

Faculty of Humanities Guidance to Postgraduate Research Supervisors and Students on Co-publication

The Faculty of Humanities recommends that supervisory teams should discuss publication strategy with students from an early stage in the PGR programme, and that this conversation should include the possibility of co-authored publications between student and supervisor. This is not to pre-judge the appropriate outcome of that conversation, which will depend on, among other things, the conventions of the discipline. This guidance is intended to inform these discussions especially in those disciplines where co-publication of this kind has hitherto been rare. Whilst co-publication is encouraged, where appropriate, there is no obligation on supervisors to co-publish with their students.

Advantages of co publication

The practice of co-publication can offer significant benefits to student and supervisor. It has the potential generate REF-able publications at 3* or above. There is some evidence to suggest that writers achieve more when working together particularly when inexperienced writers work with more experienced ones so that co-authorship acts as a form of intensive training in how to write for publication at this level. Where a student is the first named author, co-authoring with a supervisor may increase their motivation to complete and confidence to submit the paper as well as potentially increasing the chance of acceptance (Hartley2008). Co-authors act as editors/proof-readers for each other and bring fresh perspectives to each other's work. For the supervisor, co-authoring with a student provides a deeper understanding of the student's work and how s/he goes about it. When it results in a high quality publication, it rewards the supervisor for the investment of intellectual effort that goes into high-quality supervision.

The most obvious way in which co-publications can be developed is for the supervisor to contribute to a paper being written by the student from her/his research. This contribution can range from comments and revisions to sections of the content but the student would remain responsible for the final draft. Care needs to be taken to ensure that joint authorship does not breach the principle that the research embodied in the thesis should be the student's own. However, students may also contribute to projects in which the supervisor retains all or part of the responsibility for the final output. For example, if a supervisor invites a student to co-present at a conference, this may lead to a co-authored publication. In considering whether it is appropriate to involve students in this way, the following ethical principles should be kept in mind.

Ethical Principles

- i. Whether or not to engage in co-authorship should ultimately be the student's decision: it should never be a requirement that PGR publications should include the supervisor as co-author simply by virtue of being the supervisor.
- ii. Decisions on inclusion of co-authors should be based on accepted principles as set out in the University's [Authorship Guidelines](#), which conform with those agreed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, the British Sociological Association, and the Committee on Publication Ethics.

All authors should, among other things, have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the research and played a role in drafting or redrafting the work.

iii. The expectation is that the PGR student is named as first author on all publications arising directly out of his/her thesis, as per the University of Manchester Authorship Guidelines. That implies that the PGR student should always play the lead role in the design and authorship of the paper. However, students and supervisors may engage in other forms of co-authorship that do not arise directly from the thesis as discussed above. In these cases, supervisors should refer to the University's authorship guidelines on identifying the first author.

Further guidance on ethical principles around authorship is provided through the [Epigeum](#) online Research Integrity training course that is now mandatory for all PGR students.

Practical Considerations

The practical decision is whether it is desirable for the supervisor to play a substantial role in the authorship of a paper related to the student's thesis or for a student to appear as co-author on a project attributed to the supervisor. It follows from the principles set out above that the decision to name or not name the supervisor as co-author should depend only on the nature of the contribution made. In making that decision, student and supervisor should take into account the following:

i. How common co-authorship is in the student's discipline. As a rule, it is much more common in the social sciences than in the arts and humanities, but there are exceptions. In disciplines where most journal articles are co-authored, PGR students would benefit from early experience of co-authorship.

ii. Whether the inclusion of the supervisor as co-author would be likely to enhance either the prospects of publication in a high-ranking journal or the number of citations the paper will receive.

iii. Whether a first-authored paper would carry less weight than a sole-authored paper on the student's CV, e.g. in applying for fellowships and lectureships. This is likely to depend heavily on the discipline, and (ii) and (iii) might counter-balance each other in some cases.

Further Reading

HARTLEY, J. 'Academic Writing and Publishing: A Practical Handbook'. London, Routledge 2008

HAYTER, M., and WATSON, R. 'Supervisors are morally obliged to publish with their PhD students', Times Higher Education, 18 May 2017

THOMSON, P. 'Co-writing with your supervisor – the authorship question', <https://patthomson.net/2017/04/10/co-writing-with-your-supervisor-the-authorship-question>

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