



ITC Authorship Policy

This policy describes the criteria for authorship on papers that report on ITC data and are designed to be published in scientific journals. In the case of conference papers, a less rigorous standard will be applied.

Please note: inclusion as an author on a conference presentation does not guarantee authorship on the journal article.

The ITC Paper and Presentation Policy describes the ITC Project system of submitting ideas for papers and for tracking the progress of these papers through the various steps to publication. Please refer to the *Paper/Presentation Request Process* link for more details (<http://www.itcproject.org/forms>). We welcome suggestions for improving/changing these two important documents. All such changes must be approved by the ITC Administrative Committee.

Types of Authorship

Lead author

All papers must have a Lead Author, who is typically --although not always --also the first author. This must be a person of sufficient seniority to take responsibility for the paper. Normally graduate students and research assistants would not be considered senior enough to take this role. The Lead Author will act as guarantor for the paper where a journal requires it. The Lead Author will be the primary point of contact for the ITC administration (e.g., keeper of the appropriate paper list) and the person who should be approached by other members of the ITC team wishing to be co-authors.

First author

This is the first listed person on a submitted paper. The First Author will usually be the Lead Author, but where a junior person (e.g., graduate student or research assistant) has done the majority of the work on a paper, he/she can be the First Author. Generally this would be negotiated with the Lead Author at the time of beginning the paper, and might be conditional on the quality of the work.

Other authors

The ITC Project is bound by obligations to limit authorship to those making a significant intellectual contribution to the paper, as described in the next section. ITC Investigators involved in a project can request to be an author on any paper that predominantly uses data from that project. However, to become an author they still need to fulfil the criteria for authorship (See Section below). If for any reason a lead author does not want a person who nominates themselves to be involved, the issue will be referred to the responsible Committee for adjudication. A list of these Committees can be found on page 1 of the ITC Authorship Policy document available on www.itcproject.org.

Criteria for Authorship

The following authorship criteria are informed by the October 2008 *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication* of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Because the majority of papers arising from the ITC Project will be submitted to biomedical journals (which include public health and health behaviour journals), the ITC Project criteria are designed to be consistent with the ICMJE criteria (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>).

Although the ITC Project criteria for authorship are consistent with the criteria for biomedical journals, they must be applied in the preparation of ANY journal article:

- whether or not it is peer reviewed
- whether or not the journal itself is a biomedical journal; for example, these criteria apply for ITC papers submitted to economics, sociology, or statistics/methodology journals, even those that do not themselves use ICMJE authorship criteria
- whether or not it is a journal that is an “international” journal (that is, these criteria apply to authorship on non-English journals whose circulation is limited to a single country).

Each author must satisfy the following three criteria:

Criterion 1 --Conception/Data Acquisition/Analysis and Interpretation

At least one of point of A, B, or C below must be satisfied to meet Criterion 1. Examples of acceptable activities are described in bullet points:

A. Substantial contributions to conception and design:

- Formulation of the research question(s) addressed in the paper. This could include formulating the research questions stated in the grant proposals that funded the work; AND/OR
- Contribution to the development of measures used in this study (unpublished); AND/OR
- Inclusion of measures that are central to the paper.

B. Acquisition of the data:

- Significant contributions to ensuring that the data collected are valid, including high level supervision of data collection and adherence to the sampling plan.

C. Analysis and interpretation of the data:

- Directing the data analysis strategy, or making significant contributions to ensuring that the analyses of the data used are valid, and/or
- providing high-level (innovative) ideas about strategies for analysing the data. This is an area where new potential co-authors who were not part of the study's conception or implementation can qualify for authorship during the writing process.

Lead authors should check with the Principal Investigators of the project to find out who has met Criterion 1 before the writing starts. Criterion 1 is not automatically fulfilled by all investigators because some investigators have played a more limited and circumscribed role than others.

Criterion 2 --Preparation of the Paper

At least one of A, B, or C below is necessary to satisfy Criterion 2;

A. Drafting substantial parts of the paper to a level where one could take intellectual responsibility for that content.

- This may include significant sections of the Introduction, Literature Review, Results and/or Discussion. More than one person making an extensive or critical contribution can take joint responsibility for the content.

B. Revising the paper for important intellectual content.

- This includes either confirming that the draft adequately reflects prior intellectual input, or by contributing new ideas. This point is designed to make it clear that someone who meets Criterion 1A prior to the commencement of writing does not need to add any new direction or content to a draft to meet this Criterion - it is enough for them to check that their prior ideas have been expressed appropriately.

C. Responses to progressive drafts of the paper reflect a good level of “intellectual engagement/involvement”.

- Note that this criterion differs in an important way from “changing the direction of a paper.” It is possible for an individual to fulfil this criterion even if he/she agrees with the major points of the draft. Criterion 2 is not met by making grammatical or stylistic edits alone. However, such activity could be considered as a contribution when the person's contribution is otherwise marginal to warrant authorship.

Criterion 3 --Final Approval of Version to be Published

All authors must read and approve a final, or near final, version of the paper and email their approval to the lead author (and complete any other paperwork required by the journal to which the paper is being submitted).

Comments on these three criteria

Under the following circumstances a contribution to **Criterion 2** can be achieved in the following non-typical ways (i.e., not actually writing directly on drafts):

- A research supervisor or senior team member can provide advice to a junior (e.g. graduate student) in research meetings and encourage that person to implement changes and/or help them understand what the implications of the work are or of issues that need to be addressed and in so doing materially affect the writing contribution made by the junior person.
- An ITC investigator who is not proficient at writing in English can similarly have their contribution channelled through a bilingual member of the team, who can then add relevant content.
- In both of these cases, it is the responsibility of the investigator who is contributing indirectly to ensure that the lead author is aware of their contribution.
- Some journals now request and publish information about the contributions of each person named as having participated in a submitted study, at least for original research. Lead authors must be in a position to provide this information if required.

Acknowledgements

Other members of the ITC Project team who are not authors may be acknowledged in footnotes where this is relevant. This must be done where they make significant contributions, but fall short of authorship. Contributions from non-investigators that fail to meet the criteria for authorship should also be footnoted in the Acknowledgements section in the usual way.

Group and split authorship

Increasingly, authorship of multi-center studies is attributed to a group (e.g., ITC Four Country Project). This tends to occur where the number of authors or potential authors exceeds some notional maximum set by the journal. In such cases, it may be necessary to either have the paper referenced as authored by the group, or from some subset of contributors on behalf of the group. In the latter case this involves splitting the authors into two sub-groups: those named in the list of authors and those named in a footnote. See Section below for determining ordering of contributions. The corresponding author/guarantor should be prepared to explain the presence and order of these individuals if the journal requests it.

When submitting such cases, the last named 'author' in the byline should be listed as "for the ITC XXX Project," if the Journal will accept it. This should be accompanied by a footnote (that says something like this): "(Other) members of the ITC-XXX Project team who contributed to this paper (and approved the final draft) are: x,y,z, and q." Other, non-authorial acknowledgements can be made in the usual way.

Criteria for listed authorship where authorship is split

There must be one author (the Lead Author) and normally would not be more than 4 authors named before the generic ITC Project team. All such authors must clearly meet the criteria for authorship and would normally have made significant contributions to all parts of the paper, being involved in either or both drafting the original version or providing major editorial changes that reshape the form of the paper and thus its focus and or conclusions.

Criteria for secondary (footnoted) authors

Again, such individuals must meet the minimum standards for authorship, but here marginal cases can be included. They must clearly meet one of Criteria 1 and 2, but be marginal on the other, and they must meet Criterion 3; i.e., they all must approve the final (or near final) version of the paper.

NB: The National Library of Medicine (USA) indexes the group name and the names of the individuals that the group has identified as being directly responsible for the manuscript (i.e., both the authors and the second-level co-authors); it also lists the names of other collaborators if they are listed in Acknowledgments.

Process for deciding on order of authorship (and for deciding on whether an individual is included in the authorship list or second-level authorship list or collaborator list, if relevant)

It is the responsibility of the Lead Author to review the contributions to the paper of each author, using the three criteria for authorship, and to make a tentative decision on the order of authorship (and, if relevant, whether an individual is listed as an author, a second-level author, or a collaborator). The order of the authors must be provided in the version of the document that is circulated for final approval. Co-authors have the right to challenge their positioning (both order of listing and sub-group listing where applicable). In the first instance (order of listing), this should be negotiated directly with the Lead Author. If it cannot be resolved, then the author requesting to be moved up in the author list can request that the PI of the ITC Project for that country (or PIs in the case of multi-country papers) adjudicate the matter. In exceptional cases, the dispute may be referred to the ITC Administrative Committee to adjudicate.

Generally, the first three authors listed would be in order of contribution, but beyond that, it is often easier to list those from the same institution together - particularly where it is difficult to rate contributions. It is legitimate to include a footnote on equivalence of authorship, between first and any other authors, if this is deemed important enough. NB. Some journals require a listing of contributions of authors that removes some of the inferences about author order, at least further down long lists.

Country representatives

Some countries, particularly developing countries, have policies to control external research that is not conducted with local collaborators. This includes some ITC countries. As a result, it is critical that in-country collaborators are given the opportunity to participate in authorship of studies involving their country wherever possible (the main exception might be papers comparing large numbers of countries), and failing that, are listed in the acknowledgment section of the paper.

Investigator lists

Each project will maintain an active list of investigators for the project ([see www.itcproject.org](http://www.itcproject.org) >Internal Documents> Contact lists). Where researchers join or leave an ITC project these points will be noted. Thus a new investigator would not expect to be included in potential authorship teams for papers that use data collected before they joined the team, but could earn authorship in other ways, in accordance with the three criteria. Similarly, those leaving the ITC

project might have an expectation of being included on papers resulting from work they did while they were part of the team.

Funding acknowledgements

Up-to-date lists of funders to be acknowledged will be maintained on the website (<http://www.itcproject.org/sponsors>). Again, where mentioning a funder is conditional on topic or wave of survey (or anything else), this will be documented in the notes on required acknowledgements.

Papers emerging from external use of the data

External investigators who have been approved to use ITC data will be required to keep the Appropriate Committee aware of the progress of papers resulting from the access. At a minimum, notification to the DMC is required at points of acceptance of papers and final publication, with copies provided. These papers should be added to the relevant lists, by the Committee or individual nominated to be the main go-between.