Policy and Guidelines for Authorship on Scientific and Scholarly Publications

1. Context KU Leuven

‘Scientific integrity’ has been enacted as the fifth challenge of the Research Policy Plan 2014-2018 of the KU Leuven

“It is clear that misconduct, in all its forms, undermines public confidence in science and exceptional cases of fraud damage the whole scientific community. Therefore, research integrity is an inherent part of our institutional research policy. High quality science and scientific integrity go hand in hand. The KU Leuven policy aims at prevention of misconduct and at fostering a culture of integrity in order to meet the highest standards in correct scientific behaviour. Integrity principles that are fundamental to all scientists will be better communicated and doctoral students will be offered a course in scientific integrity and good laboratory practices. The visibility of the Commission of Scientific Integrity, which is in charge of handling misconduct, as well as that of other ethics advice committees will be improved.”

In particular, the following measures have been taken
- mandatory course on Scientific Integrity for doctoral students starting 2014/15
- raising awareness through online tool LIRIcs available on Toledo (virtual learning environment accessible for both junior and senior researchers)
- refining remedies and sanctions through a revised procedure for the Commission of Scientific Integrity

Accurate authorship constitutes a fundamental element of a culture of integrity. On the one hand, both the scientific community and the public at large have a right to be informed of the identity of

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1 Approved by the Faculty Council and effective as from May 22 2015.
the author(s) that are responsible for the research results. On the other hand, accurate authorship credit is important to correctly assess the importance and repute of individual researchers. Researchers should be given just rewards for their contributions and efforts.

Therefore the present policy seeks to outline essential considerations and requirements to be observed by members of the Law Faculty in relation to their publications, taking into account the specific nature of the disciplines of law and criminology. The notion publications used in this policy is to be given a broad interpretation as each and every form of dissemination of research results should be held to the same ethical principles of scientific integrity. It includes, inter alia, books, articles, abstracts, presentations, research proposals as well as any output from such proposals.

The aim of the policy is to encourage and promote good practice as well as to help prevent misconduct in relation to the issue of authorship. It provides key principles for researchers that have been endorsed by the Faculty board.

It is observed at the outset that the nature of the rules defining ‘scientific integrity’ in general, and authorship in particular, is rather ‘moral’ rather than juridical. Established rules often derive from commonly accepted practices which may moreover differ between disciplines. Obviously, the rules adopted below are without prejudice to, and should be applied in coherence with, existing statutory norms such as copyright law.

2. Authorship policy

2.1. Context

There are no universal standards on authorship. Cultural traditions and guidelines for attribution of authorship to scholarly publication vary between institutions and disciplines. Moreover, also the various journals’ authorship policies differ in the different scientific fields.

As no common guidelines seem to exist in the humanities, inspiration may be drawn from other disciplines.

E.g.

In the natural sciences the guidelines of the PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America) are often pointed at. This policy specifies that "authorship should be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the manuscript" and furthermore that "authors are strongly encouraged to indicate their specific contributions" in a footnote.

3. In the social sciences, reference can be made to the following guidelines of the APA (American Psychological Association): “Individuals should only take authorship credit for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed (APA Ethics Code Standard 8.12a, Publication Credit). Authorship encompasses, therefore, not only those who do the actual writing but also those who have made substantial scientific contributions to a study. Substantial professional contributions may include formulating the problem or hypothesis, structuring the experimental

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3 See also the policy of the ACS (American Chemical Society) further specifying that authors are those who also “share responsibility and accountability for the results [http://pubs.acs.org/userimages/ContentEditor/1218054468605/ethics.pdf], point 11
design, organizing and conducting the statistical analysis, interpreting the results, or writing a major portion of the paper”.

An interesting practice can be found in medicine where the so-called “ICMJE policy” is widely adopted. The proposal below (see 2.2) will be based upon this policy.

2.2. **Authorship policy (Law & Criminology)**

2.2.1. **Criteria to determine authorship credit**

Authorship credit should be based on the following three cumulative contributions:

a) a substantial contribution that involves an intellectual effort to either
   - the conception and design and/or
   - the acquisition/collection of data and/or
   - the analysis and interpretation of data

b) substantially drafting the research output (e.g. article, paper, book) or substantially critically revising it for important intellectual content

c) final approval of the version of the document to be published

Only persons who fulfill all three criteria cumulatively (a + b + c) should be listed as authors.

Researchers or other persons making a contribution to the manuscript in ways that do not meet the three above-mentioned criteria should not be given authorship credit but may need to be properly acknowledged in another way (see, *infra*, 2.4).

2.2.2. **Unethical behavior in Authorship**

The following situations are considered inadmissible

a) **Honorary and gift ‘authorships’**

These types of ‘authorship’ have in common that they are given to someone who has a relationship with the research but who did not play a significant role in the preparing the manuscript. Such practices of listing undeserving authors on publications are widely condemned because they "dilute the credit due the people who actually did the work, inflate the credentials of those so 'honored,' and make the proper attribution of credit more difficult".

These practices include *inter alia* the following types of ‘authorship’:

- **Honorary** (guest or courtesy) ‘authorship’ whereby authorship is granted to an individual out of appreciation or respect, or in the belief that the prominent standing of that person may increase the status (including the likelihood of publication) of the manuscript.

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5 Inspired on ICMJE policy (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors)

6 As regards the order of the various authors, see *infra* 2.3.


8 To fight this practice, some journals impose the obligation that each new manuscript must include a statement of responsibility that specifies the contribution of every author (e.g. Nature Journals)
Gift ‘authorship’ whereby authorship credit is attributed to an individual out of obligation, tribute or dependence or to help thicken an individual’s CV

Examples of improper authorship include the listing of persons as author merely because they, e.g.
- are the chair of the department or program in which the research was conducted,
- are the supervisor of a researcher
- provided funding for the research,
- are the leading researcher in the area, or
- served as a mentor to the primary author.

b) Ghost ‘authorship’

Ghost authorship occurs where an individual makes a substantial contribution to the research or the writing of the report and meets the authorship criteria, but does not wish to be listed as an author (or there is an understanding that they will not be listed). Ghost authorship may, e.g., be linked to partnerships with industry with the aim to obscure a conflict of interest.9

It should be noted that researchers that allow ‘ghost’ authors not to be listed as (co-)author are themselves engaging in unethical conduct.

This rule does not prejudice the right of every researcher to distance him- or herself from certain content and, hence, to decide not to add his/her name as author because of disagreement with the substance of a publication10.

2.3. Order in case of multiple authors

2.3.1. Context

More than in other disciplines the model of the ‘solo scholar’ (one-paper-one author model) still seems to be the predominant model in the humanities which may explain for the lack of guidance in this field. However, in recent decades the number of collaboratively-written articles has substantially increased as a result of the promotion of research by project teams, interdisciplinary collaborations or shared interests by scholars with complementary skills.

In this context issues of authorship can be controversial.

As was the case for authorship credit, also rules for the order of multiple authors vary significantly between disciplines and fields of research.11 In addition to differing established practices, individual journals may impose particular rules with respect to the papers they publish.

In some fields, authors are listed in alphabetical order (e.g. in mathematics the so-called Hardy-Littlewood Rule is applied12). This practice seems also usual in economics, business and finance and

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10 Such person will normally not meet the three requirements for authorship (see 2.2 above).

11 Within the same field, the policies seem to be generally consistent; Kennedy, Donald (1985). "On Academic Authorship (RPH 2.8)". Stanford University Research Policy Handbook Document 2.8. Retrieved 2010-04-01

12 This usage is described in the Information Statements on the Culture of Research and Scholarship in Mathematics, American Mathematical Society (http://www.ams.org/comm-prof/CultureStatement04.pdf)
high energy physics\textsuperscript{13}. In other fields authors are listed in order of their degree of involvement in the manuscript, with the designation first or last author carrying special weight (the most active contributors are listed first while the last position is often given to the corresponding author\textsuperscript{14}).

The APA Guidelines applied in the \textit{Behavior Sciences}\textsuperscript{15}, prescribes as a general rule that principal authorship and the order of authorship credit should accurately reflect the contributions of persons involved, regardless of their relative status.

The ICMJE Requirements simply note that “\textit{the order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the coauthors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed}”.

Amongst the various policies, some common generally accepted rules can be identified. E.g. the relative status of a person (i.e., department chair, junior faculty member, student) should not determine the order of authorship. Furthermore, because doctoral work is expected to represent an independent and original contribution devised by the particular researcher, he/she should be listed as the principal author of any multi-authored papers substantially based on the dissertation.

\subsection*{2.3.2. Rules of good practice for the Law Faculty}

In view of the different policies and customs outlined above, it does not seem expedient to prescribe the order of authorship in a decisive manner. Rather the following guidelines are set forth that may avoid authorship disputes

\textbf{Anticipate:} Proactively discuss and agree authorship protocols from the outset

\begin{itemize}
  \item Authorship credit and order should be based on a collective decision of all involved in the project after an open discussion within the group.
  \item Authorship and order should be agreed upon (preferably in writing) at the initial stage of the design of a project, possibly even before starting it.
  \item As a practical matter, a responsible author (lead author) should be designated who will normally assume the role of managerial author for the manuscript and who will act as the official contact for the paper (‘corresponding author’). Obviously, this person should meet the authorship criteria set forth in this policy.
  \item The agreed decisions should be communicated (preferably in writing) to all members of the research team.
  \item The agreed decisions should be re-discussed - and be revised if need be – as the research project progresses because roles and contributions may change.
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Default guidelines} (subject to deviation in particular circumstances)

1. If authors play equal or comparable roles in the research and publication, their names should be listed in alphabetical order.

2. In cases of collaborations with varying weight, the name of the principal contributor to the publication should appear first, with subsequent names in order of decreasing contribution. In this case principal authorship and the order of authorship credit should accurately reflect the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} In science and engineering it seems that a common practice has emerged whereby the principal investigator is mentioned last in the author list.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} American Psychological Association; http://www.apa.org/research/responsible/publication/
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
respective contributions of the persons involved, possibly with additional explanation in the footnotes.

3. A combination of 1. and 2. may be appropriate in certain circumstances. A case in point would be the situation whereby one author clearly acted as principal author (to be mentioned first) and was assisted by other authors meeting the three requirements (to be mentioned in alphabetical order subsequent to the principal author).\(^{16}\)

4. Institutional position or relative status (i.e., department chair, junior faculty member, student) may not be taken into account to determine the order of authorship.

5. Particular circumstances that may justify alternative rules or orders include *inter alia* collaboration with researchers from other disciplines or universities that apply different rules.

6. If possible it is recommended that the order of the authors is explained at a place in the publication that allows for such an explanation.

### 2.4. **Distinguish between authorship and contributorship**

#### 2.4.1. *In general*

In a collaborative setting, researchers may encompass activities that contribute to the publication but who do not meet the authorship criteria (e.g. securing research funding, providing research facilities, collecting research data, managing or supervising researchers involved in the project, ...). Such valuable contribution of other persons - from within or outside the faculty - may warrant proper acknowledgement. This should be done in a *separate acknowledgment section*, e.g. as a footnote on the first page.

Proper acknowledgement may be given to contributions that relate to:

- Coming up with the idea or the design of the research\(^{17}\)
- Provision of financial support
- Acquisition of the funding
- Technical skill
- Writing or editorial assistance
- General supervision of the research (group)
- Collection of the data
- Coordination of data collection
- Statistical advice
- Being the author of an earlier paper upon which the new manuscript builds further

Contributions that solely consist of the above input, do not warrant authorship credit.

Unless there exists an obligation to do so (e.g. in funding contracts), the author should seek the permission of every individual person prior to acknowledging his/her contribution.

#### 2.4.2. *Doctoral theses*

In the case of a doctoral thesis, other persons such as the promotor, co-promotor(s) or other members of the scientific committee, may provide input to the thesis that may qualify as an original

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\(^{16}\) For a discussion of the particular situation of publications linked to a PhD thesis, see *infra* 2.4.2

\(^{17}\) Often this concerns the supervisor of the research who, in many disciplines, is listed as an author (often the last author)
substantial contribution. Nevertheless, as regards the publication of the doctoral thesis itself which, by definition, should represent an independent and original contribution devised by the doctoral researcher, the latter should be listed as the only author of such publication. The promoters and any other possible contributor should be acknowledged and mentioned qualitate qua in a separate section.

2.5. **Issue of self-plagiarism (duplicate publication)**

In the context of scientific integrity, it is deemed unethical to re-use previous text or data of one self or to publish findings in more than one publication\(^\text{18}\) without properly citing the original or previous source\(^\text{19}\). Also in case of a *quasi verbatim* re-publication, such circumstance should be explicitly mentioned\(^\text{20}\). In the same line of reasoning submitting a manuscript simultaneously to more than one journal without mentioning it, is deemed scientific misconduct.

On the other hand, and in the particular fields of law and criminology, there may be good reasons for re-using previous texts in different journals (e.g. to reach a different audience or to adjust content to a more practitioner-based journal) or in a later PDH. In these disciplines, new publications regularly draw on ideas and investigations published before and it is quite common that the earlier starting points and conclusions are repeated.

This policy requires researcher to be wholly transparent about the fact and the reasons of re-use of any prior publication as well as to apply the correct reference ‘MULTPUB’ in Lirias\(^\text{21}\).

3. **Related obligations**

**Responsibility**

Authorship not only confers status but also carries with it the responsibility for the reported research results. In particular:

a) each author must carry responsibility for correctness: anyone listed as an author should be prepared to take public responsibility for (the appropriate portion of) that manuscript and ensure its accuracy, including the integrity of the research;

b) each author must fully understand and be able to defend a paper’s major points.

Hence: if an author disagrees or is uncomfortable with the content of the publication, he should opt out of authorship (and has the right to do so). Alternatively, authors have the possibility to indicate that they disagree or defend different opinions on certain matters.

**Conflicts of interest & Disclosures**

Where appropriate, authors shall furthermore acknowledge and disclose

\(^{18}\) Conference abstracts are not included in the definition of ‘publication’ in this context

\(^{19}\) Such duplicate (also referred to as redundant) publication is in general deemed unacceptable, e.g., because it is considered to constitute a waste of resources and may cause problems for meta-analyses.

\(^{20}\) A mere footnote with the reference of the earlier publication is not sufficient.

\(^{21}\) See the Faculty’s STAR model, nr. 35 “Publications that are not entirely new but largely (i.e. for more than 75%) replicate previous publications must be tagged as a multiple publication. This includes updates, revisions, new editions, translations of books, articles, chapters in books. This must be indicated by adding a second qualifier in LIRIAS, after the normal publication code: MULTPUB”.

• Any support or funding, such as research grants, gifts and other forms of support that allowed for the publication
• In particular, financial or other interests that could be regarded as a potential conflict of interest
• Any direct or indirect interest as advisor, legal counsel or expert
  o In case of a direct involvement in such capacity researchers should in principle refrain from publishing on the subject matter. Alternatively, if a publication appears justifiable, the nature of the researcher’s involvement should be disclosed in a transparent way

4. In case of conflict

Disputes over authorship between members of the Faculty (such as misattributed authorship, omitted or added authors, disputes over order, lack of acknowledgment of contributor … ) should be submitted to either the competent ombudsperson or the vice-dean of research and the chair of the doctoral commission jointly, who will seek to mediate. In case of a conflict of interest, the dean will arrange a replacement.

This rule is without prejudice to the possibility for any member of the Faculty to report Instances of possible scientific misconduct directly to the Commission for Scientific Integrity of the KU Leuven22.

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22 http://www.kuleuven.be/research/integrity/procedures/