

Publication Policy – Faculty of Medicine and Health

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Publication Policy – Faculty of Medicine and Health (MH)

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I. Background

When discussing research ethics questions regarding scientific publication and authorship are regularly raised. The basis of publication ethics is that it should adhere to The Vancouver rules for authorship (formal name: Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals, published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, ICMJE) (1). The interpretation of the Vancouver rules varies which can result in different handling and create insecurities for many, particularly more junior researchers. A Swedish study showed that many PhD-students at medical faculties experience that the Vancouver rules are not followed (2). There has been critique against the medical faculties for lack of distinct application of the publication rules. Authorship is a very important part of academic merits and therefore, it is imperative that the principles are well known, transparent, commonly accepted and applied.

Thus, there is reason to have a policy for the Faculty of Medicine and Health concerning authorship and publication policies for all publications coming from the faculty, regardless of field. This policy is supposed to be a support for all persons doing research at the Faculty (employed, adjunct, affiliated or students) to achieve a good research policy and an ongoing discussion on publication ethics. The document does not aim to control details but rather to work as a guidance. To protect the trust in research in medical and health sciences and counteract the risk of errors, due to mistake or lack of knowledge, is the uttermost goal.

II. Codex and guidelines to encourage good research practice

Several organizations and institutions have developed codices or guidelines to promote a good research and publication practice. Some important examples which are recommended are ALLEA (3), Codex (4) and (in Swedish) the Swedish Research Council's pamphlet "God forskningsset" (5). These can be downloaded free of charge.

III. Publishing within medicine and health

All publications should follow the Vancouver rules, the 4:th edition. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)¹ has, based on the Vancouver rules, published "Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals" (1). The recommendations apply to all who plan to publish in journals connected to ICMJE, *i.e.* most serious medical journals. The recommendations were updated in December 2019 and should be applicable for other scientific areas outside Medicine and Health as well (1). The recommendations aim to ascertain that persons who have contributed significantly to a publication get proper recognition but also are made aware of the responsibility they have for a publication as a co-author.

¹ An association that organizes editors of medical journals.

The Vancouver rules for authorship

To justify for authorship ALL four criteria should be met (1). **Please note** that all persons fulfilling criteria 1 should also be given possibility to fulfill criteria 2, 3 and 4 (1).

- **Criteria 1**
Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work.
- **Criteria 2**
Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content.
- **Criteria 3**
Final approval of the version to be published.
- **Criteria 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.

To justify for authorship all the four criteria above need to be met. If some, but not all, criteria are met, the person should be invited to be mentioned in "*Acknowledgements*".

IV. For scientific publication from the Faculty of Medicine and Health the following guidelines should be considered.

To publish

- Research results should be made public. This is an ethical obligation to patients or study participants who have contributed to the study but also to those funding the study. Thus, all results, even neutral or negative should be published. Negative or neutral studies can be very important for an overall analysis of the field and is necessary when performing systematic reviews or meta-analyses. Furthermore, unnecessary research can be avoided.
- Before first recruitment to a clinical treatment study with patients or other studies involving study persons, it should be registered in a public, searchable registry such as WHO International Clinical Registry Platform (ICTRP), NIH's ClinicalTrials (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/>), the German clinical trial registry (DRKS), or the European Union Drug Regulating Authorities Clinical Trials (EudraCT). This is a requirement for publication in any of ICMJE's journals. Study protocol can also be published.
- Avoid to divide a study into multiple publications (so called "salami publishing") if not specifically called for. However, one study may have several free-standing research questions or be too expansive for a single publication which then may motivate a division into several publications.
- Follow guidelines for different types of studies. Within the EQUATOR Network guidelines are collected for most type of studies within Medicine and Health Science. See: <https://www.equator-network.org/>.
- Orcid-number for authors should be noted to simplify identification.
- The school should have a system that enables following studies with ethical approval over time. Copies of ethical approvals and the entire ethical application to the Ethics committee (Etikprövningsmyndigheten, before 2019-01-01: Etikprövningsnämnden) should be kept at the school regardless of the study being performed at ORU or at Örebro County Region (RÖL). This is particularly important for PhD-students and valid regardless of the principal of the application.
- Open access is encouraged. Several of the large publishing houses have agreements with ORU that waive the open access fee. There is also a fund for journals not included in the agreements. See: <https://www.oru.se/english/research/research-support/publishing-your-research/open-access/>

Choice of journal

- Publishing should be done in international English journals with "peer review" system following ICMJE recommendations.

- The researcher is responsible for avoiding so called predatory journals or "pseudojournals". There are different lists that can help identifying predatory journals as well as the University library. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure this for PhD-student's articles. If possible, citations from predatory journals should be avoided.
- Impact factor for journals differ substantially between different research fields and is not suitable for comparison between scientific areas. Within a research area, the researchers and research groups should aim for higher ranking journals in the research area.

Authorship and co-authorship

- To be an author of an article the four criteria of the Vancouver rules (above) should be fulfilled (1). However, what "*a substantial contribution*" means can be hard to distinguish, but a reasonable interpretation could be that without that person's contribution, the work would not have been possible to carry out in the way that is presented. To be a supervisor of a PhD student is not in itself enough for co-authorship, but it is the work done on the project that should be decisive.
- Normally, an agreement of authorship and order of authorship should be made at project start and documented in the research plan. If changes in the group or in the work needed or contributed to the project change over time this should be discussed and documented. The documentation can then be used when reporting each author's contribution to the journal. It is important that PhD-students are aware and part of the discussion about co-authorship. An ongoing discussion about this should be initiated by the supervisor early in the research education.
- Equal contribution and shared first or last authorship may be an alternative if several authors have contributed equally to the work. In interdisciplinary or translational research, it is common that different persons are responsible for different parts of the project, and thus of the paper (6, 7).
- It is possible to include deceased persons in an author list provided that the person have contributed to criteria in the Vancouver rules (8).
- The following is **not** considered sufficient for authorship: to have secured funding for the research, having cared for patients who participated in a study, having provided administrative support or/and having proofread or given linguistic support for an article. However, such contributions merits for an acknowledgement if the person approve of that.
- Persons who have been involved in a project but not having contributed enough to fulfill all criteria for a full co-authorship (e.g. by including patients or delivering other kind of data), may be included in the acknowledgement or mentioned as collaborators (e.g. as "clinical investigators" or "participating investigators"). They could alternatively be acknowledged under a "banner authorship". These particular contributions should be clearly stated and the persons that are named must give their consent to being mentioned (1).
- It is important to stress the collective responsibility of a publication. If the group cannot achieve consensus on authorship or the order of authors, this should be referred to the school management (or to the faculty board if persons on the school board are involved).

To clarify individual author contributions, reduce author disputes and facilitate collaboration in scientific publishing the **CRedit author statement** has been developed (see Appendix 1).

Affiliation

A researcher can have his/her scientific affiliation at different universities or similar organizations at the same time. In addition to ORU, many employees within the MH faculty are also affiliated to (for example) the University Hospital in Örebro (USÖ) or Örebro County Region (RÖL). Which affiliation or affiliates that should be stated in a scientific work, other publications or for a performance, depends on where and in what role the specific work has been made.

- For persons who are active at ORU and another organization at the same time (as an employee/co-opted, with joint employment or through an affiliation agreement), affiliation to both ORU and the relevant clinic (or equivalent) is usually stated.
- All doctoral students need to have ORU as an affiliation for all sub-studies that are to be included in the thesis.
- A researcher (for example post-doc) at ORU may retain his/her affiliation with his/her previous university. However, if the work is fully funded by ORU, only the affiliation to ORU is stated. Accordingly, if the work was carried out both at ORU and at another university both affiliations are stated.

Conflict of interest (COI)

- All conflicts of interest should be declared as truthfully and transparent as possible. Most journals have special forms for this (Declaration of interest). How long a conflict of interest remains varies according to the type of COI. The policy may also vary between different journals.
- Researchers and research groups should be careful not to reach agreements with study sponsors implicating limitation of data access or possibilities of analysis, interpretation, or publication of data. A sponsor's role in a study should always be made clear and particularly if the sponsor plays an active part in the study.

To promote good publication practice

- For good publication ethics it is very important to have an open climate where questions about publication and authorship are discussed and challenged. This is everyone's responsibility but particularly the responsibility of senior researchers. *Everyone* refers to all persons that in some way is working with the research attached to the Faculty of Medicine and Health (employee, co-opted, affiliated, PhD-student and other students). The school and the faculty have a responsibility to promote good publication ethics, but in the end it is each individual's personal responsibility to be accountable for a good research practice.
- Before publication, some kind of seminar or journal club within the research group or research environment is recommended.

To further promote good publication practice ***CRedit author statement*** (in Appendix 1) can be directive.

How to handle research misconduct?

Within the meaning of the law research misconduct means "Intentional distortion of the research process by fabrication of data, text, hypothesis, or methods from another researcher's manuscript form or publication; or distortion of the research process in other ways." There are other kinds of reprehensible conduct such as deliberately withholding results, belittle other persons' contributions, unwarranted promoting of one's own contributions, or deliberately only citing studies supporting ones own's finding.

An open dialogue and discussions in recurrent seminars are means to maintain a high awareness of good publication ethics.

- If a mistake is discovered after publication, the journal should be contacted and a correction submitted. The head of school should be copied on this.
- If research misconduct is suspected, reporting should be made according to Örebro University guidelines "Riktlinjer för ärenden rörande misstänkt oredlighet i forskning och allvarlig avvikelse från god sed i forskning". This is mandatory for employed, co-opted or affiliated researchers at ORU. Suspected research misconduct is handled by the national board of research misconduct (<http://www.oredlighetsprovning.se/>) while other cases are handled by Örebro University or by Örebro County Region, depending on principal.

V. Implementation

This policy has been approved by the Faculty board of medicine and health 2021-02-03. The policy will be published on the faculty home page and will be distributed at the different departments. PhD-students should be made aware of the policy during PhD courses and through director of PhD-studies (studierektor) and subject manager (ämnesansvarig).

VI. References and recommended reading

ALLEA (3)

All European Academies, (ALLEA), is a non-for profit, independent association of scientific organizations and academies from countries within and outside the EU. Sweden is represented by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (Kungliga vetenskapsakademien). ALLEA has published "The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" revised edition 2018, which describes a framework for the integrity of research and the professional, legal and ethical responsibilities of the research community. This codex discusses good research practice and what may constitute a breach of good research practice.

CODEX, rules and guidelines för research (4)

A webpage published by Uppsala university that collects national and international laws and guidelines determining research ethics.

Swedish Research Council, Good research practise (5)

This paper also discusses essential aspects of good research practice with a number of references. Please note, however, that this publication has not been updated since the Act on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct (2019:504) came into force on 1 January 2020.

VII. References

1. Editors ICoMJ. Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors www.ICMJE.org [Available from: <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>].
2. Helgesson G, Juth N, Schneider J, Lövtrup M, Lynøe N. Misuse of Coauthorship in Medical Theses in Sweden. *J Empir Res Hum Res Ethics*. 2018;13(4):402-11.
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4. CODEX regler och riktlinjer för forskning: Centrum för forsknings- & bioetik; 2020 [Available from: <https://codex.uu.se/>]
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7. Lei SY, Dong YP, Zhu WF, Li LJ. An emerging trend of equal authorship credit in major public health journals. *Springerplus*. 2016;5(1):1083.
8. Helgesson G, Bülow W, Eriksson S, Godskenen TE. Should the deceased be listed as authors? *J Med Ethics*. 2019;45(5):331-8.

Appendix 1

CRediT author statement²

CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) was introduced with the intention of recognizing individual author contributions, reducing authorship disputes, and facilitating collaboration. The idea came about following a 2012 collaborative workshop led by Harvard University and the Wellcome Trust, with input from researchers, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and publishers, including Elsevier, represented by Cell Press.

CRediT offers authors the opportunity to share an accurate and detailed description of their diverse contributions to the published work.

- The corresponding author is responsible for ensuring that the descriptions are accurate and agreed by all authors.
- The role(s) of all authors should be listed, using the relevant categories (below).
- Authors may have contributed in multiple roles.
- CRediT in no way changes the journal's criteria to qualify for authorship.

CRediT statements should be provided during the submission process and will appear above the acknowledgement section of the published paper.

Term	Definition
<i>Conceptualization</i>	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims
<i>Methodology</i>	Development or design of methodology; creation of models
<i>Software</i>	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components
<i>Validation</i>	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs
<i>Formal analysis</i>	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data
<i>Investigation</i>	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection
<i>Resources</i>	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools

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<i>Data Curation</i>	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse
<i>Writing - Original Draft</i>	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)
<i>Writing - Review & Editing</i>	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or postpublication stages
<i>Visualization</i>	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation
<i>Supervision</i>	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team
<i>Project administration</i>	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution
<i>Funding acquisition</i>	Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication