



POLICY ON AUTHORSHIP

Policy Owner	DVC: Research and Internationalisation
Division/ Unit/ Department	Postgraduate School
Date of Initial Approval	18 March 2021
Approved By	Senate
Approval Dates of Revisions/ Amendments	
Next Review Date	2026
Platform to be Published on	UJ Website, Intranet

POLICY ON AUTHORSHIP

1 PREAMBLE

The University of Johannesburg (UJ):

- In pursuit of its vision of being an international university of choice, anchored in Africa, dynamically shaping the future;
- In pursuit of its strategic goal of excellence in research and innovation as a component of its primary strategic goal to achieve global excellence and stature;
- mindful of its commitment to the sustained excellence and relevance of its comprehensive programmes and of its research;
- carrying out its mission of inspiring the community to transform and to serve humanity through innovation and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge, among others through research output;
- recognising its obligation to nurture employees and students with integrity, who are knowledgeable, well-balanced leaders and confident global citizens who are committed to the values which underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom (inclusive of academic freedom),

in this *Policy on Authorship* states the rules and principles on the basis of which recognition and credit is given to authors of research output affiliated to UJ.

2 RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

2.1 Authorship assigns credit to individuals for significant, direct and identifiable intellectual contributions to research output. Recognition associated with such credit is accompanied by accountability. Authors take responsibility for the content of the research output and the conduct of the research on which the research output reports.

2.2 Authorship matters as it has important social, academic and economic implications. Considerations for assigning authorship and assuming responsibility for such authorship include:

- (i) The increase in the number of individuals who must participate in research projects in order to solve complex research problems, in the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and in the research output arising from such collaboration, concomitantly increases the scope of contestation of the assignment of authorship.
- (ii) Authorship produces status. It enhances the standing of a researcher among peers and provides opportunities for career advancement.

- (iii) The accreditation of research output¹ is an important source of funding for public higher education institutions (HEI's). Authorship of accredited research output thus brings direct financial benefit to the institution and authors themselves can share in those financial benefits. Pressure is therefore brought to bear on public HEIs to increase accredited research output and the financial benefits serve as an incentive for researchers affiliated to such public HEIs to claim authorship of such output.
- (iv) Unequal power relations can influence the assignment of authorship. UJ is mindful of this concern where postdoctoral fellows, postgraduate and undergraduate students are expected to, and do in fact, contribute significantly to UJ's accredited research output.
- (v) No universally-accepted norm exists to inform the order in which multiple authors of a research output is listed. Where consequences are attached to the order of listing, such ordering is fertile ground for contestation.

3 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to formulate an enforceable university policy that reflects Senate's understanding of academic authorship. This understanding is based on international best practice policies and guidelines and on the 2015 *Research Outputs Policy* of the Department of Higher Education and Training.
- 3.2 Not all issues related to authorship are capable of being captured in this policy statement. Nevertheless, this policy provides a framework for a uniform, rational, ethical and fair approach to authorship.
- 3.3 The policy serves the following purposes:
 - (i) to ensure that individuals affiliated to UJ receive due recognition for their contribution to research output;
 - (ii) to maintain a climate of collegial effectiveness and efficiency, conducive to the highest levels of reputable research output and to the fair assignment of authorship to each affiliated researcher, irrespective of status and position;
 - (iii) to pre-empt disputes over authorship and to guide the resolution of such disputes that may arise; and
 - (iv) to promote informed, empowered, transparent and rational discussions between all relevant parties in pursuit of amicable and substantive agreement on issues of authorship.

¹ In terms of the 2015 Research Outputs Policy of the Department of Higher Education and Training: see *GN 188 of 1 March 2015* in GG 38552.

4 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

4.1 The policy applies to all persons affiliated to UJ. These include:

- employees;
- postdoctoral research fellows (PDRFs);
- undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- research affiliates;
- visiting academics; and
- community engagement research collaborators.

4.2 The following authorship-related concerns fall beyond the scope of this policy:

- (i) Ownership of intellectual property arising from authorship (for example, copyright);
- (ii) ownership of legally-protectable intellectual property arising from inventions (for example, patents and trademarks); and

4.3 Creative outputs and innovations produced by persons affiliated to UJ are treated in the manner prescribed in the *2017 Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations produced by Public Higher Education Institutions* and the accompanying *2019 Implementation Guidelines* of the Department of Higher Education and Training.

4.4 Faculties/colleges may adopt rules on authorship to address discipline-specific requirements, provided that such rules are complementary to (and not contrary to) this policy and have been approved by Senate.

5 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to terms used in this policy:

“affiliation/affiliate” in respect of research output means academic, academic support and research employees of UJ, researchers appointed by UJ in terms of Senate-approved policies and registered UJ students who were employed, appointed or registered at the time the research was conducted.² This means:

- (i) In the case of authors who are no longer affiliated to UJ (for example, persons who are no longer employed by UJ or who are no longer registered students at UJ), their affiliation to UJ at the time the research was conducted must be

² See the definition of “affiliated authors” in section 3.3 of the 2015 Research Outputs Policy of the Department of Higher Education and Training (fn 1).

acknowledged in the research output. This does not preclude an author's current affiliation from also being acknowledged in the research output.

- (ii) In the case of authors who are currently affiliated to UJ but who were affiliated to another institution at the time the research for the research output was conducted, the affiliation of the author to that other institution must be stated in the research output. This does not preclude an author's current UJ affiliation from also being acknowledged in the research output.

“author” means any natural person affiliated to UJ who meets the requirements for authorship in terms of this policy, and “co-author” has the same meaning.

“authorship” means a significant, direct and identifiable intellectual contribution to the particular material that is to be, or has been, published and the assuming of responsibility for the conduct of the research on which the research output reports. (This definition applies regardless of different historic practices across the spectrum of scientific and academic disciplines.). To comply with the definition of authorship, the following criteria (i)-(iii) must *all* be met:

- (i) An author must have made a *significant, direct and identifiable intellectual contribution* to:
- the conceptualisation of the research and design or to the acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data, *and*
 - to the drafting or content of the published output or to its critical revision for important intellectual content; and
- (ii) Final agreement must exist between all authors on the content of the version to be presented or published; and
- (iii) There must be agreement to be responsible for all aspects of the work to ensure that concerns related to the accuracy or integrity of the output or any part of it are appropriately investigated and resolved.

“research output” means published or publishable scholarly research, be it an article in an academic journal, a book or a chapter in a book, a conference proceeding, paper or poster or any other form of public or private research, where research is understood to mean original, systematic investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding.³

“significant, direct and identifiable intellectual contribution” is determined by the exercise of sound academic judgment using objectively justifiable and, where appropriate, discipline-specific considerations in respect of each research output.

³ Part of this definition is based on the definition of research output contained in section 2.2 of the 2015 Research Outputs Policy of the Department of Higher Education and Training: see fn 1.

6 PRINCIPLES TO DETERMINE AUTHORSHIP

- 6.1 Authorship of a research output must be decided upon in a fair and transparent manner by all relevant parties, each party being allowed to lay a claim to “authorship” as defined in this policy.
- 6.2 Where unequal power relations exist among co-authors (for example, between students and supervisors, between PDRFs and hosts, or between junior and senior employees), the process to determine authorship must be fair, equitable, transparent, participatory and based on rational discussions between all relevant parties.
- 6.3 In research output based on the research conducted by a UJ-registered undergraduate and postgraduate students and who meet the definition of “authorship” in this policy, the authorship of the student must be acknowledged.
- 6.4 Agreement reached and/or discipline-specific requirements in respect of the authorship of research output based on the supervised research of students are recorded in a student-supervisor agreement prior to the commencement of study.
- 6.5 Agreement reached and/or discipline-specific requirements in respect of the authorship of research output based on research undertaken by PDRFs at UJ are recorded in a PDRF performance agreement prior to the commencement of study.
- 6.6 If a research output is produced based on research conducted by a person who is no longer affiliated to UJ at the time of the research output, such a person’s claims to authorship is based on the definition of “authorship” read with the definition of “affiliations” in this policy.
- 6.7 The order in which authorship is attributed in a research output must be agreed to before publication of the research output. Such agreement may be influenced by the requirements of the editorial board of a journal, by the publishers of a book or by discipline-specific practices.
- 6.8 Where more than one author contributes to a research output, the co-authors designate one among them to be the “corresponding author”. The corresponding author, acting on behalf of all other co-authors, takes primary responsibility for all communication and administrative and/or logistical arrangements during the process of manuscript submission, review and publication of the research output. She or he is available during the submission and peer review process to respond to all editorial queries and, after publication, to respond to comment and/or criticism of the research output and to any requests for data or to additional queries that may arise.

6.9 Contributions to research output that do not comply with the definition of “authorship” in this policy may be recognised in the research output as follows:

(i) Taking account of discipline-specific considerations, *persons* may be appropriately acknowledged as having made a contribution to the research work. Such persons include those involved in the acquisition of funding, general supervision of a research group, research support, writing assistance and technical and language editing. The contribution should, where possible, be accurately specified.

(ii) *Institutions or research facilities* in respect of which the research output contains results, draws interpretations from results or in any other way benefits significantly from:

- research conducted by one or more of the authors at the institution or research facility; or
- results placed in the public domain by the institution or research facility,

must be acknowledged in the research output. Such an acknowledgment may take the form of an acknowledgment of the hospitality an author enjoyed at the institution or research facility during a hosted research visit, or an acknowledgment that the policy of a large research facility is that raw data are placed in the public domain after a certain period has elapsed since publication of the results of an experiment at the facility recorded in the research output.

6.10 In cases of large multi-author groups collaborating on a large research project, discipline-specific practice and/or research agreements determine which collaborators on the project should be listed as authors of the research output. If listed as authors, they share in the benefits and responsibilities of authorship. In particular cases a by-line may be inserted into the research output to indicate direct responsibility for the manuscript on which the research output is based.

6.11 In the event of disputes concerning authorship:

- (i) the definition of “authorship” in the policy is determinative; and
- (ii) the procedure provided for in section 7 is followed to resolve disputes.

7 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

7.1 Decisions on authorship and the order in which authors are listed in research output must be resolved in accordance with the provisions of this policy prior to publication of the research output.

- 7.2 If a dispute on authorship of a research output is unable to be resolved among the parties, the aggrieved party or parties must lodge a written complaint with the appropriate Head of Department (or equivalent position).
- 7.3 If the Head of Department (or equivalent position) is unable to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the parties, the matter is referred to the appropriate Executive Dean. In seeking to resolve the matter, she/he may consult the research committee or research ethics committee of the relevant faculty/college board. The Executive Dean must make a decision on the matter within a reasonable time period on the matter, based on this policy and on such evidence as is provided by all parties concerned in the disputed authorship. The parties must be informed of the decision in writing.
- 7.4 If a party is aggrieved with the decision of the Executive Dean, she/he must within a reasonable time lodge a written appeal to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research must consult the Senate Research Ethics Committee on the matter. After such consultation and after due consideration of all issues involved, The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research makes a decision on the matter within a reasonable time period. The decision must be in writing and must be conveyed to the parties. The decision is final.
- 7.5 An Executive Dean or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for research may delegate the powers as provided for in sections 7.3 and 7.4 to another employee or existing or *ad hoc* structure of the University to exercise that power.

8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 This policy must be read and applied in conjunction with the *UJ Code of Academic and Research Ethics* and the *UJ Policy on Plagiarism*.
- 8.2 Persons who make claims to authorship can, in the event that such claims amount to unethical academic conduct in terms of the *UJ Code of Academic and Research Ethics*, be subject to a charge of academic misconduct in the terms of UJ's disciplinary provisions for students or employees.
- 8.3 Financial contributions to research, both internal to and external to UJ, must be declared in the research output based on the research, to ensure transparency and public trust in the scientific process and in the credibility of the research output.
- 8.4 Any contributions to the research and to the research output other than financial contributions must be declared in the research output if such contributions can potentially create conflicts of interest that, if undeclared, might impact the credibility of the research and of the research output.

- 8.5 The University does not assign authorship to a natural person not employed by or affiliated with the University who does not meet the requirements for authorship as provided for in the policy, nor does the University assign authorship to persons who are not natural persons.

9 PUBLICATION OF POLICY

This policy is readily available to all persons who are affiliated to UJ and who produce or contribute to research outputs at UJ.

10 INTERPRETATION AND COMMENCEMENT

- 10.1 Any reference in the policy to the singular includes the plural and vice versa. A reference to gender includes all genders.
- 10.2 If any provision of the policy is or becomes invalid or unenforceable due to law, such provision shall be divisible from the policy and regarded as *pro non scripto* and the remaining provisions of the policy shall remain valid and enforceable.
- 10.3 If any clause (including a definition clause) contains a substantive provision, notwithstanding that it is present only in that clause, effect shall be given to it as if it were a substantive provision in the body of the policy.
- 10.4 The use of word “including” or “for example” or other similar grammatical forms followed by specific instances shall not be construed as limiting the meaning of the general wording preceding it and the *eiusdem generis* rule shall not be applied to the interpretation of such general wording or such specific instances.
- 10.5 This policy is not a complete codification of all the issues to which it refers and shall not in any way be interpreted to amount to a waiver, or to limit or prejudice UJ’s rights and remedies against persons affected by it in terms of the law or any other rule, policy, regulation, code or practice applicable to a person.
- 10.6 This policy or any amendment to it comes into effect when approved by the Senate. When it becomes effective, it will replace the *Guidelines Authorship: Research Output* of 2008.