Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Authorship Guidelines

Discussions of authorship within the Harvard T.H. Chan School usually concern published reports of original, scientific research. However, the same principles apply to all intellectual products: words or images; in paper or electronic media; whether published or prepared for local use; in scientific disciplines or the humanities; and whether intended for the dissemination of new discoveries and ideas, for published reviews of existing knowledge or for educational programs.

1. Everyone who is listed as an author should have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work. For example, they should have contributed to the conception, design, analysis and/or interpretation of data. Honorary or guest authorship is not acceptable. Acquisition of funding and provision of technical services, patients, or materials, while they may be essential to the work, are not in themselves sufficient contributions to justify authorship.

2. Everyone who has made substantial and direct intellectual contributions to the work should be an author. Everyone who has made other substantial contributions should be acknowledged.

3. When research is done by teams whose members are highly specialized, individuals’ contributions and responsibility may be limited to the specific aspects of the work described in the publication.

4. All authors should contribute to writing the manuscript, reviewing drafts and approving the final version.

5. One author (usually the Principal Investigator) should take primary responsibility for the work as a whole even if he or she does not have an in-depth understanding of every part of the work. This individual should assure that all authors meet the basic criteria for authorship outlined in guideline 1.

6. The authors should make every effort to decide the order of authorship together. Research teams should discuss authorship issues frankly early in the course of their work together and at other times during their collaboration as needed. It is recommended that the PI write up a summary of the authorship agreement. To assist with this, these guidelines should be distributed to all team members at the start of the collaboration.

7. If there is an authorship dispute, every effort should be made to settle it at the local level by the authors themselves, the research PI and/or the Department Chair.

If local efforts fail, please contact Dean Michael Grusby (mgrusby@hsph.harvard.edu) for additional resources to facilitate dispute resolution.