

MEF



Policy paper on Student-Supervisor Co-authored publications

One way of strengthening the relationship between teaching and research is to encourage students and supervisors to collaborate on papers that are published as co-authored papers (“papers” from now on denotes peer reviewed research publications; it should be noted that there are also fertile grounds for other forms of student/supervisor collaboration e.g., public dissemination articles, conference proceedings, arranging seminars etc.).

This form of collaboration is by no means unproblematic or uncontroversial: Among other challenges, the asymmetric relationship between supervisor and student might create situations where the student feels obligated to accept agreements that they really do not want, or which is not in their best interest, all things considered. Conversely, a researcher/supervisor may feel obliged to partake in a co-authorship, if encouraged to do so by a student. Moreover, as a humanities department, we are less familiar with co-authored papers in general and perhaps especially as concerns student-supervisor collaborations as compared with the natural and medical sciences; hence, some uncertainty as regards good practices and also on the individual merit of such collaborations and publications must be overcome.

That being said, the potential gains for the students seem plentiful: gaining first-hand experience and training in research and publication practice; a helping hand with first or the first couple of publications; hopefully an inspiring experience; and an opportunity to publish new findings. For supervisors the advantages could be increased availability of manpower to initiate and complete interesting projects; more publications; that students will become more interested in research areas that align with the interests of the supervisor; and finally that the pool of talented and ambitious prospective PhD-students will become larger.

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Typically, these papers (i) are written on the basis of an student essay or other form of exam, (ii) or based on a draft or manuscript originally authored by the supervisor, but worked through and finished by the student, (iii) or based on student internship in a research group, or based on a student's participation in research by contributing to research design, by collecting and analyzing data, taking part in theoretical discussion, literature review etc.

Collaborative research is demanding and complicated, and even more so when it comes to student/supervisor coauthoring. We propose the following guidelines for co-authored papers:

1. If the paper is made on the basis of an exam, then the paper and the exam must be viewed as two separate entities. The role as co-author and the role as examiner must not be conflated at any point of the process.
2. In general, work on a paper should only commence when the exam (including the various deadlines for formal complaints about examination results) is finished. It is acceptable to discuss possibilities, and perhaps draw the outlines, of collaboration before exam; however, it is the duty of the supervisor to guarantee that the examination and the amount of quality of supervision in no way depend on agreements (or their absence) of future collaboration.
3. According to the prevailing interpretation of the Vancouver rules, which are accepted as standard for good publications practice by Copenhagen University, ordinary supervision does not suffice for co-authorship (for the supervisor). Hence, mirroring the previous point about co-author and examiner roles, the roles as supervisor and as co-author must not be confused at any point of the process. Nor does ordinary supervision give the student any form of duty to offer co-authorship to the supervisor, and vice versa: the supervisor is not obliged to accept the student's request for co-authorship.
4. If a student collaborates on a publication (in whichever way relevant), then he or she should always be credited as a co-author (given the criteria of the Vancouver Guidelines are met) or as a contributor. This is also the case when the student's contribution has coincided with supervision or teaching conducted by the researcher in question.
5. Before commencing work on a co-authored paper, the supervisor and the student must make a written agreement that details the division of labor and the author roles as regards the paper, and the final paper should include a foot/endnote explaining the division of labour

between authors. The Vancouver Guidelines must be adhered to at all stages. The typical forms of role- and work assignments will be:

- If a paper is based on a student essay (or part of master thesis etc.), then the student will be first author and the supervisor will be co-author (and typically senior author.) Conversely, if the paper is based on a draft or manuscript made by the supervisor.
- If a paper is based on a roughly equal input of intellectual content as concerns research design, collection and analysis of data, theoretical conceptualization and discussion, writing and so on, then division of work and order of authors must be agreed to and specified beforehand. Typically, the person doing most of the actual writing will be first author, but one might also consider shared first-authorships.

Note that written work- and authorship agreements are not set in stone. If roles or assignment of workload changes during the research process, it might be reasonable to revise and re-negotiate work- and authorship agreements.

Some typical problems of paper collaborations are disagreements concerning the amount and significance of one's own and the collaborator's contributions, and disagreements regarding the necessary and sufficient conditions for being allowed to make a contribution in the first place. Both problems ought and can be alleviated by strict adherence to point 5) in the above.