

GVSU Authorship Guidelines for Collaborative Scholarly Products

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At Grand Valley State University, scholarship is deeply rooted in the University's mission. It is integral to decisions regarding faculty contract renewals, salary, tenure, and promotions, and to recognition for students' specialized accomplishments and preparation for advanced study. Within the academic environment, faculty and students are expected to conduct their scholarly projects with the highest degree of integrity, since that work reflects both the scholar and the institution.

Appropriate recognition of faculty and student contributors to a scholarly product is fundamental. Scholarly activity may be an independent or collaborative effort amongst faculty and students. When the effort is collaborative, assignment and order of authorship should be based upon careful considerations regarding everyone's contributions to the final product. The following guidelines are offered to provide a fair and consistent method of judging scholarly contributions by faculty and/or students.

I. Process of Assigning Authorship

Note: For this context, "**Product**" can refer to any disseminated work (in any format including electronic), such as a manuscript, book, poster presentation, invited oral presentation, creative work, or performance. "**Author**" refers to any person, (faculty, student, or collaborator) who is a significant contributor to the completion of the product.

Bringing a scholarly product to culmination is a fluid process; therefore, establishing early and regular communication and transparency in authorship decisions can help mitigate problems related to designation or order of authors.

- Faculty, colleagues, and students should discuss how authorship decisions are made. At a minimum, this discussion should include the nature of contributions to professional publications, the meaning of authorship credit and order, and the importance of parties agreeing on what contributions will be expected of each collaborator for a given level of authorship credit. There should be at least one of these formal discussions at both the initiation and completion of the collaborative project.
- One author should be designated as the Primary Author. That person 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.

- The Primary Author assures that all authors meet basic standards for authorship. The Primary Author should also prepare a concise, written Memo of Understanding (MOU) describing the contributions made by the authors to the work. The MOU must be approved by all authors prior to any submission and should include an indication of how authorship order was decided. The MOU should remain with the sponsoring department, and if necessary, modified to reflect any later revisions.
- When a collaborator, such as a statistician or technical writer, contributes specialized information or skills to a product and has responsibility limited to certain aspects of the work, the Primary Author, in consultation with the other authors, should ascertain whether the contributions are significant enough to warrant inclusion of the collaborator as an author. The primary consideration should be fairness to all parties.
- Individual Units or Colleges should engage in discussions that would establish more specific guidelines for their constituents whenever possible.
- A particular journal or publisher may have stipulations regarding authorship. For example, it may be GVSU unit policy to list all student authors, but a journal may limit the number of authors. If a journal or publisher has stipulations that are at variance with unit of university practices, the variances should be noted in the MOU by the Primary Author and, when appropriate, negotiated with the journal.

II. Guidelines for Assigning Order of Authorship

While the significance of a particular order of authorship may be understood in a given setting, the order of authorship has no universally agreed upon meaning. Different disciplines, media, and countries have notably different traditions on matters of authorship. Authorship traditions include alphabetical or random order, descending order of contribution, placing the person who took the lead in writing the manuscript or doing the research first, and, especially in the lab sciences, placing the most experienced contributor last.

Therefore, it is understood that specific and universal rules cannot be applied across campus. However, the following principles may provide guidance for decisions related to the appropriate recognition of student and faculty scholars.

1. Everyone who is listed as an author should have made a substantial, direct, intellectual contribution to the work. For example, in the case of a research report, each person listed as an author should have contributed to the conception, design, analysis, and/or interpretation of the data. Assigning authorship credit to honorary or guest authors is not an acceptable practice at GVSU. For example, while persons who acquire funding

or provide technical services may be essential to a scholarly endeavor, those contributions alone are not sufficient justification for authorship.

2. All authors listed on a scholarly product should have participated in creating this product. For example, for a research report, all authors should have participated in writing the manuscript by reviewing drafts and approving the final version.
3. Every person who has made substantial intellectual contributions to the completion of the product and satisfies criteria #1 and #2 (above) should be an author.
4. Persons who have made contributions to the product, but have not met the preceding requirements, should receive an acknowledgement only.
5. Finally, the authors should collectively decide, and periodically review for appropriateness, the order of authorship. In the absence of specific unit, discipline, or journal requirements for the order of authorship, the order at GVSU in which authors generally are listed is as follows:
 - a. The list should reflect descending order of contribution to the product.
 - b. The person who took the lead in writing the manuscript and/or developing the product should be considered the first author.