

# **Authorship Best Practices for Extension Professionals**

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## ***Why authorship is something for Extension faculty to think about***

- Possible negative outcomes of authorship confusion/misunderstandings
  - Professional ethics are in question
    - Authorship is taken seriously and it equates to professional fraud to misrepresent contribution to a scholarly work
    - Someone may take advantage to make documents look better
    - Just because you have the need to be first author and other team members don't, doesn't mean you can make yourself first
  - Frustration when work isn't properly or fairly credited to someone who deserves it or can result from giving someone else credit for something they didn't contribute to
  - This can lead to strained working relationships among colleagues (like not wanting to work with people again)
  - Unfairness to interns and students who work with us if we don't give them proper credit

## ***What authorship means and how it matters***

- Authorship represents both credit for the work represented in the output and responsibility for the work.
- Authorship should be based on contribution to a specific scholarly output.
  - For example, being part of a team should not automatically warrant inclusion as an author on all scholarly works produced by the team
  - Contributing one lesson guide to a large set of guides doesn't alone warrant inclusion on scholarly outputs related to the set as a whole, although you get credit for authoring that lesson on your CV
- There are a variety of ways someone can contribute to a specific output that warrant being listed as an author, including:
  - Project conceptualization or involvement in finalizing a project's design
  - Literature review and writing summary of existing literature
  - Developing an evaluation process or selecting a tool, measure, or survey
  - Selecting, conducting, or interpreting the data analyses
  - Initial drafting or significant revision of any section of an article, conference proposal, report, etc.
- Authorship order has meaning
  - Each authorship slot should represent the relative level of contribution to that specific output
    - Meaning that the second author should have contributed more significantly to that output than the third author and so on
  - It is considered by P&T committees

- Authorship and authorship order is relevant to almost all scholarly outputs, including:
  - Journal articles
  - Conference proposals
  - Awards
  - Blog articles
  - Fact sheets
  - Educational lesson guides
  - Impact reports
- What it means to be first author or listed first on a scholarly output
  - May mean different things on different outputs
    - For example, the person who takes primary responsibility for working on an award submission should not necessarily be listed as the first “author” on that award since it represents the work of the team.
    - Another example, for a conference proposal, the presenting author is not necessarily listed as the first author. Authorship order on the presentation should be based on contribution to the content of the presentation.
  - The first person listed on a given scholarly output has the ultimate responsibility for the content of the output.
    - They should make sure everything contained in the output is accurate.
    - They should make sure that the author list and the order of that list accurately reflects each author’s level of contribution to that particular output.
    - That all authors have had a chance to review it and given their approval to the final draft.
    - They may have to deal with hurt feelings and have hard conversations.

### ***What guidance is available***

- Different organizations and universities have created authorship guidelines to help us figure it out, including the American Psychological Association. Here are some helpful resources from the APA.
  - [apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-paper](https://www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-paper)
  - <https://www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-determination-scorecard.pdf>
  - <https://www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-agreement.pdf>

### ***Things to remember***

- All team members are not necessarily involved in all aspects of the team’s work.
- People join and leave teams which is why authorship should be determined based on their contributions to a given output, not membership on a program or project team.

### ***Our recommendations***

- Program/project team leaders should pay attention to who is being included as an author on various scholarly outputs and the authorship order because it does matter.
- Program/project teams should create a set of authorship guidelines that everyone uses to determine what is fair and accurately reflects contributions.
- It can be helpful for the first author to keep a record of each author's contribution to an output so that it is clear how authorship order was determined. This can keep the process objective.
- Have open discussions about authorship of each scholarly output throughout the development process with all authors.
  - Because projects and work related to them evolve, it works best when everyone involved in the development of that output understands what they can expect in terms of their order on the authorship list for the contribution they have been asked to make. If someone's level of contribution merits a change in the proposed order, it should be discussed and communicated to the rest of the team so everyone is on the same page and no one is surprised.
  - Individuals who feel their contribution merits a higher place in the list should bring this to the first author's attention. We should not feel afraid to advocate for ourselves when it is appropriate. Let the first author explain their rationale for the order.
  - If the output is connected to a bigger program or project, the team leader/project director should be responsible for deciding who to include and it should be based actual contributions. For example:
    - With an award, they might decide to include everyone that contributed to the program/project.
    - With a journal article, authorship should include only people that significantly contributed to the content represented in that output.
- All listed authors should have a chance to review the output before it is submitted, printed/published, presented, etc.
  - We should not add someone as an author without their knowledge (except in very special circumstances).
  - Remember, it represents them and affects their professional reputation.
- A contributor can make it clear that they don't want to be first author even if their contribution would warrant it. This could be the case when someone likes to write and contributes significantly in that way, but others have done more of the groundwork on the actual project upon which the writing is based.
- Consider how to best represent the contribution of an intern or grad student or other collaborator who is involved after the fact that helps to develop the output.
- When a program or project contributor leaves their position for any reason, consider their contribution to the output being produced.
  - If significantly adapted from someone's work, that should be acknowledged.
  - If it still uses their work, they should be listed as an author and they need to be contacted and kept in the loop and given a chance to review like all other authors.

- When a new person joins a team, consider what outputs they should appropriately get credit for
  - If they haven't meaningfully contributed to the content represented in the output, they should not be included as an author.
  - If they meaningfully contribute to an output connected to project or program, even if they weren't involved in the original project/program, that's a contribution that should warrant authorship.

### ***Summary***

- Authorship (both who is included, and in which order) is something that should be discussed at multiple points while the output is being developed.
- It's appropriate that not everyone from a team is included as an author on every output that comes out of a project or program.
- Team/project leaders sometimes have to make hard decisions about who should be included.

### ***Websites with resources for determining authorship:***

- Louisiana State policy example: [https://www.lsu.edu/policies/ps/ps\\_27.pdf](https://www.lsu.edu/policies/ps/ps_27.pdf)
- Oregon State: <https://research.uoregon.edu/manage/research-integrity-compliance/responsible-conduct-research/authorship-guidance>
- Harvard guidelines: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty-affairs/authorship-guidelines/>
- Authorship order article: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/leap.1191>
- If author has left: <https://utiabrand.tennessee.edu/extension-publications-manual/authorship-guidelines/>