

Authorship Guidelines for FLEX students

FLEX students are not required to generate publications (or conference abstracts) because activities can have many different types of outcomes, and it is the learning achieved in participating in a scholarly project which is the goal of any FLEX activity.

However some FLEX activities lend themselves to creation of publications and abstracts. If so, please discuss the potential publication and expectations around authorship with your Activity Supervisor during the project planning stage. Every discipline and research community has their own guidelines regarding who should be an author, and the author order. Your Activity Supervisor will have the most experience with their area of study, and they have the final say on authorship. The following are general guidelines.

Recommendations from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

The ICMJE is working group of general medical journal editors who meet annually to work on the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. Their website provides great resources in this area.

The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

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

Tips on how to have the authorship discussion

Nature Journal published the following article which provides some hints on how to have the authorship discussion: [Dance A. Authorship: Who's on first?, *Nature* 2012; 489: 591-593](#)

When many scientists work together, determining authorship isn't always easy. Here are some tips for settling the line-up.

- Make sure that you choose collaborators with whom you can work well.
- Discuss authorship early, and keep doing so often as a project evolves. Put it in writing.
- When there are disputes, first try to talk it out amicably and understand the other person's point of view. For example, try to work out how the idea first came about.
- If you must approach your supervisor about an authorship decision that you don't like, keep the tone inquisitive, not accusatory. Explain that you want to understand how authorship was decided.
- If a contributor's authorship is in question, it can help to consider what the paper would have looked like without their efforts, and whether someone else could have made the same contribution.

- Familiarize yourself with your institution's or journal's authorship guidelines, or those of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Use them to back up your case.
- Be prepared to compromise or share credit.

Who should be first author?

Who should be first author is a common question. Points for FLEX students to keep in mind are:

- Creativity (such as in conceiving the research hypothesis) and novel intellectual contributions are the most important factors for determining who should be the first author.
- Doing a great deal of work (such as going through many, many charts) is a necessary contribution to a research project. But doing a great deal of work in itself does not warrant first authorship

Please feel free to reach out to your FLEX Site Director if you have any questions regarding authorship.