

MOU: Authorship and Ethics

Conversations between students and supervisors


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Conversations to be had around the MOU:

1. What does UCT Authorship practices policy say?
2. Dubious publication and authorship practices.
3. Resolving authorship disputes
4. Choosing the right journal and avoiding low quality or predatory journals.
5. Ethics approval and other compliance issues.



[1] Conversations
about:
UCT Authorship
Policy:

<http://www.researchsupport.uct.ac.za/policies-1>

Core value

*The governing **ethical value** underpinning this guideline is **justice**, made manifest by processes that foster the **principles of fairness, transparency and reasonableness.***

AUTHORSHIP CRITERIA- ALL THREE (ICMJE and COPE), UCT (exclusion of data acquisition)

1. Substantial contribution to concept and design AND/OR ~~acquisition of data~~, or analysis and interpretation of data **AND**
2. Drafting the article OR revising it critically for intellectual content **AND**
3. Approval of the final draft and the ability to accept responsibility/defend the paper


The individual authors who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript should list the members of the larger authorship group in acknowledgements; in cases of large multi-center groups- as an appendix to their acknowledgements. (Blackwell publishing- Best Practice Guidelines)

“The guideline is **prescriptive** to the extent that:

It requires researchers:

- especially **principal investigators and research team leaders, to set a positive example by their actions and behaviour;**
- to comply with the **principles of fairness, transparency and reasonableness;** and to be sensitive to social, cultural and ethical issues that have a bearing on their research;
- to strive for the highest levels of integrity and professionalism;
- to take responsibility and act in accordance with that responsibility when conducting or supervising research, including deliberating on matters concerning authorship;
- including trainees, to familiarize themselves with the principles that govern good research conduct including those that pertain to authorship;

- It requires the senior researcher(s) involved with a research project to take responsibility for **anticipating possible disagreements** concerning authorship credit and to initiate conversations on the matter before students and other participants are permitted to invest substantial time on the project;
- It places a **special obligation on senior staff members to avoid co-authorship on papers generated from independent work by their junior colleagues or students**; co-authorship should be allocated only in accordance with the eligibility principles for authorship;
- It requires the allocation of responsibilities amongst researchers to be commensurate with their skill and training.”
- UCT Authorship Practices Policy Pg2.



[2] Conversations about: Ethical Issues in authorship and publication

- Authorship allocation
- Authorship order
- Text- recycling and self-plagiarism
- Publication manipulation: salami slicing, double-dipping/redundant publication
- Publishing in low quality and [predatory] journals; Publishing in your own journal?

Ethical issues: Authorship allocation

- Guest/Gift authorship-
 - Invited
 - Expected
 - Conflict-avoiding
- Ghost authorship
 - e.g. medical/pharmaceutical industry
 - Mentor-mentee; capacity development
- Mutual authorship “you scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours”



Authorship order

- First author should be the person who has contributed most, even if a student
- Discipline's have own conventions; acceptable
- Health Sciences, Sciences- First author has usually done the drafting and is the corresponding author; last author is the most senior person of the team. Sometimes corresponding author is a fairly junior member of the team
- Some disciplines list authorship in alphabetical order, apart from the first author
- Those that don't qualify for full authorship should be acknowledged; one should also request permission to acknowledge
- In big study teams, the entire team may be listed as “Study Team”

Ethical issues: Text recycling and self plagiarism

- Text recycling is the reuse of ones own text in different places, which can sometimes be appropriate, usually if adequately referenced.
- Self plagiarism (Controversial term)- reuse of one own work **without alerting** the reader to this fact.

American Psychology Association (APA) Publication Manual:

*“Just as researchers do not present the work of others as their own (plagiarism), **they do not present their own previously published work as new scholarship** (self-plagiarism).*

There are, however, limited circumstances (e.g., describing the details of an instrument or an analytic approach) under which authors may wish to duplicate without attribution (citation) their previously used words, feeling that extensive self-referencing is undesirable or awkward.

When the duplicated words are limited in scope, this approach is permissible.

When duplication of one’s own words is more extensive, citation of the duplicated words should be the norm.

*What constitutes the maximum acceptable length of duplicated material is difficult to define but must conform to legal notions of fair use. **The general view is that the core of the new document must constitute an original contribution to knowledge**, and only the amount of previously published material necessary to understand that contribution should be included, primarily in the discussion of theory and methodology”.*

PhD thesis; use of preprint servers or ‘working papers’

<http://asapbio.org/preprint-info/preprint-faq>

1. “A PREPRINT is a complete scientific manuscript that is uploaded by the authors to a public server. The preprint contains complete data and methodologies;

.....In most cases, the same work posted as preprint also is submitted for peer review at a journal.

Thus, preprints (rapid, but not validated through peer-review) and journal publication (slow, but providing validation using peer-review) work in parallel as a communication system for scientific research”. **Should be seen as one piece of work, not two.**

2. Master’s/PhD’s – one area where reuse of text is regarded as acceptable is publishing out of a thesis. Should alert the Journal editor to the fact that the thesis is on an open repository, if this is the case as could be picked up by Turnitin or similar.

Consider an explanatory foot-note in the article.

Ethical issues: Publication manipulation

Controversial; there are many research units and seasoned academics that do fragment the publication of research outputs and get their students to do it.

Duplicate publication may be acceptable if publishing for very different audiences but must be adequately cross-referenced.

- **Redundant or duplicate publication** is the publication of essentially the same article in separate journals; but with changes made to the title and perhaps order of authors. **No attempt to alert reader.**
- **Salami- slicing** is the division of results from one study into separate parcels that are then published as separate articles usually in different journals (Roig 2011). p.16 This is also often referred to as publication of the ‘smallest publishable unit.’



[3]Conversations needed: Authorship Disputes

Prevention is better than cure

- **Encourage a culture of ethical authorship.** (Teams can have entrenched bad habits that may need to be broken)
- **Start discussing authorship when research in planning stage-** how many papers, who will lead each one etc?
- Have follow-up meetings as project evolves; Keep authorship on the agenda
- **Decide authorship before you start each article-** have a written authorship agreement, even if it is a circulated 'aide-memoire' of the meeting notes.

How to handle authorship disputes when they occur:

DISPUTES:

does not contravene guidelines/policy

- Usually about interpretation of the concept of **'substantial'**; whose contribution qualifies?
- Get each person to describe their contribution
- Requires frank discussion and negotiation **and sometimes mediation by neutral 3rd party**
- Refer back to UCT policy/ ICMJE guidelines etc.

MISCONDUCT:

does contravene UCT policy/accepted guidelines

- **Author included that clearly does not qualify or visa versa**
- See COPE authorship Dispute guidelines as well as UCT policy; Departments and Faculties should have authorship dispute mechanisms in place.
- Write a clearly motivated written complaint explaining why proposed authorship amounts to research misconduct.
- Stick to facts; avoid emotive language or making accusations that may be challenged or difficult to substantiate.

[4]Conversations
needed:
Choosing the right
journal and avoiding low
quality or predatory
journals.

- **Author beware!!**
- **Low quality journals** (**sometimes though definitely not always!**:
published by a department at one institution; small number of articles per year, wide ranging scope, articles from the editor/ editorial board make up a significant proportion of articles)
- **Local vs international??** Some very good long established local journals and dubious international ones and visa versa!

'Predatory' Journals

- A predatory open access journal is one that is primarily concerned about profit and has no interest in providing any form of scientific value for either reader or author;
- authors are the consumers rather than the readers.
- These journals actively solicit submissions via emails.
- They charge a publication fee that is often lower than that of authentic similar open access journals; usually in the region of \$90-300.
- They also provide a very quick turnover and will often accept an article for publication in a matter of days.
- **A hallmark of a predatory journal is that the scientific peer review process is bogus!!!**

Features of Predatory Journals

- The **title is very similar**, but not quite the same as a well-established journal in the same field. E.g. British Medicine Journal vs British Medical Journal (BMJ)
- The **website is unprofessional** and there are **grammatical errors** in documents such as 'Instruction to authors' or on the home page; there may also be obvious errors in titles and abstracts.
- The **editorial board is very small or pending**. (Often academics are listed on these editorial boards without their permission and have great difficulty in getting their names removed).

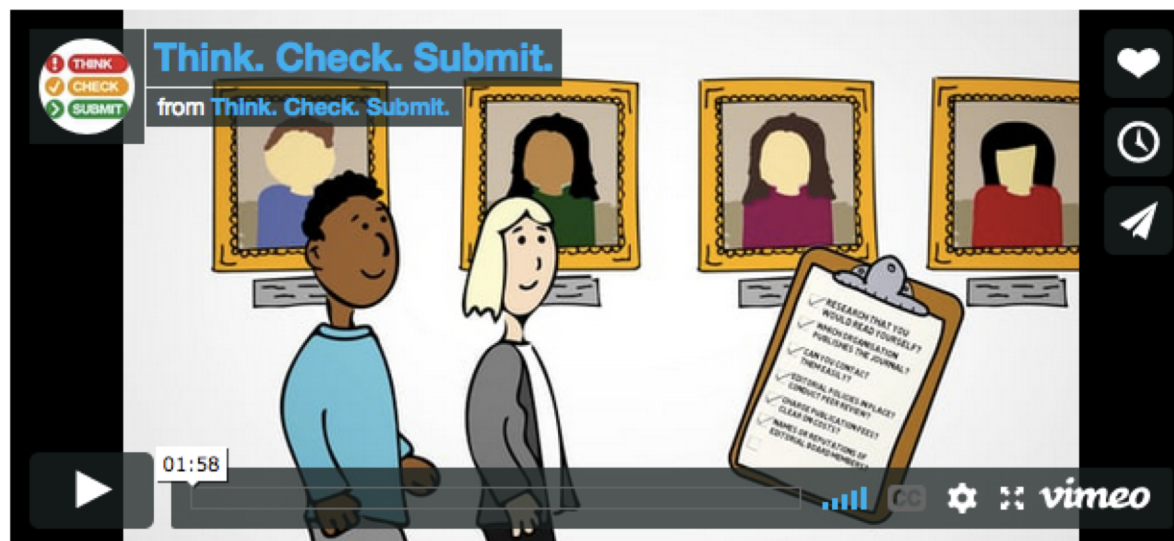
Features of Predatory Journals

- A single publisher suddenly releases a large range of journals.
- The **range of articles** in each journal does not correlate well with its title or stated scope.
- **Geographical discrepancy**. The journal purports to operate from the US or UK etc. but there are indicators such as email addresses, that show that its operations are located elsewhere.
- The impact factor listed may be fake or generated by an illegitimate source.
- Fraudulent use of ISSNs (The last two points are not so easy to spot).



Choose the right journal for your research

<http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>



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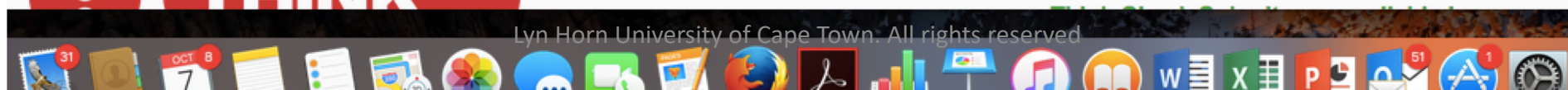
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[5]Conversations
needed: Research
Ethics; Gatekeepers
permission; permits
etc

- Essential to check faculty processes and requirements; all different.
- All research involving human or animals need ethics.
- Some research with biosafety concerns as well
- Gate-keeper permission if you wish to recruit at a company, health facility, school, UCT staff and students etc
- Permits ?? (DAFF, GMO, DoH etc
- SAVC authorisations for students conducting research on animals??

Thank you for listening!

Questions?