



## UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG GUIDELINES AUTHORSHIP: RESEARCH OUTPUT

### 1. PREAMBLE

Integral to the University of Johannesburg's vision of distinguished scholarship and its commitment to establish the University among the top research universities in the country, is an acknowledgement of the contribution academic researchers, their associates/co-workers and postgraduate students make, and continue to make, in the realisation of this goal. At the same time, the University recognises that as research problems become more complex and/or interdisciplinary, greater numbers of researchers, co-workers, colleagues and postgraduate students are drawn into a research project with a concomitant increase in the production of published research material arising from the research which, in turn, raises the question as to who should be credited with authorship or co-authorship.

The issue is compounded by the fact that South African universities are funded, in part, on the number of papers published from which authorship brings explicit financial benefits to the institution, and often also to the author/s of a paper. In addition, authorship of papers is linked to status and standing among peers as well as opportunities for career advancement. Postgraduate students are increasingly expected to contribute to the institution's formal research output and now constitute a significant proportion of its formal authors. The more individuals involved in a research activity, the greater the potential for contestation of issues around questions of authorship.

These *Guidelines* are a key element in maintaining a climate of collegial effectiveness and efficiency which is conducive to the highest levels of reputable research outputs and, at the same time, is fair as possible to academic researchers, co-workers (who may include community engagement partners) and postgraduate student researchers alike.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of these *Guidelines* is to pre-empt contestation of issues around authorship as pressure to quantify research activities and output within universities increases by providing a framework:

- 2.1 For the rational, fair, and ethical resolution of questions around authorship of a published research output (i.e. whose name should appear on the published material, be it a paper in a DoE-accredited academic publication, a book or book chapter, a conference proceeding, paper or poster, or any other form of publically or privately published research output);
- 2.2 that promotes informed, empowered, transparent and rational discussions between all relevant parties in pursuit of an amicable resolution of all questions of authorship.

### **3. SCOPE**

- 3.1 The *Guidelines* apply to all academic employees, postdoctoral researchers pursuing research within the ambit of the University and all students registered for postgraduate (master's and doctoral) degrees at the University across all campuses and departments as well as any community engagement research partners, where applicable.
- 3.2 The *Guidelines* do not apply to the question of ownership or inventorship of legally-protectable intellectual property such as inventions or trademarks.

### **4. AUTHORSHIP**

- 4.1 Regardless of the different historic practices that may persist across the spectrum of academic and scientific disciplines, the fundamental principle underpinning the notion and application of authorship in academic context is that *authorship of a publishable research output necessarily and sufficiently requires that the author has made a significant intellectual contribution to the material that is to be published.*
- 4.2 The only condition included in this principle is that of a "significant intellectual contribution" (i.e. financial or other contributions do not constitute grounds for authorship).
- 4.3 Where different practices exist between disciplines, the principle itself remains a constant and differences in approach may arise only for either of the following two reasons:
  - 4.3.1 different interpretations of the term "significant intellectual contribution": and/or
  - 4.3.2 different research practices and methodologies.

### **5. POINT OF DEPARTURE**

- 5.1 The question of authorship is negotiated in a fair and transparent manner, allowing all parties to put forward a claim to authorship on the basis of the *significant intellectual contribution* that they have made to the work to be published.
- 5.2 In cases of unequal relations between authors and co-authors, e.g. students and lecturers and senior academic/research employees, the process of determining authorship is empowering, fair, equitable, transparent, participatory and based on rational discussions between all relevant parties.
- 5.3 Should disagreement occur:

- 5.3.1 the conditions stipulated in Section 4 apply as a test to each claim on authorship, and
- 5.3.2 the procedures laid down in Section 6 are followed to ensure a rational and objective resolution of the dispute.

## **6. PROCEDURES**

- 6.1 The following three criteria must be satisfied to obtain credit for authorship and co-authorship:
  - 6.1.1 The author must have made substantial intellectual contributions to research conceptions and design, *or* to the acquisition of data, *or* to the analysis and interpretation of data; *and*
  - 6.1.2 The author must have made substantial intellectual contributions to the drafting and content of the published output (essay, article, paper, or presentation); *and*
  - 6.1.3 Final agreement must exist between all authors/co-authors on the content of the version to be presented or published.
- 6.2 In respect of the publication of research output emerging from the research activities of enrolled postgraduate (master's or doctoral) students, the student's name must be included as an author.
- 6.3 Upon registration, all new masters and doctoral students must be provided a copy of this guideline.
- 6.4 Where a supervisor or co-supervisor believes he/she has a legitimate claim to authorship or co-authorship, this must be clearly communicated to the student, student-assistant, or post-doctoral researcher together with the rationale supporting the claim, and the student's views on this solicited.
- 6.5 In the event of an agreement being reached, the supervisor(s) should consider securing written, informed consent by the student, student-assistant, or post-doctoral researcher for co-publishing and co-presentation.
- 6.6 In the event parties to a publication (either a student, student-assistant, post-doctoral researcher, supervisor(s) and/or staff member) are unable to reach agreement on the question of authorship and/or co-authorship, any party may appeal to the following individuals, who shall attempt to resolve the dispute:
  - 6.6.1 to the respective Head of the Department concerned if the disagreement is between members of a department;
  - 6.6.2 to the respective Executive Dean of the faculty concerned in the event the disagreement is between members of a faculty (but different departments);  
or
  - 6.6.3 to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in the event the disagreement is between members of different faculties.
- 6.7 Should the above intervention prove unsuccessful, the Head of Department, or the Executive Dean or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor

- (Academic) will be required to refer the matter either to the faculty's ethics committee, or to the Senate Academic Ethics Committee for final arbitration.
- 6.8 Students who feel aggrieved may approach another member of staff and request them to facilitate a resolution of a disagreement during the above steps, but the Executive Dean remains accountable for the outcome of the deliberations, or for referring the matter onwards as outlined in the preceding clauses.
  - 6.9 Determinations regarding the hierarchy of authorship, e.g., the order in which authors are to appear in a publication, or whether someone is referred to as a co-author or author, need to be resolved within the prevailing stipulations of the medium in which the publication is to appear and the disciplinary practices, and any resulting disagreements to be resolved in the manner outlined in this document.
  - 6.10 Where students have left the University without giving any indication that they want their work published, and provided that a period of 12 months has elapsed since the student left University, supervisors may rework material from the student's dissertation or thesis into an article or presentation, provided the student gets fair recognition for his or her role as an author. Supervisors are expected to make all efforts to seek the student's consent to co-publish as required in 4.1. If supervisors are unable to trace the student, they may proceed with publication (including the student as an author), but are advised to declare this to the Executive Dean of the faculty prior to proceeding with publication.
  - 6.11 This guideline must be read in conjunction with article 4.1.3 [iii] of the full University's Code of Academic and Research Ethics.

## 7. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Significant assistance with the research activities by field workers/community stakeholders and/or partners are acknowledged.

Approved by Senate on 18 February 2008.