors must maintain a copy of the express general agreements and the correspondence about specific subsequent discussions (e.g. the email offering to individual authors the opportunity to participate in the subsequent publication and the individual's response).

**Ongoing discussion**

The discussions about authorship matters should occur very early in the formative stages of a research output right through its writing, dissemination and beyond.

A collegiate, honest, good faith, timely and respectful approach to these discussions is vital. Disputes can often arise from misunderstandings, rather than ill will. They can nevertheless easily degenerate into acrimonious and combative situations that can be distressing for all concerned.

The attached form is intended as an optional resource. It should be used only as a tool to assist discussion between collaborators, not as the endpoint of a bureaucratic process.

A completed form can represent a clear statement of mutual agreement about the nature of individual contributions and their significance to the final publication.

**Disputes about authorship**

As was noted above, disputes concerning authorship can sometimes occur, especially when the collaborators have not discussed matters such as plans for publications, who will co-author and who will be acknowledged, role and significance of that role, and the approach to future publications.

In the event an authorship dispute arises (e.g. in terms of how the contribution of a colleague is acknowledged), every effort should be made by the executive/corresponding author to mediate a mutually satisfactory resolution. Where that is not possible, the matter may need



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## OR Contacts

## Office for Research

Manager,  
Research Ethics  
and Integrity

Rick Williams  
ext: 54375  
rick.williams@griffith.edu.au

Policy Officer,  
Human Research  
Ethics

Dr Kristie Westerlaken  
ext: 58043  
k.westerlaken@griffith.edu.au

Policy Officer,  
Animal Research  
Ethics

Dr Amanda Fernie  
ext: 56618  
a.fernie@griffith.edu.au

Systems and  
Support Officer

Ext: 54855  
research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

to be mediated by the relevant Head of Element or Dean (Research). If such mediation has proven ineffective it may require central review. Refer to RIRS #11 for more about the conduct of reviews.

## Conflicts of interest

The attached authorship form includes space to record any conflicts (actual or potentially perceived) the authors have with regards to the output. These must be discussed by the collaborators, reported and addressed as per [University policy](#), disclosed to the editor/publisher of the output and potentially within the output itself. Refer to RIRS #5 for more about the conflicts of interest.

## Research Assistants and authorship

Research Assistants should neither be automatically excluded from the list of authors, nor should they be automatically included. Even though they may have been engaged and paid to undertake a task, if they meet the test discussed at **Who can be listed as an author?** above they should be listed. If they do not meet that test, their contribution may still warrant them being acknowledged.

## HDR Supervisors and authorship

The contribution HDR Supervisors make in terms of conceptual, methodological, ethical and practical components of the design, conduct and analysis of a candidate's work, coupled with guidance with regards to the dissemination of the results of research mean that they typically will be co-author of the primary output from a HDR candidate's work. **They will not however automatically be the lead author of that output, nor an author of other publications the candidate subsequently produces unless the nature of their contribution warrants it (see Who can be listed as an author? Above).**

## Cultural advisors and contributors

The appropriate and successful conduct of some research relies upon advisers with regards to cultural protocols and traditions. Outputs of some research also may contain cultural knowledge and heritage. **The importance of such advice and contributions must be acknowledged in the associated output and will sometimes warrant an individual being named as an author.**



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*The contents of this kit (especially the authorship matrix) was based on a resource produced by Assoc Prof Romina Jamieson-Proctor, University of Southern Queensland*