

Guideline: Authorship Agreements and Human Research Ethics Applications

PURPOSE

This guideline outlines expectations regarding authorship agreements for projects requiring human research ethics approval. Its purpose is to promote clarity, transparency, responsible research conduct, and the protection of students and researchers throughout the lifecycle of a research project.

RATIONALE

The requirement for an authorship agreement at the ethics application stage is aligned with the principles set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)*, which emphasises:

- clarity of roles and responsibilities;
- transparency in research conduct; and
- proactive identification and management of ethical risks.

Authorship is important for ethical and publication matters. Early discussion and documentation of authorship expectations help prevent misunderstandings or disputes later in the research process and supports fair and responsible research practice.

WHEN IS AN AUTHORSHIP AGREEMENT REQUIRED?

An authorship agreement is required:

- for all human research projects submitted for ethics approval where publication is anticipated; and
- to be submitted at the time of the initial ethics application.

WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

At the ethics application stage, the authorship agreement should list:

- all researchers named on the ethics application; and
- any supervisors, collaborators, or investigators who are reasonably expected to contribute to the research or resulting outputs.

At this early stage, inclusion reflects **anticipated involvement**, not a final determination of authorship order or contribution weighting.

AUTHORSHIP AGREEMENTS AS LIVING DOCUMENTS

Authorship agreements are not intended to be static or final at the time of ethics approval.

Research projects evolve, and it is expected that:

- roles and contributions may change over time; and
- authorship arrangements need to be updated accordingly.

Hence, authorship agreements are treated as living documents and may be revised over the course of research. Revising author agreements is routine and is considered good research practice

WHY THIS MATTERS — ESPECIALLY FOR HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDENTS AND EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

Requiring authorship agreements early in the research process is particularly important for HDR students and early career researchers, who may be more vulnerable to ambiguity or power imbalances.

Early documentation:

- ensures that students' contributions are visible from the outset;
- sets mutual expectations between students and supervisors; and
- provides an ethical safeguard should disagreements arise.

This approach is proactive rather than reactive, prioritising the prevention of harm over resolving disputes after they arise.

WHAT THE AUTHORSHIP AGREEMENT SHOULD (AND SHOULD NOT) DO

The agreement should:

- identify proposed authors;
- outline anticipated contributions at a high level; and
- acknowledge that contributions may change as the project progresses.

The agreement should not:

- attempt to fix final authorship order prematurely;
- be treated as a legally binding or immutable document; or
- be used to exclude contributors who emerge later in the project.

MANAGING CHANGES TO AUTHORSHIP

Where authorship arrangements change:

1. discuss the proposed change within the research team; and
2. update the authorship agreement to reflect current expectations.

The Committee recognises that changes are often a natural outcome of good research practice.

SUMMARY

- Authorship agreements are an ethical requirement, not an administrative formality.
- They support transparency, fairness, and responsible research conduct.
- They are living documents that can and should be updated.
- Early agreements help protect students and prevent disputes later.
- Amendments to authorship agreements are expected and appropriate.

Should you have any questions, please reach out to the chairHREC@bond.edu.au or ethics@bond.edu.au.