Research Integrity - Authorship Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure covers the principles and processes for determining authorship and handling disputes between authors of all forms of research output where one or more of the authors are Victoria University (VU) staff and/or students.

Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(2) HESF: Standard 4.1 Research; 4.2 Research Training; 5.2 Academic and Research Integrity.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Procedure relates to authorship of research outputs or other authored publications conducted under the auspices of Victoria University by University staff, students and visitors. This scope includes situations where Victoria University researchers collaborate in research projects that are based at other institutions.

Section 4 - Definitions

(4) Author: An individual who has made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output, and agrees to be listed as an author.

(5) Corresponding Author: The author who is, as agreed by all co-authors, responsible for communication between the publishers, managing communication between the co-authors and maintaining records of the authorship agreement.

(6) Research Output: A research output communicates or makes available the findings of research that may be in hardcopy, electronic or other form. Examples of research outputs include journal articles, book chapters, books, conference papers, reports, datasets, patents and patent applications, performances, videos and exhibitions.

(7) Gift authorship: refers to the practice of offering authorship to a colleague(s) in the blatant or surreptitious hope that they will return a favour.

(8) Honorary authorship: refers to the practice of offering authorship to those because they hold senior positions within the service or facility where the research occurred, and may have, for example, helped secure funding.

(9) Guest authorship: refers to the practice of offering authorship to senior colleague(s) because of their respect or influence in the hope that this will increase the likelihood of publication and/or impact of the paper once published.

(10) Ghost authorship: refers to the practice of not acknowledging a colleague(s) as an author when they have made a significant contribution to a manuscript to warrant authorship.

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Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(11) Research Integrity Policy

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Senior Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity	Co-ordinate and monitor institutional policies in regards to Research Integrity. Provide training for researchers
Researchers and HDR Students	Ensure appropriate and fair attribution of authorship Formalise authorship arrangements through an Authorship Agreement. Acknowledge contributions other than authorship Be accountable for the research output Approve research output Engage in relevant training Make reasonable efforts to resolve matters at a local level (if safe, reasonable and appropriate to do so)
Corresponding Author	Ensure all contributors to the research output are properly recognised Maintain records of the Authorship Agreement Retain a record of any agreed changes to the authorship of a research output
Author	Alert the corresponding author to any author or contributor who may have been inadvertently omitted.

Part B - Procedural Principles

(12) The University follows the conventions of attribution as set out in Authorship: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Authorship Guide), a guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018) (Cth).

(13) The processes the University will follow to manage a potential breach of the Code are outlined in the Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 (the Investigation Guide), the Research Integrity Policy, the NHMRC good practice guide Authorship: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Research Integrity - Guide to the Management of Potential Breaches of the Australian Code Procedure.

(14) This Procedure applies to the authorship of all research outputs (including non-traditional research outputs) and the attribution of authorship in other documents related to research, such as research proposals, grant applications, reports for funding agencies, tenders, patents and patent applications, etc. This also applies to web-based publications and applications, including professional blogs and any form of authored research output that is made publicly available.

(15) Authorship of a research output is a matter that should be discussed between researchers at an early stage in a research project, and reviewed whenever there are changes in participation.

Part C - Authorship Assignment

(16) As a general rule, all those who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution should be named as

authors. If an individual is unwilling to be accountable for the contribution by being named as an author, their contribution should generally not be included in the research output. All named authors must consent to being named and must be able to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the reported research. Authorship cannot be ascribed to Generative Artificial Intelligence, Large Language Models, or Foundation Models because these tools cannot assume responsibility for content. As non-legal entities, they are unable to declare the existence or absence of conflicts of interest, not can they handle copyright and licensing agreements. (COPE, 2023)

(17) Authorship must not be attributed when an individual has not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to a research output.

(18) Where there is more than one author, VU encourages that an VU Authorship Agreement is developed before the commencement of writing up a research project. Guidance on how to develop such an agreement are contained at Section 4.2 of the Authorship Guide and in the VU Authorship Guidelines.

(19) While acknowledging that authorship conventions vary across disciplines, a 'significant intellectual or scholarly contribution' must include one, and should include a combination of at least two or more of the following*:

a. conception and design of the project or output;
b. acquisition of research data where the acquisition has required significant intellectual judgement, planning, design, or input;
c. contribution of knowledge, where justified, including Indigenous knowledge;
d. analysis or interpretation of research data;
e. drafting significant parts of the research output or critically revising it so as to contribute to its interpretation.

*Note: this is a minimum threshold, some journals, disciplines, and institutions may require a higher threshold.

(20) Authorship should not be attributed solely on the basis of:

a. the provision of funding, data, materials, infrastructure or access to equipment;
b. the provision of routine technical support, technical advice or technical assistance;
c. the position or profession of an individual, such as their role as the author's supervisor or head of department ('gift authorship');
d. whether the contribution was paid for or voluntary;
e. the status of an individual who has not made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution being such that it would elevate the esteem of the research ('guest authorship').

Part D - Part D – Victoria University and Researcher Responsibilities

(21) VU:

a. ensures that its policies, procedures, the VU Authorship Guidelines and VU Authorship Agreement are readily accessible on the VU website;
b. provides ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct;
c. has policies, procedures and resources available that are designed to ensure the fair and honest attribution of authorship, and to minimise and resolve disputes about authorship.

(22) VU Researchers will, as detailed in the Authorship Guide:

a. Ensure fair and appropriate attribution of Authorship.
b. Formalise Authorship arrangements – the Authorship Guide provides guidance on the development of

Authorship Agreements. VU encourages the development of Authorship Agreements before the commencement of writing up a research project. Please see the VU Authorship Agreement and the VU Authorship Guidelines. As a project evolves, it is important to continue to discuss authorship, especially if new people become involved in the research and make a significant intellectual and scholarly contribution.

c. Acknowledge contributions other than authorship – contributions to research that do not meet the criteria for authorship should be acknowledged where appropriate. Researchers intending to publish Indigenous knowledge obtained through sources including unpublished manuscripts, or audio or video recordings, should seek approval from the Indigenous people involved in the project or the community from which that knowledge originates and the individual and collective contributors of the knowledge should be acknowledged, as appropriate. Further guidance is available in the Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders, 2018.
d. Acknowledge any use of digital tools. Text entered into digital tools like ChatGPT is not protected by copyright or other protections, and prompts will be retained even if requested otherwise, risking loss of confidentiality and ownership. This will result in the Intellectual Property no longer being owned by the researcher or university and potential violations to privacy and consent. Failure to acknowledge the use of tools that generate or assist in altering outputs (including text, images, etc.) may mislead others into believing the work is the author's own and could breach the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018) (Code).
e. Be accountable for the research output – An author is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of their direct contribution to the research output. If an individual does not agree to be accountable for their contribution, the contribution should not be included in the research output.
f. Approve research output – Authors must approve the research output before its submission for publication and, in doing so, agree to be accountable for it.
g. Engage in relevant training - Researchers should engage with relevant training and education provided by or through the University and should seek out other relevant training opportunities when they perceive a knowledge gap. Failing to disclose the use of Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in the creation or alteration of research outputs, thereby misrepresenting the authorship of the work.

Part E - Part E – Resolution of Disputes over Authorship

(23) Disputes over the inclusion, exclusion or order of potential authors or researchers unwilling to accept authorship and/or accountability for contributions may sometimes arise.

Local Level Resolution

(24) Research staff and higher degree by research students are encouraged to attempt to resolve any issues between authors about authorship of a work through informal resolution at an early stage, before the issue escalates.

(25) Research Integrity Advisors are available to provide independent advice, as detailed at clause 31.

Authorship Disputes

(26) Parties to an authorship dispute shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve the dispute in a fair, consistent, transparent and timely manner. They may wish to seek the advice of a Research Integrity Advisor throughout this resolution process.

(27) Where this process fails or where a dispute might represent a significant deviation from accepted practice, a formal complaint can be made in writing addressed to the Head of the Graduate Research School (GRS) for further action under the Research Integrity - Guide to the Management of Potential Breaches of the Australian Code Procedure.

(28) Records of agreements reached after resolution by direct dialogue or mediation shall be maintained by the

parties to the dispute.

(29) Legal representation for any party to an authorship dispute is not permitted.

Research Integrity Advisors

(30) Research Integrity Advisors provide confidential and independent advice about the responsible conduct of research and related processes. They cannot be involved in processes that follow-on from any of their discussions with people seeking their advice, i.e., they must remain independent and cannot act as an advocate or advise an individual on how to proceed.

Part F - Breaches of the Code

(31) Examples of breaches of the Code include, but are not limited to:

a. crediting authorship to or accepting authorship from individuals who do not meet the criteria for authorship (for example, honorary, gift or guest authorship)
b. failing to ascribe authorship to individuals where those individuals meet the requirements of authorship (for example, ghost authorship)
c. attributing authorship to individuals without their consent
d. publishing research without the final approval of the attributed authors
e. failure to comply with an authorship agreement
f. making false claims about the authorship in a grant application.

(32) Complaints and potential breaches are managed by the University in accordance with the University's Research Integrity - Guide to the Management of Potential Breaches of the Australian Code Procedure.

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