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Policy Steward: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability)

Authorship Policy (MPF1181)

1. Objectives

1.1. The objective of this policy is to prescribe the standards of responsible, honest, fair and accurate acknowledgement of authorship contribution required by the University of Melbourne and to facilitate compliance with The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018) (the Code), the supporting Guides, including the *Authorship Guide* (2019) and the University's Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy (MPF1318).

2. Scope

2.1. Excluding patents, this policy applies to the dissemination of all Research Outputs where a University of Melbourne Researcher has contributed or is attributed as an author. This policy also applies to the attribution of authorship in supplementary outputs developed in the course of research such as research proposals, grant applications, reports for funding agencies and tenders.

3. Authority

3.1. This policy is made under the University of Melbourne Act 2009 (Vic) and the Vice-Chancellor Regulation and is to be read in conjunction with the Code and with any other policies specifically referred to herein.

4. Policy

4.1. The University is committed to ensuring the community can trust the integrity of the University's research by promoting and fostering a culture of best research practice, in which its researchers accurately acknowledge all those, and only those, who have contributed to the research. The University requires that its researchers adhere to:

- a) the Principles and Responsibilities of responsible authorship practices as described in the Code; and
- b) the Procedural Principles described in Section 5 of this policy.

4.2. In accordance with the Code, researchers must appropriately recognise, value, and respect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and afford appropriate acknowledgement and consideration of authorship within the planning and dissemination of research.

5. Procedural principles

5.1. Authorship recognises a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output. In determining this policy, the University considers that authorship:

- a) must be an accurate reflection of contribution to research and its output/s;
- b) must be assigned fairly and consistently as aligned with established disciplinary practices;
- c) must be agreed to by all contributors and communicated clearly and transparently between them;

- d) should be approached with generosity whilst remaining true to the policy requirements; and
- e) must be handled in a manner consistent with legal rights and obligations under intellectual property law.

Authorship criteria

5.2. Individuals qualify as authors if they have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output. Acknowledging that some journals, disciplines, and institutions may require a higher threshold, the University (with rare exceptions) requires authorship contributions to in general meet at least two or more of the following five criterion (as discussed in the authorship guide that accompanies the Code):

- a) conception and design of the research described in the research output;
- b) acquisition and/or processing of research data where it has required significant intellectual judgement or input;
- c) substantial contribution of knowledge that influences the research and its output;
- d) analysis or interpretation of research data; and
- e) drafting significant parts of the research output or redrafting the research output so as to critically change or substantively advance the interpretation.

5.3. Failure to attribute authorship honestly, transparently, accurately, and fairly constitutes a breach of the Code and this policy.

5.4. Authorship must not be attributed when a researcher has not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output by meeting the criteria in clause 5.2 . Authorship should not be attributed solely on the basis of the provision of:

- a) Supervision;
- b) funding, data, materials, infrastructure, or access to equipment;
- c) routine technical support;
- d) editorial assistance (e.g., proof-reading); or
- e) technical advice or technical assistance.

5.5. In addition, authorship should not be attributed solely on the basis of a paid or voluntary contribution, or the position or status of an individual (gift or guest authorship).

5.6. Contributions to research and its output that do not meet the authorship criteria described in 5.2 must be appropriately recognised by acknowledgement in the research output in a manner appropriate for the type of contribution and research output.

5.7. Authors must:

- a) agree to be listed as an author;
- b) agree on authorship in writing prior to submission for publication and/or dissemination of the research output; and
- c) agree to be accountable for the research output.

Authors are directly responsible for the integrity and accuracy of their contribution and should take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the contributions of all other co-authors.

Researcher responsibilities

5.8. All authors have a responsibility to ensure that reasonable efforts are made to properly recognise all contributors to the research and its output, including students, Graduate Researchers, and Research Assistants, through authorship or acknowledgement, including appropriate recording of preferred name and affiliation.

5.9. At the earliest possible stage of planning a research output, all researchers should discuss authorship between potential co-authors and contributors. To identify and reflect any changes in circumstances and/or contributions to the research, authorship discussions should continue throughout the course of the research.

5.10. The purpose of authorship discussions is to reach an Authorship Agreement. Discussions should include all potential co-authors, and cover basic and discipline-specific aspects of authorship, such as:

- a) the expectations of individuals and the collaboration;
- b) the expected outcomes from the research;
- c) the probable research outputs that will be generated;
- d) the roles and responsibilities of researchers who will contribute to the work;
- e) who will be an author (inclusive of authorship order and consideration of co-authorship);
- f) who will receive acknowledgement; and
- g) who will be the Coordinating Author.

5.11. In addition to fulfilling the criteria for authorship, the Coordinating Author is responsible for managing the communication between the co-authors and managing and implementing the Authorship Agreement. They are normally responsible for overseeing the research and attesting to the integrity and accuracy of the research as a whole.

5.12. Researchers should keep a record of all authorship discussions on the understanding that changes in authorship over the course of research are likely, and Authorship Agreements should be reviewed to reflect these changes. These records should be made available to all researchers involved in the research.

5.13. Final authorship must be agreed to by all authors prior to dissemination of the research output, via a finalised Authorship Agreement, except in the case of rare exceptional circumstances permitted by the Code (e.g., where an author is deceased).

5.14. An Authorship Agreement must include:

- a) author's preferred name and title;
- b) author's affiliation(s);
- c) a description of all individual's contributions made to the research and its output;
- d) justification of decisions regarding acknowledgement and authorship inclusion and exclusion, inclusive of where an author has been included due to exceptional circumstances, where applicable;
- e) the agreed authorship order, where applicable; and
- f) identification of the Coordinating Author.

5.15. A person who might reasonably regard themselves as qualifying to be an author must not be included or excluded without their written agreement and a record of this agreement must be kept.

5.16. Where the Coordinating Author is a University of Melbourne researcher, they must distribute and maintain records of the Authorship Agreement(s) for at least five years and in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy ([MPF1242](#)) and the Records Management Policy ([MPF1106](#)). Where the Coordinating Author is not a University of Melbourne researcher, authors are encouraged to keep their own records.

5.17. Researchers should obtain permission from named contributors before acknowledging them in research outputs, and acknowledge them in an agreed manner.

5.18. Where researchers are unsure about authorship conventions, they should seek advice from a senior researcher in the relevant discipline or research field and consult any available guidance from publishers in the relevant field. A [Research Integrity Advisor](#) can also be consulted for advice as can Advisory Committee Chairs for Graduate Researchers.

5.19. Failure to reach agreement for authorship constitutes a dispute. Where a dispute arises between authors it is to be resolved in accordance with this policy.

Management of authorship disputes

5.20. For the purpose of this policy, an authorship dispute arises where two or more researchers (Disputing Parties) are unable to reach agreement regarding acknowledgment or authorship inclusion.

5.21. Disputing Parties are to attempt to resolve the authorship dispute through direct dialogue, with records of the discussion maintained and outcomes communicated to all involved. The authorship dispute resolution process is outlined [here](#) .

5.22. Where this is unsuccessful, authorship disputes should be referred by the disputing parties or the coordinating author to the Dean of the disputing parties or Delegate to facilitate dispute resolution.

5.23. Where more than one faculty is represented in a dispute, the relevant Deans should reach agreement on the appropriate Dean to facilitate dispute resolution.

5.24. If there is a Conflict of Interest with the Dean that cannot be appropriately managed, the dispute should be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) to facilitate dispute resolution.

5.25. A disputing party who is not a University of Melbourne researcher cannot be required to comply with this policy, thus it is at the discretion of the relevant Dean, as guided by the principles and responsibilities of the Code, to determine the appropriate course of engagement with another institution to facilitate dispute resolution.

5.26. Where requested, the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity can support local level facilitation.

5.27. Records of agreement (i.e., Authorship Agreement) reached after resolution by direct dialogue or facilitation shall be maintained by the parties to the dispute and the facilitator where applicable.

5.28. Where all reasonable efforts and formal processes have been exhausted, and resolution of the dispute is not reached, the output should not be published.

5.29. Any potential breaches of the Code identified by the facilitator, coordinating author or disputing parties during the dispute resolution process must be referred to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, per the Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy ([MPF1318](#)).

5.30. Any potential breaches of the Code referred to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity will be managed in accordance with the Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy ([MPF1318](#)).

5.31. Where an authorship dispute relates to authorship of a research output post publication and/or dissemination, the matter must be referred to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, as this represents a potential breach of the Code, as per the Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy ([MPF1318](#)).

5.32. Legal representation for any party to an authorship dispute decided under this policy is not ordinarily permitted.

5.33. Nothing in this policy prevents researchers from seeking independent legal advice or legal redress outside of this policy.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

<i>Role/Decision/Action</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Conditions and limitations</i>
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<p>Are directly responsible for the integrity and accuracy of their contribution, and should take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the contributions of all other co-authors. Should maintain records relating to their direct contributions to research and its output, and authorship discussions and decisions.</p>	<p>Authors</p>	
<p>Responsible for implementing the Authorship Agreement including managing communication between the co-authors and maintaining and distributing records of the Authorship Agreement(s) and related documentation. Normally oversees the research and can attest to the integrity and accuracy of the research as a whole.</p>	<p>Coordinating Author</p>	
<p>Facilitates dispute resolution where attempt to reach resolution amongst researchers is unsuccessful. Must maintain records of dispute facilitation and decisions of resolution. Where a potential breach of the Code is identified, refers dispute to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.</p>	<p>Dean or Delegate of Coordinating Author's faculty</p>	<p>Will recuse themselves and delegate responsibility in cases where there could be a perceived or actual conflict of interest in their involvement.</p>
<p>Receives concerns regarding potential breaches of the Code. Oversees the University's processes for responding to potential breaches of the Code</p>	<p>Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity</p>	<p>Will recuse themselves and delegate responsibility in cases where there could be a perceived or actual conflict of interest in their involvement.</p>

<p>Can provide initial support to facilitators for dispute resolution where required and provides support in the handling of concerns relating to potential breaches of the Code.</p>	<p>Office of Research Ethics and Integrity</p>	
<p>Advise on responsible research practices, inclusive of discipline specific authorship and citation practices and conventions. Can provide advice on raising a concern relating to a potential breach of the Code to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity.</p>	<p>Research Integrity Advisors</p>	<p>Appointment by nomination from an Associate Dean of Research or equivalent. Will delegate responsibility in cases where there could be a perceived or actual conflict of interest in their involvement.</p>

7. Definitions

Acknowledgement means the practice of formally acknowledging all contributors to research and its output. This may include contributions made by researchers, technical support, funding bodies, research infrastructure facilities and organisations.

Author means an individual or writing group that has made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output and is willing to be responsible for that contribution, and who has agreed to be listed as an author as described in this Policy at clauses 5.2-5.6.

Authorship Agreement means a record of contributions to research and its output, inclusive of the agreed authorship inclusions and exclusions. An Authorship Agreement should identify the Coordinating Author. The record of Authorship Agreement must be written, and preferably using the University Authorship Agreement template when the Coordinating Author is a University of Melbourne researcher, however it may be informal (e.g. email, letters, etc. that outline the discussions and decisions being made). Where there is a formal collaboration agreement that specifies authorship, the collaboration agreement serves as the Authorship Agreement.

Authorship exclusion occurs when a contributor does not meet the requirements for authorship as described within this policy or declines authorship.

Authorship dispute means a disagreement between individuals (Disputing Parties) who are enrolled at, employed by, or otherwise associated with the University of Melbourne regarding acknowledgement and authorship inclusion. 'Disputing Parties' include co-authors, potential co-authors, and other contributors to the research output. An authorship dispute does not include a complaint made to the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity about a potential breach of the Code by an individual who all authors agree has not contributed to or otherwise been involved in the relevant research or research output.

Authorship inclusion is offered to those who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output and meet the requirements for authorship as described within this policy.

Breach of the Code means a failure to meet the obligations and requirements of the Code.

Conflict of Interest means where a researcher may be unduly influenced by other, competing interests. This could be a financial or non-financial interest and may be a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest.

Contribution of knowledge means circumstances where a body of knowledge is contributed to research and its output in which that knowledge significantly influences the research and/or its output, for example Indigenous knowledges obtained through unpublished manuscripts, or audio, or video recordings. Such contributions should be considered for acknowledgement and/or authorship, where appropriate.

Contributor means all those, including researchers and others, who have made a contribution to research and/or its output, whether qualifying for authorship or not.

Coordinating Author means an individual who is responsible for implementing the Authorship Agreement including managing communication between the co-authors and maintaining and distributing records of the Authorship Agreement(s) and related documentation. The Coordinating Author may also be referred to via varying terminology dependent on the discipline, for example: senior author, lead author, primary author, corresponding author, responsible author, etc.

Exceptional circumstances or rare exceptions means a circumstance that is out of the ordinary, special or uncommon. An exceptional circumstance cannot be one that is regularly or normally encountered. Such circumstances must be justifiable, recorded in the authorship agreement, and agreed to by all authors.

Facilitation means the process through which an appointed facilitator aids disputing parties in coming to an agreed resolution and Authorship Agreement.

Gift authorship occurs where an individual is included as an author, who has not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution, but inclusion is based on the position or profession of that individual, such as their role as the author's supervisor or head of department. This is not an acceptable practice and is inconsistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Code and this Policy.

Graduate Researcher means a person admitted to a Research Degree as defined in the Courses, Subjects, Awards and Programs Policy ([MPF1327](#)) or whose research under consideration was undertaken while admitted to a Research Degree.

Guest authorship occurs where an individual is included as an author, who has not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution, but inclusion would elevate the esteem of the research. This is not an acceptable practice and is inconsistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Code and this Policy.

Non-traditional research output (NTRO) means research outputs that do not take the form of published books, book chapters, journal articles, conference publications or traditional forms of outputs. Examples include: original creative works, live performance of creative works, recorded/rendered creative works, curated or produced substantial public exhibitions and events, research reports for an external body portfolio.

Researcher means any University Student, Employee and honorary (noting that an honorary may be a clinical fellow or an emeritus appointment) who is, engaged in research and/or research support at the University, as defined in the University Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy ([MPF1318](#)). This is inclusive of Graduate Researchers and Research Assistants.

Research data means any information, facts or observations that have been collected or recorded during the research process for the purpose of substantiating research findings. Research data may exist in digital, analogue or combined forms and such data may be numerical, descriptive or visual, raw or processed, analysed or unanalysed, experimental, observational or machine generated. Examples of research data include: documents, spreadsheets, audio and video recordings, transcripts, databases, images, field notebooks, diaries, process journals, artworks, compositions, mathematical arguments, laboratory notebooks, algorithms, scripts, survey responses and questionnaires.

Research Output can be anything in hardcopy, electronic or other form that communicates or makes available the products of research, inclusive of non-traditional research outputs. This includes, but is not limited to: journal articles, books and book chapters, conference abstracts, reports, creative works, exhibitions, videos, performances, web-based publications, software and the making of any form of scholarly work available over the Internet.

Supplementary outputs can be anything in hardcopy, electronic or other form that is developed in the course of research that is not the primary research output, such as research proposals, grant applications, reports for funding agencies and tenders.

The Code means the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018).

POLICY APPROVER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

POLICY STEWARD

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability)

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed by 17 July 2026.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections Modified
1	Academic Board	29 April 2013	29 April 2013	N/A
2	Policy Officer	1 December 2021	1 December 2021	Hyperlink fixed
3	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	16 March 2023	4 April 2023	Changed Policy Steward from Director, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity to Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability)
4				Minor errors relating to policy library application, resulting in duplicate versions with formatting issues.

6	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	14 June 2023	17 July 2023	<p>Entire policy modified to facilitate compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018), accompanying Authorship Guide, and incorporation of the Authorship Procedure (MPF1041) and Authorship Dispute Resolution Procedure (MPF1039).</p> <p>Major review requirement under MPF1308 met and next review date updated.</p>
7	Policy Officer	24 July 2023	24 July 2023	5.2 The word 'Researcher' has been replaced with the word 'Individuals'. Two links updated.
8	Policy Officer	24 July 2023	24 July 2023	Amended formatting error in 5.18.

9	Policy Officer	28 July 2023	28 July 2023	Amended inconsistencies in version history and policy steward title to reflect document history accurately.
10	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	22 November 2023	23 November 2023	Revisions to improve the clarity of the policy.
11	Policy Officer	21 December 2023	21 December 2023	Change to formatting to amend issue with downloaded Word versions of MPF1181.10.