

University Policy #318

Section I. Policy Statement & Purpose

Research contributes to the public fund of knowledge when the results are published, presented, or otherwise disseminated. With that step, researchers take public responsibility for the work. This responsibility includes both credit and accountability, and is typically conveyed by being named an author.

However, the role authorship plays in careers, awards, grants, and the like means that the stakes are high, and authorship decisions can evoke tension and conflict among collaborators. This conflict may in turn negatively affect relationships between faculty and students or between collaborators within the institution, across the country, or internationally. Vulnerable groups, such as graduate students, post-doctoral students, junior faculty, or those underrepresented in the academy can be most at risk in such conflicts. In the worst cases, these disputes can end projects or lead to publication retractions. Although many disciplines and journals articulate authorship standards, collaborators may not be aware of them and may even disagree about them (for example, due to different disciplinary authorship practices), leaving authorship assumptions among collaborators largely unstated.

Because institutions have an interest in and are sometimes responsible for resolving authorship disputes, it is important to establish policy to support good authorship processes and address potential disputes. This Policy is part of UNC Charlotte's commitment to fostering a culture of transparency, openness, and research integrity. The Policy is intended to help reinforce healthy, transparent authorship practices that can prevent disputes, and to offer clear processes to resolve them if they occur. It includes productive and historically successful approaches to co-authorship and mediating authorship disputes.

Section II. Definitions

In cases in which a manuscript has been submitted for publication consideration, the Corresponding Author is the person who identified themselves as responsible for communicating between the publisher and collaborators on the project.

Generally, the designation of an individual as Lead Author refers to an individual who has taken a prominent role in the generation of ideas for and conduct of the research, as well as in drafting the manuscript in question, but the criteria for designation of Lead Author may vary by discipline.

In sponsored research, the Principal Investigator is the individual usually identified as such on the grant proposal of which the research is a part. However, an individual who leads a research project may occasionally be identified as a Principal Investigator even if the research project is not sponsored by external funding.

Section III. Scope & Applicability

This Policy applies to UNC Charlotte faculty (as defined in University Policy 102.13, Tenure Policies, Regulations, and Procedures), staff, and students conducting research, scholarship, or other creative academic activity as part of their employment or enrollment at UNC Charlotte, as well as potential disputes between individuals in these categories (e.g., faculty/student or faculty/faculty collaborations). Authorship disputes covered by this Policy include disputes that occur pre- and post-publication.

This Policy is distinct from University Policy 309, Responding to Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Scholarship. Prior to initiating an authorship dispute process under this Policy in which research integrity might be implicated, the Research Integrity Officer and the Dean of the Graduate School should discuss the case to make a determination about the appropriate process to be applied.

This Policy is also distinct from University Policy 407, Code of Student Academic Integrity. Prior to initiating an authorship dispute process under this Policy in which student academic integrity is an issue, the Dean of the Graduate School should discuss the case with the Director of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity to make a determination about the appropriate process to be applied.

Section IV. Policy

This Policy recognizes the wide variety of authorship practices across disciplines and publications, so it is not the intent of this Policy to establish a single set of authorship standards. However, as summarized by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), “The minimum requirements for authorship, common to all definitions, are 1) substantial contribution to the work and 2) accountability for the work that was done and its presentation in a publication.”

The following principles and practices are recommended for helping to prevent disputes and promoting constructive and transparent authorship practices.

a. authorship principles—

1. It is the responsibility of the Lead Author, Corresponding Author, or Principal Investigator (these may or may not be the same person), as appropriate, to lead conversations among contributors regarding authorship, ensure that contributors are appropriately recognized, and ensure fairness in the authorship process. Ideally these conversations occur at the beginning of projects, throughout the project duration, and at the conclusion of the project.
2. Being named an author is an indication that one has made a substantial contribution to the project and is willing to be held accountable for their contribution to the work. “Substantial contribution” may vary by discipline, and therefore the Lead Author, Corresponding Author, or Principal Investigator should consult the guidance that applies to their discipline to make authorship determinations.
3. All individuals who have made a substantial contribution to a project should be named as authors; others who have contributed may be more appropriately recognized in the acknowledgments, footnotes, or other areas of the work as appropriate and subject to the individuals’ consent.
4. All authors on a publication should have a reasonable opportunity to review and approve the final product. However, approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
5. Honorary, guest, gift, or ghost authorship is not acceptable. Honorary, guest, or gift authorship occurs when individuals who have not made a substantial contribution are named as authors. Ghost authorship occurs when someone who has made a substantial contribution is not named, usually to conceal their relationship to the product.
6. Authorship ordering conventions vary by discipline and publication format; it is not within the scope of this Policy to specify ordering practices. However, ordering decisions should be made in the context of healthy authorship conversations.
7. Authorship practices regarding theses or dissertations may vary by discipline. However, it is generally expected that in publications resulting from a thesis, dissertation, or capstone, the student will be the first author. Faculty members and others on thesis and dissertation committees may be included as authors when they meet typical authorship criteria, but mere membership on these committees may not suffice for authorship. Student work should be protected from expectations that violate Section IV.A.5 above.

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Section IV. Policy

The following are examples of constructive authorship practices by UNC Charlotte faculty, staff, and students:

b. constructive authorship practices—

1. As soon as possible in a research collaboration, conversations among the collaborators about authorship should be initiated by the PI or intended Lead/Corresponding Author, as appropriate. This should include a discussion of general expectations for various roles even if the exact authorship order is not yet clear or may change. In cases of theses and dissertations, the Chair of the Committee should facilitate authorship discussions with the student, starting during the proposal stage and continuing, as appropriate, throughout the process.
2. Agreements about authorship order should be transparent, and ideally, a written authorship agreement should be developed and shared with all collaborators. (Creating a project on the Open Science Framework may also provide an opportunity to initiate authorship discussions as collaborators are named and listed in an initial order.) Important elements of such an agreement include proposed authorship order, authorship standards collaborators agree to follow, and indications regarding when authorship changes should be discussed. This Policy, including reference to the dispute resolution process below, should also be included as an appendix to the agreement.
3. Because research roles can change throughout the life cycle of a collaboration, it is important to revisit authorship agreements as circumstances warrant. For example, authors may want to agree that after a specified period of time, a subset of collaborators may proceed with dissemination of results even if one or more collaborators fails to respond to a request for approval as to relevant elements of the dissemination (authorship order, manuscript text, publication selection, etc.).
4. University departments and research units should include reference to this Policy in their orientation materials for new students and faculty. If such units require particular approaches to authorship, those should also be communicated to new students and faculty, in conjunction with other unit policies and guidance.
5. Collaborations with researchers at institutions other than UNC Charlotte should follow the recommendations in this Policy, including a written agreement explicitly establishing authorship order, authorship standards collaborators agree to follow, indications regarding when authorship changes should be discussed, and dispute resolution methods. Such authorship dispute resolution processes may be distinct from those at UNC Charlotte. For example, on larger collaborations (particularly when they may lead to multiple publications), establishing an authorship dispute committee with members from each institution may be appropriate.

Section V. Dispute Resolution Procedures

Although following the principles and practices outlined above will help significantly to prevent authorship disputes, such disputes may still arise. Informal steps should be taken to resolve the dispute first, but if informal resolution fails, the dispute may be submitted to the Authorship Dispute Panel for formal resolution.

a. informal dispute resolution—

If an authorship dispute arises, the collaborators should initially attempt resolving it informally. Collaborators should consult any written authorship agreement to inform such resolution. If there is no such agreement or if the terms of the agreement do not sufficiently resolve the matter, the collaborators might involve a neutral third party, such as an informal mediator or an Ombuds, who may facilitate discussions but whose role is not to render a decision. UNC Charlotte has separate Ombuds offices for faculty (<https://ombuds.uncc.edu>), graduate students (<https://graduateschool.uncc.edu/current-students/ombudsman>), and undergraduate students (<https://sass.uncc.edu/students>).

Section V. Dispute Resolution Procedures

continued

If the dispute remains unresolved, the collaborators may also contact the Chair, a Graduate Program Director, the Dean of the relevant College, or the Dean of the Graduate School if the dispute involves a Chair, members of multiple departments, or members of multiple colleges for informal assistance.

b. formal dispute resolution: authorship dispute panel—

1.

Initiation of a Formal Dispute Resolution: If an authorship dispute cannot be resolved with the informal steps suggested above, a disputant may initiate a formal dispute resolution process by contacting the Dean of the Graduate School in writing with a summary of the dispute and any supporting documents. The Dean will review the dispute and any supporting documents to determine whether a formal resolution is appropriate. If the Dean determines that formal resolution is appropriate, the Dean will appoint an Authorship Dispute Panel to consider the matter and make recommendations.

2.

Authorship Dispute Panel: From a standing pool of seven members appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School (including faculty members and at least two graduate students), the Dean will charge a three-person Panel to hear the dispute. If the dispute involves a graduate student, the Panel must include at least one graduate student. If the dispute involves only faculty, the Panel must include only tenured faculty. The Dean will ensure that there is appropriate expertise to carry out a thorough and authoritative evaluation of the dispute, and will require that the Panel maintain confidentiality of all parties, deliberations, and documentation. The Panel may also consult other members of the University community for required expertise without disclosing any identifying information about the disputant, but those consulted will not participate in adjudicating the dispute.

The disputant is responsible for presenting the authorship dispute in good faith, for maintaining confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and of all documentation, and for cooperating with the Panel's deliberative process. The disputant will have an opportunity to be interviewed by and present documentation to the Panel, and to review the draft report.

The Panel will notify the respondent(s) of the dispute when the Dean appoints the Panel. The respondent(s) are responsible for making their case in good faith, for maintaining the confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and of all documentation, and for cooperating with the Panel's deliberative process. The respondent(s) will have the opportunity to be interviewed by and present documentation to the Panel, and to review the draft report.

UNC Charlotte will protect the confidentiality of the parties to the dispute, any deliberations, and any related documents to the extent permitted under law. Retaliation against individuals for raising authorship dispute claims in good faith or for cooperating in good faith in the University's review of any such claims is strictly prohibited and subject to disciplinary action in accordance with applicable policies.

3.

Resolution: The Panel will make a written recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School summarizing the dispute, documentation considered, and recommended resolution, along with its rationale. The Dean will notify the disputant and respondent(s) of the Panel's recommendation.

The Panel's recommendation is not binding on the parties to the dispute but may be considered as presumptive evidence of the appropriate authorship designation if either the disputant or respondent fails to implement the recommendation. The Dean may notify the non-complying party's supervisor or other appropriate administrator if the Dean determines that the party's failure to implement the recommendation warrants consideration of disciplinary or other appropriate action.

Section VI. Responsible University Administrator

The Dean of the Graduate School shall be responsible for implementing this Policy.

Link to policy: <https://legal.charlotte.edu/policies/up-318>

Supplemental to University Policy #318

Section I. Introduction

The role authorship plays in careers, awards, grants, and other academic endeavors means that the stakes for authorship naming and ordering are high. At times, collaborators may not agree on authorship designation for a presentation, publication, or other scholarly work. As a result, University Policy 318, Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures ("the Policy") establishes authorship principles and practices and provides methods of informal and formal authorship dispute resolution.

In particular, if informal steps fail to resolve a dispute between collaborators, and a disputant initiates a formal dispute resolution process, UNC Charlotte will engage the procedures established in University Policy 318, Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures and these Formal Dispute Resolution Procedures. The objective of these Procedures is to provide a uniform framework for resolving formal authorship disputes.

Section II. Formal Dispute Resolution Procedures

Parties to the Dispute

1.

A formal authorship dispute may be initiated by any member of the UNC Charlotte community covered by the Policy (current faculty, staff, and students, or former faculty, staff, or students who engaged in work at UNC Charlotte that is the subject of the dispute) ("disputant") who is unable to resolve an authorship dispute with one or more collaborators ("respondent") informally. A dispute may involve more than one disputant and/or more than one respondent; for the purposes of these Procedures, the singular also refers to the plural.

2.

Dispute Initiation

A disputant who is unable to resolve an authorship dispute with a respondent informally may initiate a formal dispute resolution by sending a request for a formal authorship dispute resolution to the Dean of the Graduate School ("Dean") in writing, with a summary of the dispute and any relevant supporting documents.

3.

Dean's Initial Assessment

The Dean will review the disputant's summary and documents to determine whether:

- A. The factual information necessary to evaluate the claim is available to the parties or the University;
- B. There is any evidence to support the claim; and
- C. The claim, if true, would constitute a violation of applicable authorship norms or policies.

Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of the disputant's summary and documents, the Dean shall make a determination about whether the case shall be subject to formal dispute resolution, as follows:

2.3.1.

If, upon review of the summary and documents, the Dean makes an initial determination that (1) there is insufficient evidence to support a claim, (2) the claim, if true, would not constitute a violation of applicable authorship norms or policies, and/or (3) the parties and/or the University do not have access to information necessary to evaluate the claim, the Dean will notify the disputant accordingly, and the case will not be subject to a formal dispute resolution process.

2.3.2.

If, upon review of the summary and documents, the Dean makes an initial determination that (1) there is evidence to support a claim, (2) the claim, if true, would constitute a violation of applicable authorship norms or policies, and (3) the parties and/or the University have access to information necessary to evaluate the claim, the Dean will initiate a formal dispute resolution process, in accordance with Section 2.4 below.

2.3.3.

Conflicting Processes

To ensure that there are not two processes initiated to address the same matter, if the Dean believes that the dispute may also involve research misconduct, the Dean should consult with the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) to determine whether a research misconduct investigation may be appropriate instead of or in addition to the authorship dispute resolution process. Similarly, the Dean should first consult with the Director of Student Accountability and Conflict Resolution if there is reason to believe that the case involves a student academic integrity violation.

4. Initiation of Formal Dispute Resolution Process

2.4.1.

Authorship Dispute Committee

At least annually, the Dean should appoint and maintain a standing pool of seven members of an Authorship Dispute Committee. At least two of the members must be UNC Charlotte graduate students. The remaining members must be tenured UNC Charlotte faculty. Committee members must receive training prior to serving on a Hearing Panel. Training will be provided via a dedicated Canvas course. In addition, the Dean may appoint an ex officio committee member to prepare materials, conduct administrative tasks, arrange meetings, etc.

2.4.2.

Hearing Panel Selection

When an authorship dispute has been initiated, and the Dean has determined that it is appropriate for formal dispute resolution pursuant to Section 2.3.2 above, the Dean should select three members from the Committee to form a Hearing Panel, including naming a Chair. If the dispute involves a student, at least one of the Panel members must be a graduate student. If the dispute involves only faculty, the Panel should consist only of tenured faculty. The Dean must also ensure that there is appropriate subject matter expertise on the Panel to evaluate the dispute.

2.4.3.

Hearing Panel Appointment

The Dean shall inform the Hearing Panel members in writing of their appointment to the Panel in accordance with the deadline in Section 2.3 above. The notice of appointment shall include:

- A. The names of the disputant and respondent;
- B. A summary of the disputant's allegations to be considered by the Panel; and
- C. Instructions about the Panel's duties and confidentiality obligations.

Any Panel member with a conflict of interest or bias shall recuse themselves by informing the Dean within seven (7) calendar days so that the Dean can appoint a different Panel member.

4. Initiation of Formal Dispute Resolution Process (continued)

Notice to the Parties and Party Responses

Simultaneously with the notice of appointment of the Hearing Panel, the Dean will provide the parties to the dispute written notice that the dispute has been referred to a Hearing Panel for formal dispute resolution. The notice shall include the following information:

- A. A summary of the disputant's allegations to be considered by the Panel;
- B. The requirement to prepare and submit to the Panel the materials and information indicated below within seven (7) calendar days; and
- C. Names and titles of the Panel members and designation of the Chair.

2.4.4.

The disputant and respondent have the right to object in writing to any Panel member based on bias or conflict of interest.

Within seven (7) calendar days, the parties must submit to the Dean the following:

- A. Position statements;
- B. Supporting evidence;
- C. A list of potential witnesses, if any; and
- D. Any objections to a Panel member based on conflict of interest or bias. If a party objects to a Panel member, the Dean shall appoint another Panel member promptly and shall notify the parties.

Hearing Panel Adjustments

2.4.5.

If the Dean appoints a new Panel member based on recusal of or objection to a Panel member previously appointed, the new Panel member and parties shall be notified simultaneously of the appointment. The new Panel member shall have five (5) calendar days to recuse themselves if they have a conflict of interest or bias by notifying the Dean in writing. The parties shall have five (5) calendar days to object to the new Panel member based on a conflict of interest or bias by notifying the Dean in writing.

5. Authorship Dispute Hearing Procedures

Role of the Panel

2.5.1.

The role of the Panel is to assess the evidence and testimony of the disputant and respondent and any witnesses regarding authorship and to issue to the Dean a written report with a recommendation for resolving the dispute.

Charge of the Panel and Hearing Preparation

2.5.2.

Within seven (7) calendar days after receipt of the parties' position statements, supporting evidence, and potential witnesses as indicated in Section 2.4.4 (or after appointment of a new Panel member if a Panel member is replaced pursuant to Section 2.4.5), the Dean will formally charge the Panel with undertaking review, holding a hearing, and making a recommendation for resolution of the dispute.

5. | Authorship Dispute Hearing Procedures (continued)

Charge of the Panel and Hearing Preparation (continued)

As part of the formal charge, the Dean will provide the Panel with the materials received, including:

2.5.2.

- A. The parties' position statements;
- B. Supporting evidence; and
- C. A list of potential witnesses, if any.

Simultaneously with issuing the formal charge to the Panel, the Dean will provide both parties with the same materials.

The Dean and/or designee(s) may meet with the Panel to discuss the charge and the application of dispute resolution procedures.

Scheduling and Conduct of the Hearing

The Chair of the Panel will schedule a hearing, in consultation with the Panel members and the parties. In most cases, the Panel will seek to convene the hearing within thirty (30) days of its formal charge, though academic schedules of Panel members and/or parties may require a longer period. The hearing may be held in person or remotely via synchronous video conference, at the determination of the Panel.

At the hearing, the Panel will interview the disputant, respondent, and other witnesses who are identified by the parties and who are deemed relevant by the Panel; examine relevant evidence; and evaluate the evidence and interviews.

2.5.3.

The Chair of the Panel is responsible for the conduct of the hearing, keeping order, and setting standards of decorum. Upon written consent of all Panel members and all parties, the hearing may be audio-recorded by the Panel for the sole purpose of producing a transcript. The transcript, if produced, will be appended to the Panel's recommendation. The audio recording will not be made available to the parties, nor may the parties make an audio or video recording of the hearing.

At the discretion of the Panel, both parties to the dispute shall attend the hearing. The parties may be accompanied by an advisor of their choice for consultation during the hearing, but the advisor may not participate in the hearing or speak on behalf of the party they are advising.

The parties are responsible for presenting their positions in good faith, and for maintaining confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and of all documentation, and for cooperating with the Panel's deliberative process.

2.5.4.

Panel's Recommendation

After the conclusion of the hearing, the Panel will meet as necessary to discuss the case to prepare a draft written recommendation. The recommendation may be made by a majority of the Panel members and need not be unanimous. If the recommendation is not unanimous, the recommendation shall indicate that there was dissent within the Panel. Retaliation by any Panel member against another is prohibited and subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

5. | Authorship Dispute Hearing Procedures (continued)

Panel's Recommendation (continued)

The draft recommendation must include:

- A. The claims reviewed by the Panel;
- B. A summary of the evidence considered in support of the claims and in response to the claims;
- C. Summaries of the hearing testimony;
- D. The Panel's findings, including the Panel's reasons for making those findings;
- E. The recommendations of the Panel for resolving the dispute, as well as any other information that the Panel deems relevant to include;
- F. A transcript, if produced; and
- G. An anonymized summary of the dispute, which may include a general description of the type of dispute and the recommended resolution. The purpose of the anonymized summary is for internal institutional record-keeping purposes only.

2.5.4.

The Panel shall submit its final recommendation to the Dean within thirty (30) calendar days of the hearing, unless circumstances clearly warrant a longer period. If the Panel determines that a period longer than thirty (30) calendar days is necessary to make its recommendation, the Panel will submit to the Dean a written explanation of the extension, and the Dean will notify the parties and document the reasons for extending the deadline.

Within three (3) business days of receipt of the Panel's written recommendation, the Dean will notify the disputant and respondent of the Panel's recommendation. The Panel's recommendation is not binding on the parties to the dispute but may be considered as presumptive evidence of the appropriate authorship designation if either the disputant or respondent fails to implement the recommendation. The Dean may notify the non-complying party's supervisor or other appropriate administrator if the Dean determines that the party's failure to implement the recommendation warrants consideration of disciplinary or other appropriate action.

Confidentiality

The Panel will maintain confidentiality during the dispute resolution process, but may consult with other members of the University community to seek expertise on the academic subject at issue, so long as it does not share identifying information about the parties. The Panel may also disclose relevant information about the dispute to any witnesses identified by the parties if it interviews those witnesses.

2.5.5.

If the dispute involves authorship of a work with authors or collaborators other than the disputant and respondent, the Panel may notify those individuals of its recommendation if it affects the authorship designation of those authors or collaborators.

The University will protect the confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and any related documents to the extent permitted under law. Retaliation against individuals for raising authorship dispute claims in good faith or for cooperating in good faith in the University's review of any such claims is strictly prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.