



**THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY**  
WASHINGTON, DC

**Responsible University Official:** Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences

**Responsible Office:** Health Sciences Dean’s Office

**Last Revised Date:** March 7, 2018

## **Authorship on Scientific and Scholarly Publications**

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### **Policy Statement**

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Scientific and scholarly publications, defined as articles, abstracts, presentations at professional meetings and grant applications, provide the main vehicle to disseminate findings, thoughts, and analysis to the scientific, academic, and lay communities. For academic activities to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, they must be published in sufficient detail and accuracy to enable others to understand and replicate the results. For the authors of such work, successful publication improves opportunities for academic funding and promotion while enhancing scientific and scholarly achievement.

### **Reason for Policy**

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One of the missions of The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences (GW SMHS) is to foster the discovery and application of new knowledge through basic and clinical research in the biomedical and relevant social sciences. Coupled with this mission is the responsibility to communicate truthfully this knowledge to the rest of the scientific community. Scholarly integrity and the responsible conduct and reporting of research are essential for maintaining public trust in the research enterprise.

### **Who is Governed by this Policy**

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Faculty, Staff, and Students affiliated with GW Health Sciences.

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## **Policy**

### I. Criteria for Defining Authorship

An author is generally considered to be an individual who has made substantial intellectual contributions to a scientific investigation. All authors should meet the following four (4) criteria:

- i. Contribute significantly to the conception, design, and execution, and/or in the analysis and interpretation of data.
- ii. Participate in drafting, reviewing, and/or revising the manuscript for intellectual content.
- iii. Approve the version of the manuscript to be published.
- iv. Be able to explain and defend in public or scholarly settings that portion of the study for which he or she was directly responsible.

It is recognized that definitions of authorship differ among the various scientific disciplines and professional journals, as may standards for “substantial” and “scholarly effort”. For example, design/development of research equipment, or collection of a specific data set, may be substantial scholarly effort in certain disciplines. The expectation of this policy is that standards and criteria for authorship in an academic discipline will be widely recognized and consistent across that discipline (including GW SMHS), and consistent with the journal (publication) in which the work appears.

### II. Responsible (Lead) Author

One author, designated as the Responsible (lead) author must assume overall responsibility for each publication (e.g., primary research report, abstract, review article, book chapter) submitted from GW SMHS. The Responsible Author also often serves as the managerial and corresponding author, as well as providing a significant contribution to the research effort. The responsible or lead author is not necessarily the principal investigator or project leader and does not necessarily have to be the first author (often the last author). The responsible author is

typically the faculty member who leads the study and who assumes the responsibility for obtaining and documenting consent of co-authors, coordinating and completing the work, drafting of the manuscript, satisfying pertinent rules for submitting the manuscript and any required revisions, and coordinating responses of the group to inquiries or challenges. The Responsible Author should exercise due diligence in assuring the validity and integrity of the entire manuscript.

### III. Order of Authorship

The selection of the Responsible (lead) Author, inclusion of collaborator(s) as co-author(s), and the order of authorship should ideally be determined by the research team as a whole. Decisions regarding authorship and its order should, when possible, be determined before the study begins and any disputes resolved at that time. It is not possible for the School to define the order of authorship but should be determined and agreed upon by the study team as a whole. A written memo attesting to this determination is valuable documentation if a dispute subsequently arises. Changes in authorship, which take place as a study proceeds, should similarly be documented in writing. The Responsible Author should assure that all collaborators are appropriately recognized and that study collaborators listed as co-authors meet the criteria for authorship described in this policy.

### IV. Co-authors

All co-authors of a publication are responsible for providing consent to authorship to the responsible (lead) author prior to submission. The corresponding author will assume primary responsibility for obtaining and documenting consent from all authors. By providing consent to authorship to the responsible author, co-authors are acknowledging that they have reviewed and approved the manuscript, including the validity and integrity of the manuscript.

### V. Students, Fellows and Research Associates

All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship as defined in this policy. Faculty should be aware of their responsibility to ensure that students, postdoctoral fellows, and other research associates who participate in the preparation of manuscripts are recognized as authors in publications covering the results of research in which they were active participants.

### VI. Acknowledgements

Individuals who have made some contributions to a publication, but who do not meet the criteria for authorship, such as staff, editorial assistants, medical writers or other individuals can provide a valuable contribution to the writing and editing of publications. Since those contributions do not meet the criteria for authorship under this policy, those individuals should be listed in an acknowledgement and/or contributorship section of the work.

### VII. Unacceptable Authorship

An administrative relationship, acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of a research group alone does not constitute authorship. In addition, the referral of patients in a clinical study does not in and of itself warrant co-authorship status.

Guest, gift and ghost authorship are also inconsistent with the definition of authorship and are unacceptable and inconsistent with this policy.

Guest (honorary, courtesy, or prestige) authorship is defined as granting authorship out of appreciation or respect for an individual, or in the belief that expert standing of the guest will increase the likelihood of publication, credibility, or status of work.

Gift authorship is credit, offered from a sense of obligation, tribute, or dependence, within the context of an anticipated benefit, to an individual who has not contributed to the work.

Ghost authorship is the failure to identify as an author, someone who made substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript that merited authorship, or an unnamed individual who participate in writing the manuscript. Ghost authorship may range from authors for hire with the understanding that they will not be credited, to major contributors not named as an author.

Unethical Authorship Practices to Avoid:

- Overlapping Publications – involves the slicing of data collected during a single research study into different pieces that form the basis of individual published manuscripts in the same or different journals
- Premature public statements – Making research results public before reviewed
- Redundant publication – publication of a paper that overlaps substantially with one already published without appropriate acknowledgment of the first publication.
- Self-Plagiarism – When authors reuse their own previously written work or data in 'new' written product without letting the reader know that the material has appeared elsewhere

#### VII. Multi-Authorship/Multi-Center Manuscript

These criteria are considered important because there has been a gradual diffusion of responsibility for multi-authored or collaborative studies that has led to the publication of papers for which no single author was prepared to take full responsibility.

Multi-authorship, including authorship on papers from multi-center studies, raises special issues, such as the ability of an author to evaluate all aspects of a study and the sequence of listing of authors. Authors should discuss these issues openly before initiating a multi-authored project and repeatedly during the course of such work.

All authors should approve the final version of a manuscript and should be prepared to take public responsibility for the work. It is recognized, however, that medical studies often involve investigators from several specialties, and it may not always be possible for a single investigator to confirm each piece of data used in the written report. It is therefore the responsibility of each participating investigator to be actively involved in verifying the sections of a manuscript that discuss his or her specialty area and to assure all co-authors that the sections are accurate and valid.

## IX. Disputes Over Authorship

In general, authorship issues and related matters should be freely discussed and decided upon early during the research process and prior to writing of the manuscript. However, agreements relating to authorship may need to be changed during the collection of data and preparation of the manuscript. Possible disagreements include interpretation of the criteria for authorship, order of listing of authors, editorial control of content and focus of the manuscript, selection of journal or other publication media, and choice of Responsible Author.

Disagreements between or among authors should be resolved whenever possible in a collegial manner by the Responsible (lead) Author in consultation with the other author(s), relevant research personnel, and any other individual who claims authorship. Generally, the Responsible Author has the primary responsibility for making decisions on authorship and other matters related to the publication of manuscripts.

When matters of authorship and related issues cannot be resolved in a satisfactory manner by the Responsible Author, other author(s), research personnel, and other individuals who claim authorship, the Responsible Author and/or other author(s)/research personnel should present their controversy in writing to the Department Chair. The manuscript in question should not be submitted for publication before these issues are resolved. The Departmental Chair should meet with the individuals involved in the dispute, collect and retain appropriate information, and make a recommendation in writing. When the authorship dispute involves the Chair, or if the dispute involves more than one department, then a neutral mediator will be appointed by the Dean/designee.

In the event that a satisfactory resolution still cannot be achieved by the Department Chair or by a neutral mediator, then the Dean/designee will appoint three senior faculty members to investigate the dispute. The review group will not include individuals with personal responsibility for the research but should include faculty members with relevant qualifications to the dispute in question (i.e., research expertise, training of graduate students, experience with clinical trials, active peer-reviewed research, etc.) In the case of disputes involving faculty members from other schools within GW, a member of the committee should be on the faculty of the affected school. The committee will make a recommendation in writing to the Dean and he/she will evaluate this recommendation and render a decision. The decision of the Dean is final.

## X. Disputes Over Authorship in Multi-Center Studies

Publication, presentation, and authorship policies should be determined and accepted by all participating investigators at the beginning of any multi-center study. Specifically, it is recommended that a Publication Subcommittee representing all Investigators should be established at the beginning of any multi-center study for the purposes of expediting, coordinating, and monitoring the publication

processes. Inherent in these charges is the responsibility to adjudicate disputes over authorship.

If a dispute between investigators from separate centers does arise, the solution to the dispute should arise from within the organizational structure of the multi-center study. If a dispute cannot be resolved, the principle of academic freedom generally indicates that an investigator has the right to present those data for which he/she is contract custodian. However, this right should be tempered by the concept of collegial collaboration.

#### XI. Financial Conflicts of Interest

Authors shall fully disclose, in all manuscripts to journals, grant applications, and at professional meetings, any relevant financial interest (1) that is or could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest, or (2) that is required to be disclosed by GW SMHS and/or the sponsor, the journal, or the meeting organizer.

#### XII. Scientific Misconduct

Scientific misconduct is any action that willfully compromises the integrity of scientific research, such as plagiarism or the falsification or fabrication of data. Such misconduct represents a serious violation of our mission and the public trust and violations should be referred to the Dean. For

For supplemental information, please refer to [GW policy on Research Misconduct](#).

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## Definitions

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*This section should define any terms used in the policy that are important to compliance with it or that might be misunderstood. Defined terms are capitalized.*

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## Procedures

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<http://my.gwu.edu/files/policies/ResearchMisconductPolicy.pdf>

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## Contacts

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Contact	Telephone	Email
Health Sciences Dean's Office	202-994-0384	hsp@gwu.edu


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## Document History

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- **Last Reviewed Date:** March 7, 2018
- **Last Revised Date:** March 7, 2018
- **Policy Origination Date:** November 2017

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## Who Approved This Policy

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Reamer Bushardt, Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences  
Mary Lynn Reed, Senior Counsel, Medical Center

*This policy, as well as all [university policies](#), are located on the [Office of Compliance and Privacy's](#) home page.*