

Boston College Authorship Guide

Purpose

This Authorship Guide (Guide) is designed to assist the Boston College community to determine authorship and to prevent or resolve authorship disputes. Issues addressed in this Guide include how to determine whether an individual's contributions warrant authorship, acknowledgments, or no mention.¹

Introduction

Boston College is committed to ensuring all scholarly and research publications involving faculty, staff (including postdocs), or students, include appropriate attribution of authorship and recognition of those involved in the work. Proper attribution and recognition are critical to ensuring that authorship credit is given when and where it is due, preventing authorship disputes, and promoting collaboration among researchers.

When determining authorship attribution, researchers should familiarize themselves with the professional norms and standards of their academic discipline and apply them appropriately. Researchers should also regularly communicate those norms and standards, at minimum when an individual joins a research project and thereafter on an annual basis, with all employees, faculty, staff, students and other individuals involved in their research.

Authorship

For each individual, the privilege of authorship should be based on a significant contribution to the conceptualization, design, execution, or interpretation of the research, as well as to the drafting or substantively reviewing or revising the research article.²

Authorship potentially conveys great benefit to co-authors, but it also involves personal responsibility for the research published. In the scholarly arena, authorship also forms the basis for rewards and career advancement. It is essential that a person's consent be obtained before placing their name on a byline, since accountability and responsibility for the contents of a

¹ As published in McNutt et al., Transparency in authors' contributions and responsibilities to promote integrity in scientific publication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* March 13, 2018 115 (11) 2557-2560. These criteria were adapted from the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) framework for broader applicability across scientific fields.

² Conduct of Research in the Intramural Research Program at NIH National Institutes of Health Office of the Director

published work is implied when authorship credit is given. Therefore, if anyone is accorded authorship credit, they also accept responsibility for the publication's contents, in its entirety.³

Accepted standards for assigning authorship, as well as principles, customs and practices, differ significantly from one academic discipline to another. Consequently, researchers are advised to seek guidance on standard practices within their own academic disciplines and to consult any guides, policies or requirements set by the funders of their research, other research institutions they are collaborating with, and the research journals in which they hope to publish.

Designing an honest, ethical and transparent approach to authorship and the publication of research is a shared responsibility of all research team members, but it is primarily the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI). To prevent misunderstandings on authorship, it is recommended that discussions about authorship be held openly and frequently throughout collaborative projects.

It is further recommended that the PI prepare an authorship agreement. Authorship agreements should be established between co-authors early in the research and writing process for each manuscript, and these agreements should be reviewed and revised as needed to reflect changes in the actual contributions of individuals in accordance with this Guide.

Who is an Author?

Boston College recommends that authorship determinations include the following four criteria:

- **Scholarship:** significant contribution to the conception, design, execution and/or analysis and interpretation of data.
- **Authorship:** participation in the drafting, reviewing, and/or revising of the work and providing important intellectual content.
- **Approval:** final approval of the version to be published.
- **Agreement:** agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work, including ensuring that questions related to the accuracy and integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Although certain academic disciplines do not require all criteria to be met in order to determine authorship credit, an individual who meets all four criteria should be identified as an author.

³ Topic: Authorship Credit; American Sociological Association (ASA) <http://www.asanet.org/teaching-learning/faculty/teaching-ethics-throughout-curriculum/topic-authorshipcredit>

Authorship Order

Determinations of “lead author” and “co-author” differ significantly depending on the academic discipline. Consequently, when making “authorship order” determinations, co-authors should refer to the professional norms and standards of their academic discipline, as well as any requirements from the research journal in which they hope publish or the sponsor of the research involved. In the event of a situation in which authorship order cannot be determined, the co-authors should contact their respective department chair or associate research dean for assistance.

Non-Author Contributors

Individuals whose contributions do not justify authorship based on the aforementioned criteria could still be acknowledged individually or as a group under a single heading (e.g. "Clinical Investigators" or "Participating Investigators"), and their contributions could be specified (e.g., "served as scientific advisors," "critically reviewed the study proposal," "collected data," "provided and cared for study patients," "participated in writing or technical editing of the manuscript").

Examples of activities that alone do not qualify a contributor for authorship include, but are not limited to: acquisition of funding; general supervision of a research group or general administrative support; and writing assistance, technical editing, language editing, and proofreading.

Removal of an Author

The decision to remove an author prior to publication requires careful consideration and adherence to ethical standards. It is recommended that co-authors review the authorship criteria stated in this Guide in order to confirm each individual has, or has not, satisfied each criterion. If a decision is made to remove an author, all authors should consent in writing to that removal, including the excluded author⁴. Upon agreement, authors should amend the author list and contributor details as needed.

Any disputes or disagreements among co-authors regarding authorship removals should be addressed by the respective department chair or associate research dean. In such an instance, co-authors should explain the reason for removing an author and provide a detailed justification for that decision, along with supporting documentation, if applicable.

⁴ Changes in authorship: Removal of author – before publication; COPE
<https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/authorship-b-removal-before-publication-cope-flowchart.pdf>

Dispute Resolution

It is recommended that researchers establish an authorship agreement early in the development of any research project and/or collaborative publication (see Addendum A). If authorship disputes arise, it is crucial for researchers to address the situation transparently, honestly and ethically, and work collaboratively to find a resolution.

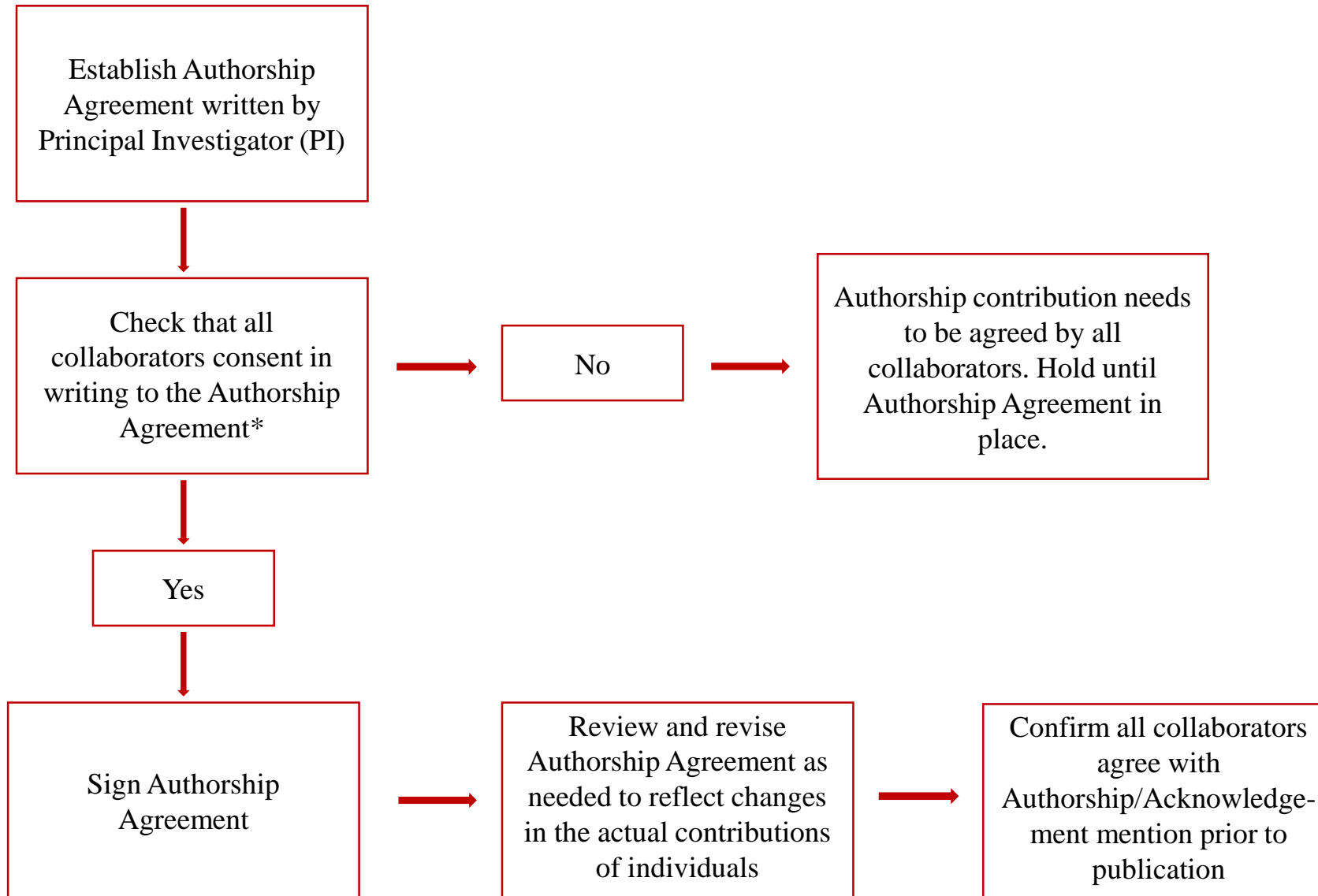
This Guide's Authorship Dispute Resolution Flow Chart and Tool (see Addendums B and C) can be used by co-authors as they work towards a resolution acceptable to all parties. If the group is unable to resolve the dispute to everyone's satisfaction, the department chair or associate research dean should be contacted. If the department chair or associate research dean has a conflict of interest that could influence their ability to make an objective decision, it is recommended that they recuse themselves and notify the dean.

If the dispute cannot be resolved using the Authorship Dispute Resolution Flow Chart and Tool, or other mediation efforts utilized by the researchers, department chair or associate research dean, the dean should be notified. The dean should be informed about the nature of the dispute and the efforts undertaken to resolve it. The dean will then review the submitted information and determine whether or not to appoint a committee to examine the case.

Research Misconduct

In the event that an authorship dispute includes any allegation of research misconduct (e.g. plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication), the matter must be immediately reported to the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (VPR), as required by the Boston College Research Misconduct Policy. Research misconduct allegations must be referred to the VPR upon their discovery, regardless of whether an associated authorship dispute is resolved or unresolved.

Addendum A: Authorship Agreement Flow Chart

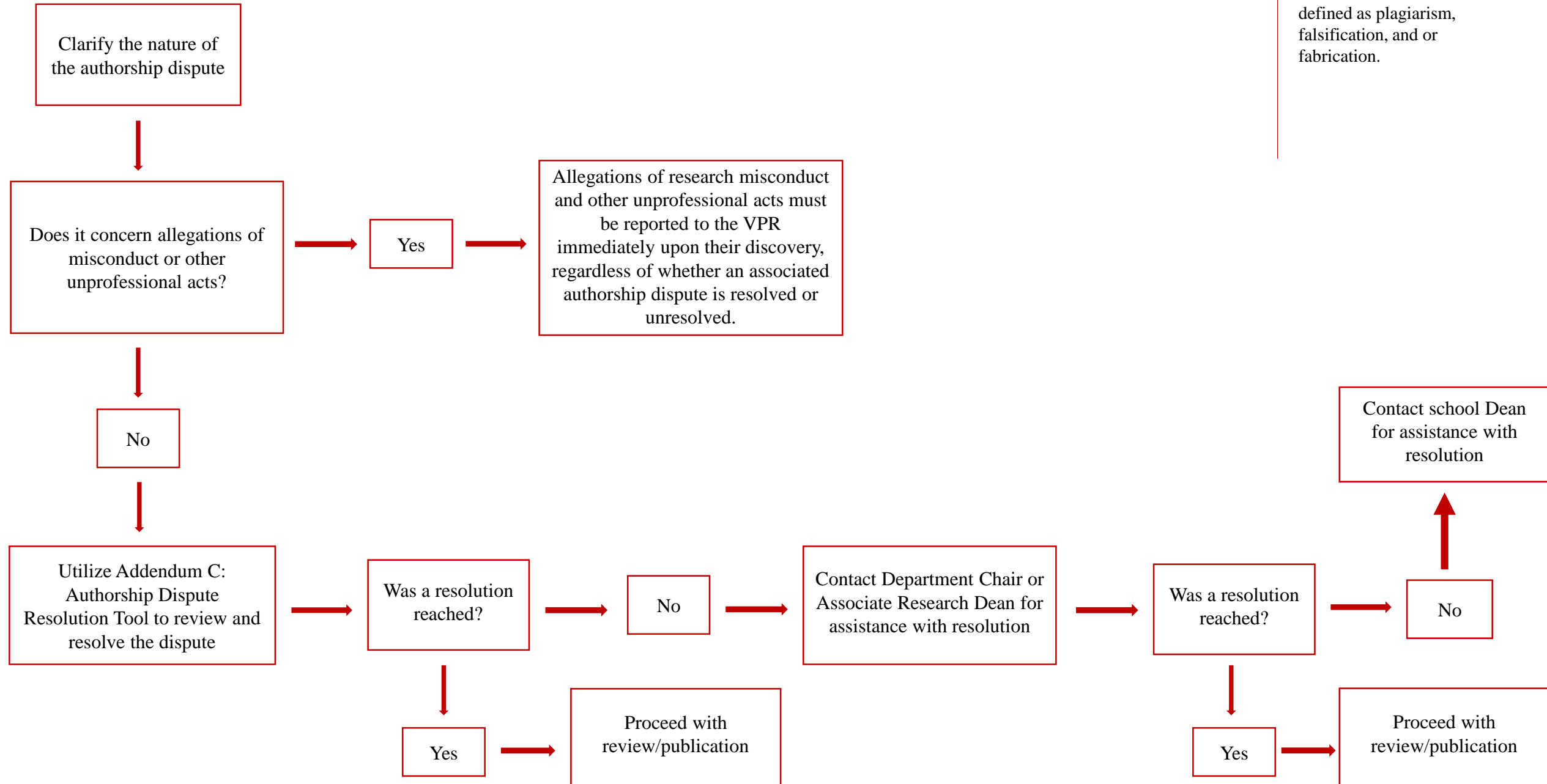


*Notes

Boston College recommends that authorship determinations include the following four criteria: Scholarship; Authorship; Approval; Agreement

Addendum B: Authorship Dispute Resolution Flow Chart

***Notes**
Research misconduct is defined as plagiarism, falsification, and or fabrication.



Addendum C: Authorship Dispute Resolution Tool

In the event of an authorship dispute, this tool is intended to assist research team members to resolve the dispute in accordance with this guide and the applicable discipline. In the event that a resolution cannot be reached, it will enable the parties to obtain critical information prior to contacting the dean.

What is the nature of the authorship dispute? (e.g. does it concern credit, inclusion or authorship order, and/or are there allegations of plagiarism or other unprofessional acts?)

What is the current stage of the research/scholarly project? (e.g., protocol design, data collection, data analysis, preparing the manuscript, manuscript has been submitted)

Who should be included in the conversations to resolve this dispute?

What agreements/discussions have occurred to date on the assignment of authorship and attribution of credit on this project?

What are the roles of those who worked on this project (whether or not they are currently described as an author)? (refer to the Contributor Roles Taxonomy for specifying roles)¹

Who among this list meets the four criteria for authorship as identified by the Boston College Authorship Guide?

Does the publication involve authors from different schools, departments, or academic disciplines at Boston College? If so, do the schools, departments, or academic disciplines have different professional norms and standards or authorship dispute resolution processes?

Does the publication involve authors from different research institutions? If so, what are the authorship dispute resolution processes for those institutions?

What efforts, if any, have been previously undertaken to resolve this matter?

¹ Contributor Role Taxonomy

<https://credit.niso.org/>