

SHARE Principles and Guidelines for Authorship

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What this document is about:

The authors of an academic paper largely shape the ‘story’ that is told about research findings, and authorship confers credit for producing that evidence. Academic papers are designed for a particular audience and constrained by academic norms of what counts as legitimate research evidence (1). Nevertheless, they can also shape health policy and guidance (2), and academic careers (3).

SHARE recognises academic authorship as a powerful tool for influencing whose voices are listened to in public health research and policymaking.

SHARE aims to implement meaningful inclusion and authentically co-produce research with communities. We acknowledge that some community partners may have less familiarity with academic collaboration and authorship experience and may favour other forms of dissemination.

These principles outline what we mean by authorship, and how we intend to support academic and community colleagues at all stages of their research careers to be meaningfully involved as co-authors in SHARE outputs.¹

SHARE recognises that its members and collaborators come from different disciplines, institutes, and cultural backgrounds, and that authorship norms and conventions can vary across these contexts. These guidelines aim to increase transparency and support discussions around authorship in order to foster harmonious and equitable collaboration.

To prevent disagreements or confusion about authorship or author order, please refer to these guidelines when commencing the research within the team. If there are uncertainties, please request assistance from the SHARE Senior Executive Team as the question may need to be referred for a wider discussion and/or the guidelines may need to be clarified.

This document is intended as a guideline for discussion and not a set of rules. It includes principles, a checklist to prompt action (and memory) and an Appendix with additional information, reflections, and references.

¹ These guidelines have been adapted from those developed in Miles, Renedo, Marston (2022).

SHARE Principles

Ensuring shared understanding

1. Everyone involved in a project should be made aware of these principles, the nature of academic publication processes and authorship conventions at the beginning of the project.

Planning outputs and authorship

2. The project research/writing team should list details of expected papers early in any project. Insofar as possible, potential journals for publication should be identified and authorship conventions and submission requirements considered early on.
3. Expected authorship and author order should be discussed as early as possible in the project and before initial drafts have been written. Where possible, these discussions will be face-to-face – either in-person or on a video-conferencing platform. Circumstances can change due to workload and can be renegotiated.
4. All authors must make a substantive contribution to the intellectual content of the paper, in line with International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME) guidelines (4). This includes:
 - a. Contribution to the conception or design of the paper; AND/OR the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data for the paper;
 - b. AND drafting the paper or critically reviewing it;
 - c. AND final approval of the version to be published;
 - d. AND agreement to be accountable for the accuracy and integrity of the paper.
5. Community project partners should be invited to co-author papers, with plans in place early on about how to support their contributions based on their own assessment of need, if any.²
6. Where there is a large group of contributors to a study, the author list for the paper could include the name of the collaborative or study group as an author, with the individual members listed as contributors in the acknowledgements. Those who have contributed to the paper in a way that meets the definition of an author would be listed as individual authors.
7. Contributors whose contribution does not meet the criteria for authorship should be named in the acknowledgements (e.g., translators or interpreters). Individuals named in the acknowledgements should be asked for permission for their name to be included.
8. Strategic needs of members of the project team should be considered in determining author order (e.g., need to gain experience of lead or senior authorship), along with the authorship conventions of the intended journal for submission. However, any named author must fulfil the requirements for their authorship position.

Drafting and submission

9. The writing strategy should be determined by the needs of the co-authors and external factors such as feasibility based on writing group size, level of writing experience within the group or the time pressure of the paper to be published.²
10. All academic publications should contain a statement about the contribution of each named author.

² See Appendix for further guidance.

11. The first author is responsible for submitting the paper and making any revisions in response to referee comments. The first author cannot submit any paper without the agreement of the named authors and the senior author (last author).

Timings and Support

12. Project plans and timelines should be flexible to ensure the time necessary to discuss authorship and facilitate meaningful contributions.
13. When swift publication is a priority, deadlines and role responsibilities should be discussed early on with the writing team and during regular check-ins. If the intended first author is unable to make progress within an agreed time, despite support being offered, the team should consider reassigning lead authorship or (where permitted) offer co-lead authorship for a paper.
14. Community project partners should be financially reimbursed for their time spent contributing to papers, in line with the SHARE Principles for Public Involvement, and their other Terms of Engagement.

Inclusive dissemination

15. Where possible within journal requirements, a Plain English summary of the paper should be drafted and submitted alongside the paper.
16. Academic journal publication should be supplemented with publication of findings in other channels to ensure inclusive dissemination (e.g., tweet threads, policy document, media article, public workshop, etc.)

CHECKLIST

Tasks	Responsibility	Completed?
PLANNING		
Shared these principles with all project team members, including community partners?	Project team lead	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinated team meeting (with community partners, where applicable) to discuss topics, roles, and process towards outputs?	Project team lead	<input type="checkbox"/>
Checked journal submission requirements (e.g., paper structure, declarations, mandatory ORCID profile, etc.) and shared this information as needed?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussed and agreed any support/time needed for co-authors, especially lead author, to fulfil their role responsibilities?	Project team lead	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agreed how authorship should be ordered? *	Project team lead / SHARE Exec	<input type="checkbox"/>
DRAFTING		
Organised regular check-ins to support progress towards submission?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensured opportunities for co-authors to critically review and feedback on drafts?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drafted a statement within the paper outlining each author's contribution?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drafted Plain English Summary if journal allows for it?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUBMISSION		
Sent final version of paper and cover letter to all co-authors for approval prior to submission?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collected all necessary information for submission from co-authors? (e.g., declaration of interest forms, affiliations, etc.)	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmed with PI how any publication / processing fees will be paid?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmed who should be listed as corresponding author?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made a plan for how to deal with reviewers' comments and re-submission?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
PEER REVIEW AND PUBLICATION		
Drafted point-by-point response to reviewers and circulated to all co-authors for approval prior to submission?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Circulated proofs to all co-authors for review and submitted corrections?	Corresponding author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed publishing agreement and paid any processing / publishing fees if required?	Corresponding author	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIDER DISSEMINATION		
Publicised publication on social media with lay summary of findings?	Lead author	<input type="checkbox"/>
Published other accessible outputs as agreed with project team?	Project team lead	<input type="checkbox"/>
*Note: Exact author order may change during the writing process depending on extent of input, so it may be the case that you agree early the principle of how you will order authors and agree on the final order near the end of the writing process.		

Appendix

Notes on the nature of academic publication processes and authorship conventions

Social science journals will often order authors by extent of input. For example, the British Sociological Association's guidelines state:

Those who have made a major contribution to analysis or writing (i.e. more than commenting in detail on successive drafts) are entitled to follow the first author immediately; where there is a clear difference in the size of these contributions, this should be reflected in the order of these authors. (5)

In contrast, biomedical / public health journals typically place more importance on the first and last authors, while it is assumed that the others (the middle authors) have made smaller contributions (6).

Middle authors may be ordered alphabetically, but this has been found to inadvertently disadvantage people with later surnames, especially where this might relate to country/language (7). Instead, SHARE consider it more appropriate to order authors by extent of input, with authorship rotated between those with equal contributions across a number of papers. For public health / biomedical journals, the senior (last) author will be the Principal Investigator (PI). Shared first or last authorship could also be considered where allowed by the journal.

It is also more conventional in biomedical / public health journals to have many authors given the large teams required for the work (e.g., large clinical trials), whereas social science publications generally have fewer authors.

Finally, the corresponding author needs to be the person responsible for paying the processing or publication fees if their affiliated institution doesn't cover it – this will usually be PI as the grant holder. *Being corresponding author does not influence authorship order* (for example, corresponding author does not need to be first or last author).

Supporting co-author contributions

At SHARE we recognise that the distinction between community partners and academic researchers is blurred. Some of our academic members have lived experience of their topics of research, and some of our community partners have multiple academic qualifications. Some of our junior researchers have less experience of writing papers, and our community partners may have less time and capacity to be involved in writing compared to the academic members of the project team.

We aspire to provide support for everyone in the project team to contribute to academic papers if this is something they wish to do. Community partners can be financially reimbursed for time spent working on papers where this is not part of their terms of reference or contract. Lead authors should also offer community partners a variety of options for input and critical reflection to papers, such as:

- Attending analysis workshops (online or in-person) where preliminary findings are presented and the discussion is recorded for further analysis and inclusion in paper discussion sections
- Reviewing written drafts and being given the option to provide feedback through:
 - Written comments
 - Edits or ideas in-text

- Phone or online meeting
- In-person meeting

Those involved in drafting, and particularly lead authors, may also need support if they have less experience with writing academic papers. This could include organising writing workshops or pairing with one or more experienced researchers for enhanced feedback.

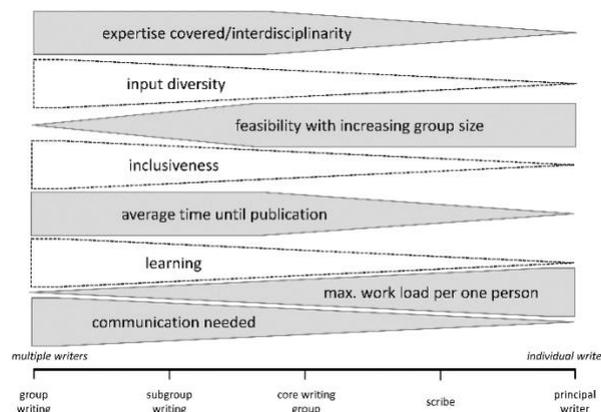
Agreeing a writing strategy (8)

Different writing strategies ranging from very inclusive to minimally inclusive:

- group writing = everyone writes on everything;
- subgroup writing = document is split up into expertise areas, each individual contributes to a subsection;
- core writing group = a subgroup of a few coauthors writes the paper;
- scribe writing = one person writes based on previous group discussions;
- principal writer = one person drafts and writes the paper

The strategy you choose will depend on the needs of the project team (white shapes in Fig 1) and based on the framework given through external factors (grey shapes in Fig 1). In most cases, the approach that everyone writes on everything is not possible and is very inefficient. It is important to engage all team members (in writing or via discussion) in defining the narrative, format, and structure of the paper to pre-empt having to rewrite or delete sections later.

Fig 1. Decision chart for writing strategy.



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