

# UNMC Guidelines for Authorship on Research Publications and Other Scholarly Work

*Approved: 05/23/24*

These guidelines apply to all employees and trainees affiliated with the University of Nebraska Medical Center and its clinical partners, including Nebraska Medicine and Children's Nebraska without any exception.

## **Authorship**

UNMC expects individuals to follow the authorship guidelines outlined below issued by the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors \(ICMJE\)](#). To earn authorship, an individual should meet the following criteria, and it is expected that every individual who meets these criteria should be included as an author:

1. "Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND"
2. "Drafting the work or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; AND"
3. "Final approval of the version to be published; AND"
4. "Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved."

Likewise, consistent with the ICMJE guidelines, UNMC expects that "In addition to being accountable for the parts of the work done, an author should be able to identify which co-authors are responsible for specific other parts of the work. Finally, authors should have confidence in the integrity of the contributions of their co-authors."

All individuals who meet the first criterion are to be given the opportunity to participate in the drafting, reviewing, and final approval of the manuscript (criteria 2 and 3) and the opportunity to agree to be accountable for the work (criterion 4) and thus earn authorship. It is the responsibility of the lead author to ensure that all individuals who meet the first criterion for authorship are given the opportunity to meet the remaining criteria.

UNMC recognizes that there may be differences among the various scientific disciplines, professional standards, and journals regarding what constitutes "substantial contributions" and the extent to which authors must participate to earn authorship. For example, collecting a particular data set or conducting a particular analysis, may represent a substantial contribution in some disciplines or situations, but not in others.

Because earning authorship requires that an individual meet all of the above four criteria, obtaining the funding for a project alone does not qualify an individual for authorship. On the other hand, receiving financial compensation for their work does not preclude an individual from authorship. Rather, all individuals who meet the criteria for authorship should be included as authors, regardless of receiving financial support for their contribution.

## Acknowledgments

Individuals who have contributed the research/scholarly work or the publication, but who do not meet all criteria for authorship should be listed in the acknowledgements. Individuals in this category include editorial assistants and writing consultants, and those who provided reagents or technical support, participated in helpful discussions, and/or supplied valuable feedback.

## Authorship Roles

The “**lead author**” of a manuscript is the individual who oversees the preparation and submission of the manuscript. This individual is usually the corresponding author and typically has played a major role in the oversight and/or generation of research presented. In situations where there are co-corresponding authors, one of these individuals should be designated as the lead author. In some fields, the lead author may also be the first author. However, in other fields, the “**first author**” is the person who did the bulk of the research presented and prepared at least the first draft of the manuscript. There may be co-first authors. Authors who are neither a first author nor the lead author are considered “co-authors” for the purpose of these guidelines.

It is expected that the **lead author** be responsible for compliance with these guidelines by:

1. Ensuring that all individuals who could potentially meet the authorship criteria outlined above are given the opportunity to do so.
2. Verifying that the first author(s) and all co-authors meet the authorship criteria.
3. Obtaining consent for authorship from the first author(s) and all co-authors.
4. Providing the first author(s) and all co-authors with a draft of the manuscript to review and approve.
5. Following journal-specific requirements regarding authorship and author review.
6. Doing due diligence to ensure the integrity of the entirety of the research presented.

It is expected that the **first author(s)** and **co-authors** be responsible for compliance with these guidelines by:

1. Giving consent to be an author and thereby acknowledging that they meet the authorship criteria outlined above.
2. Reviewing and approving the manuscript.
3. Doing due diligence to ensure the integrity of the appropriate portions of the research.

## Unacceptable Attribution of Authorship

The practices of allocating guest, gift, and ghost authorship are inconsistent with the process for awarding authorship based on the ICJME criteria. As such, these practices are considered unacceptable and represent violations of these guidelines.

Guest authorship (aka honorary, courtesy, or prestige authorship) is the awarding authorship to an individual who does not meet the criteria in the hope that the individual’s reputation will increase the likelihood of publication, the credibility and/or status of the work, or the prospects of publishing in a particular journal.

Gift authorship is the awarding of authorship to an individual who does not meet the criteria based on a sense of obligation or deference or with the expectation of a favor or benefit in

return. Allocation of authorship to an individual who secures the funding for the research but does not meet all the criteria can be considered a form of gift authorship and is unacceptable.

Ghost authorship is either the hiring of an unnamed individual who did not participate in the research to write the manuscript or the failure to include someone who made a significant contribution to the work as an author.

### **Authorship Order**

The UNMC guidelines for authorship do not outline or define the order of authorship. To the extent possible, authorship order, including the potential for co-first author or co-corresponding author attributions should be discussed at the outset. Such discussions should also be revisited as the research evolves. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author(s) to ensure that these discussions occur. Ultimately, the order of authors should be agreed upon all authors on the research study.

### **Addressing Authorship Disputes and Potential Violations of These Guidelines**

Individuals seeking assistance to resolve a disagreement regarding authorship should first consult their department chair or unit/division head. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, then the assistance of the Research Integrity Office should be sought. Likewise, queries regarding interpretation of the authorship guidelines or concerns about violations of these guidelines should be directed to the Research Integrity Office.

Authorship disputes are not considered research misconduct, but knowing, intentional, or reckless violation of these guidelines represents a conduct violation, and in some cases, may be considered a form of retaliation. Thus, resolution of authorship disputes may involve corrective action as determined through the [University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct](#), [Faculty Senate Professional Conduct Committee](#), the [Graduate Student Conflict Resolution Procedure](#) or other relevant body or process as appropriate.

Concerns related to research misconduct (i.e. falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism), including authorship concerns specifically related to plagiarism should be directed to the [UNMC Research Integrity Officers](#), by UNMC Compliance Hotline at [1-844-348-9584](tel:1-844-348-9584), or by completing a secure, online [form](#).