

University of Exeter Attribution Policy

1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. This document aims to define the University of Exeter's expectations around ensuring appropriate and fair attributions are given to all contributors to research, regardless of their relative status or position. It also aims to provide examples as to what contributions to the work constitute authorship or acknowledgement in the publication of research outputsⁱ.
- 1.2. The attribution of authorship is important in the context of good research practice. The university recognises the diversity of the roles contributing to research, from technical colleagues, students, software engineers, librarians, archivists, and more.
- 1.3. When experts make intellectual contributions to research that result in an output (e.g., publication), they should be recognised in the same way as any other contributor. Doing so benefits not only the individual, but the research lead, the institution, and the wider community, in allowing for more transparent and traceable research, as well as developing the careers of those contributors. It also fosters a healthy research culture which in turn promotes further collaboration.
- 1.4. Increasingly over more recent years, external funding bodies, such as UKRI and the Wellcome Trust, are recognising the need for research leaders to acknowledge all contributions appropriately and are beginning to consider a research lead's historic efforts to consider fair attribution in their criteria when assessing funding applications. This is detailed within UKRI's People and Teams Action Plan, for example.
- 1.5. Equitable recognition for collaborators also fosters connection throughout the global research community and encourages future research collaborations.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This document is relevant to all staff and students enabling and contributing to research outcomes at the University of Exeter.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. Authors

- 3.1.1. Lead researchersⁱⁱ have a key responsibility to ensure that the contributions of all staff are appropriately attributed, both on the outputs itself and in any published metadata.

3.2. Contributors

- 3.2.1. Anyone listed as an author on an output should accept personal responsibility for their contribution to the output and, where appropriate, be able to specifically identify their contribution to it.

4. POLICY

- 4.1. The issue of authorship is important in the context of good research practice and fostering a healthy research culture. The university recognises the diversity of the roles contributing to research, from technical colleagues, students, software engineers, librarians, archivists, and more. Appropriately attributing work to others who worked on a project does not impede on the lead researcher's ability to gain recognition for the work.
- 4.2. When all individuals make intellectual contributions to research that results in an output (e.g., publication), they deserve to be recognised in the same way as any other contributorⁱⁱⁱ.
- 4.3. The examples provided below are intended to guide decision making as to whom to identify as an author and whom to acknowledge in attribution statements or similar.
- 4.4. The following guidance has been written to assist in deciding what kinds of work would constitute either authorship or acknowledgement in a research output.

- 4.5. The use of the CRediT Contributor Roles Taxonomy and the inclusion of contributorship statements alongside traditional attributions are encouraged. For more information see section 5.
- 4.6. It is recognised that different journals have different criteria for what may constitute authorship. It is recommended that those are always referred to in the first instance, with careful consideration of acknowledgements and contributorship statements to provide full recognition of all contributions

4.7. Authorship

- 4.7.1. If someone makes a substantial intellectual contribution to the work and demonstrates accountability for the accuracy and integrity of the resulting data or analysis, then they should be included as a co-author on any resulting outputs as would any other contributing researcher.
- 4.7.2. Examples of the type of work that would constitute authorship include, but are not limited to:
- Designing or redeveloping experiments, bespoke equipment, software, or scripts
 - Developing new data generation or analysis methodology
 - Interpreting data
 - Data curation i.e., management activities such as producing metadata, scrubbing data, and maintaining research data, including software code where necessary for data interpretation
- 4.7.3. For further information, case studies demonstrating good attribution practice for authors, from across the University, can be found on the [Research Culture SharePoint site](#).

4.8. Acknowledgement

- 4.8.1. All other contributions to the work, should be recognised with a formal acknowledgement of the individual and, if relevant, Research Facility in the acknowledgements section of the resulting publication.
- 4.8.2. Examples of the type of work that would constitute an acknowledgement include, but are not limited to:
- performing instruction-led acquisitions of data or routine sample preparations
 - monitoring and maintaining experiments or equipment
 - laboratory supervision of a research student who has undertaken analysis or data collection
 - a standard service provided by research facility staff
- 4.8.3. Funders of the work should always be acknowledged, and in most cases require this as part of their terms and conditions of funding. Please check these conditions to ensure that their preferred wording is used where appropriate.
- 4.8.4. Please see the [Research Culture SharePoint](#) for some Case Studies of Good Practice when it comes to acknowledging contributions.

5. COMPLIANCE AND GOOD PRACTICE

- 5.1. Research funders may have some specific requirements on authorship and acknowledgements. Please ensure these are adhered to.
- 5.2. The [Committee on Publication Ethics](#) (COPE) have ample guidelines and examples available to support your decision making.
- 5.3. The CASRAI [CRediT \(Contributor Roles Taxonomy\)](#) resource for suggested contributor roles and clear criteria for attribution of authorship is recommended as a resource. It may help decide whether it is appropriate to list as an author or to simply acknowledge.
- 5.4. The use of [a CRediT Contributorship Statement](#) which can be used alongside traditional authorship/acknowledgements is encouraged. The link provided gives an excellent example. For more information on the use of the CRediT Taxonomy see this article by

6. REPORTING CONCERNS

- 6.1. The University of Exeter wants to empower everyone to raise any concerns about attribution through the proper and correct routes.
- 6.2. Concerns about suspected breaches of best practice in attribution^{iv} should be raised in the first instance with an individual's Head of Department or Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Impact or Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, in confidence, who will advise on the appropriate action to take. The next steps relating to this, depending on the nature of the issue, may include investigation as an allegation of misconduct.

Review / Contacts / References	
Policy title:	Attribution Policy
Date approved:	October 2023
Approving body:	RIEC
Last review date:	September 2023
Revision history:	V1. Published October 2023
Next review date:	August 2025
Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:	Compliance and Risk – Research Integrity
Policy owner:	Research and Impact Executive Committee
Lead contact / author:	RIEC Secretariat - RIEC-Support@exeter.ac.uk

ⁱ There are many types of research outputs which will include but are not limited to:

- Monographs and scholarly editions
- Journal articles
- Book chapters
- Edited volumes
- Reviews, conference contributions, working papers
- Reports
- Artefacts, devices and products
- Exhibitions
- Performances and compositions
- Patent (published and applications)
- Design
- Software
- Digital or visual media including websites
- Research datasets and databases
- Translations

ⁱⁱ The Principle Investigator (PI) or lead on any research output whether that is a paper publication, software, performance, practice-based research, portfolios, or any other kind of research output. In the context of cross-institutional outputs, the University of Exeter lead has the responsibility to ensure appropriate accreditation is provided, regardless of their overall responsibility of the output.

ⁱⁱⁱ Anyone who contributes knowledge to a research output. This might be a Co-I, members of the research group, post-docs or post-graduate researchers, but also includes other contributors such as technicians, experimental officers, archivists, software engineers, project managers, and other roles

^{iv} Historically, this may have been termed 'Research Misconduct', however, an [article by the UK Research](#)

[Integrity Office \(UKRIO\)](#) suggested updating this wording to encourage reporting and support investigations: “...There are psychological implications of either reporting a concern or being accused of research misconduct, no matter the outcome. Being transparent about the spectrum of breaches while not detracting from the seriousness of research misconduct could indicate areas to focus on for improvement and remove barriers to reporting. As an example, being accused of denying authorship is serious, but if this accusation was unfounded this could damage a reputation. However, calling this a breach of best practice in authorship changes the tone...”