

Authorship and Contribution in the Age of AI: Notes on the Current Debate

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Authorship in scholarly articles is not a mere recognition of participation, but a key component of academic and scientific ethics. This post synthesizes international criteria and essential reflections on what it truly means to sign as an author of an academic work.

What is authorship?

Authorship is commonly understood as the “status of being an author,” according to the most general definition by the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española (n.d.)). However, in academic and scientific contexts, this notion requires both normative and ethical clarification.

International Criteria: ICMJE and CRediT

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) proposes four criteria that must be met simultaneously to justify authorship (ICMJE (n.d.)):

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data.
2. Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content.
3. Final approval of the version to be published.
4. Accountability for all aspects of the work, ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Complementing this definition, the CRediT taxonomy (*CRediT – Contributor Roles Taxonomy* (n.d.)) identifies 14 specific contributor roles, allowing a more granular attribution of individual contributions to scholarly work.

Ethics and Misconduct

Common authorship-related misconduct includes **honorary authorship** (adding someone who did not contribute) and **ghost authorship** (omitting someone who did contribute). Both practices breach the principles of scientific integrity (Codina (2024)).

Moreover, authorship disputes are frequent, especially among early-career researchers. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) offers a guide for handling authorship conflicts, emphasizing the importance of early agreements, transparent communication, and institutional protocols for conflict resolution (Committee on Publication Ethics (2018)).

Conclusion

Signing a paper is neither a formality nor a courtesy—it is an ethical statement. Adopting the ICMJE and CRediT frameworks ensures fair recognition of actual contributions and helps prevent misconduct that undermines scientific trust.

Codina, L. (2024). *Ética y artículos científicos: Aspectos clave*. <https://www.luiscodina.com/etica-articulos-cientificos/>

Committee on Publication Ethics. (2018). *How to handle authorship disputes: A guide for new researchers*. <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/guideline/how-handle-authorship-disputes-guide-new-researchers>.

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Real Academia Española. (n.d.). *Autoría*. <https://www.rae.es/diccionario-estudiante/autor%C3%ADa>.