



How to prevent authorship and other disputes: Views by a Named Person

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The Use of Contracts to Avoid Disputes in Research



Background

- Since 2016 the Named Person at SUND has received on average 2 inquiries per week.
- The majority of these are based on disagreements between researchers concerning authorship.
- The second most common issues is disagreement on data ownership/rights to use data.
- Other conflicts include plagiarism, data fabrication, conflicts of interest, miscommunication etc.

Authorship disputes

Authorship disputes fall into 3 categories:

- Authorship is denied (please don't steal my work)
- Authors appear unexpected on manuscripts/articles
- Disagreement on order of authorship

Authorship disputes

In the vast majority of disputes the underlying cause is a lack of alignment of expectations:

- Junior researchers feel uncomfortable bringing up discussions about authorship.
- Senior researchers feel it is their responsibility/right to decide authorship.
- Trivial unawareness of project complexity, lack of project leadership.

Responsibilities of the Named Person

- to promote responsible conduct of research (RCR)
- to help educate researchers in responsible conduct of research, including attending research group meetings and organizing meetings on particular themes
- to **prevent** breaches of responsible conduct of research from occurring, by having informal discussions with individuals who have specific questions
- to offer advice on and help **solve** disputes in research collaborations when the parties have different views of what constitutes responsible conduct
- to respond to suspicions of, or complaints about, breaches of responsible conduct of research
- to keep up to date with international standards in responsible conduct of research in order to help improve the qualifications of SUND's employees and research directors

Authorship dispute tips

Let's talk. Bring up authorship early on. Don't approach it as if it's an expectation, but if your work directly contributes to a manuscript, ask whether you will be a co-author.

Keep records. Senior colleagues might be too busy to remember contributions precisely. Keeping track yourself means that you can gently remind them, if necessary.

Get it in writing. If authorship is discussed in a meeting, follow up with an e-mail to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Stay cool. If you find that you haven't been included as an author, explain politely, in a meeting or e-mail, why you think you should be. Getting angry won't help.

How to prevent authorship disputes

Align expectations!

Written contracts or agreements should be made early in the project.

Agreements should be adjusted at regular intervals.

Order of authors should be included in the agreement.

Clear and measurable conditions for authorship should be defined.

Authorship agreement forms

Pro:

- Might prevent disagreement on authorship.
- Legitimize discussions concerning authorship.
- Educate younger researchers in how authorships are used. Rights and obligations.

Con:

- Too rigid for many research projects.
- Takes away leadership role of PI.

Authorship Agreement

Authorship on a paper, presentation, or other scholarly work indicates a substantial contribution to a project and accountability for the results. Authorship decisions often affect reputations and careers, and they can be a source of tension, even within healthy collaborations. This tool may help to facilitate open, transparent communication about authorship decisions among collaborators.

Authorship is often best discussed as early as possible in a project. Research projects can be long and involved, and parts of a project may be disseminated at different times. As a result, authorship on each part or product may vary; for example, if a project leads to more than one publication, each may have a different first author or list of authors. Even if roles have not yet become clear, early

conversations about authorship help to set expectations and to clarify the importance of open and honest discussion throughout the process. This agreement is meant to be a “living document”—one that can be revisited and changed as circumstances evolve over the course of a project.

Instructions.

The prompts and questions provided are designed to foster transparent conversations among collaborators in order to reach a shared set of expectations. All fields are required; however, acceptable answers include “not applicable” and “undetermined” if those responses best reflect the circumstances of your collaboration. A copy of this form should be distributed to all collaborators and/or stored in a shared location. If you plan multiple outputs (e.g., multiple publications; conference proceedings and articles, etc.) from one project, use a different form for each intended output. Please refer to [University Policy #318: Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures](#) for additional information and resources.

Section 2.

Project background & publication goals

Working project title and description.

Possible conferences/publication venues for submission.

Data ownership/use of data disputes

- Disagreement on data ownership in collaborative projects.
- Disagreement on data ownership after leaving institution.
- How long do researchers have ownership of databases/materials.

How to prevent data ownership disputes

Written contracts or agreements on data ownership should be part of the project plan or protocol.

As a minimum future use of data should be described in the Data Management Plan

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

UCPH Data Management
Plan for Students



2. Rights to research data

a) Are there any policies or guidelines you will have to adhere to in your project? If so, please list them here.

b) Will you reuse already existing data/material? Yes No

If yes, are there any rules for what you can and cannot do with the data? Describe the rules in brief.

c) Will you produce your own data/material? Yes No

If yes, describe what you and others can and cannot do with the data/material.