Supplemental Procedures to University Policy 318
Effective January 27, 2022

1. Introduction

The role authorship plays in careers, awards, grants, and other academic endeavors means that the stakes for authorship naming and ordering are high. At times, collaborators may not agree on an authorship list for a presentation or publication, so UNC Charlotte has established University Policy 318, Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures (“the Policy”), to establish authorship principles and practices and to provide guidance for informal and formal authorship dispute resolution. In particular, if informal steps fail to resolve a dispute and a formal dispute resolution process is initiated, UNC Charlotte will respond in accordance with the procedures established in University Policy 318 and these Supplemental Procedures. The objective of these Procedures is to provide background information and a uniform framework for resolving disputes.

2. Formal Dispute Resolution Procedures

2.1. Dispute Initiation

Authorship disputes may be initiated by any member of the UNC Charlotte community covered by the Policy (faculty, staff, and students) who believe they have been aggrieved by contacting the Dean of the Graduate School (hereafter “the Dean”) in writing, with a summary of the dispute and any relevant supporting documents.

2.2 Initial Assessment

The Dean will review the summary and documents to determine whether, if substantiated, the allegations would violate applicable authorship norms or policies, whether there is any evidence to support the allegations or whether the factual information needed to assess the allegations is available to the parties or the University and whether, in that event, a formal resolution is appropriate. If the Dean determines that the allegations do not state a claim and/or that neither the parties nor the University has access to information necessary to evaluate the claim, the Dean will notify the disputant accordingly. If the Dean determines that the allegations do state a claim, and that the parties and/or the University have access to information necessary to evaluate the claim, the Dean will appoint a three-member Authorship Dispute Panel to consider the matter and make recommendations, according to the procedures in section 2.4 below. Generally, the initial assessment and, if applicable, appointment of the Panel, should be completed in approximately 14 calendar days following the Dean’s receipt of the claim.

To ensure that there are not two processes initiated to address the same matter, the Dean should consult with the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) at this point, if there is some reason to believe that a research misconduct investigation may be appropriate instead of or in
addition to the authorship dispute resolution process. Similarly, the Dean should consult with the Director of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity if there is reason to believe that the case involves an academic integrity violation.

2.3 Authorship Dispute Panel

Prior to a case being heard, and on a regular basis, the Dean should appoint and maintain a standing pool of seven members of an Authorship Dispute Committee. At least two of the members must be UNC Charlotte graduate students. The remaining members must be tenured UNC Charlotte faculty. Committee members must receive training prior to serving on a Panel. Training will be provided via a dedicated Canvas course. In addition, the Dean may appoint an ex officio committee member to prepare material, conduct administrative tasks, arrange meetings, etc.

For each specific dispute, the Dean should select three members from the Committee to form a Panel, including naming a Chair, and inform them in writing of their appointment to the Panel. Disputants have the right to object in writing to the appointment of a Panel member based on bias or conflict of interest, and the Dean will consider the objections and make a determination about whether to replace or retain that member. If the dispute involves a student, at least one of the Panel members must be a graduate student. If the dispute involves only faculty, the Panel should consist only of tenured faculty. The Dean also has the responsibility to ensure that there is appropriate expertise to evaluate the dispute.

2.4 Authorship Dispute Panel Procedures

The purpose of the Panel is to assess the evidence and testimony of the disputants regarding authorship and to issue to the Dean a written report with a recommendation for resolving the dispute.

The Dean will provide the parties to the dispute written notice regarding (a) the allegations that will proceed to panel, (b) the requirement to prepare position statements based on the allegations that will proceed to panel, and (c) the names of the panelists whom the Dean has appointed, so that they have the opportunity to object to a panel member on the basis of bias or a conflict of interest. Position statements, including supporting evidence, and any objections to panelists should be received by the Dean in writing within one calendar week.

Once the Panel is finalized, the Dean will charge them with making a recommendation for resolution of the dispute. The Dean will provide the Panel with the written dispute and any supporting documents received during the initial assessment, the parties’ position statements, and any supporting evidence.
The Panel will seek to convene a hearing within 30 days of their charge, during which it will interview the disputant, respondent, and other witnesses identified by the parties and deemed relevant by the panel; examine relevant evidence; and evaluate the evidence and interviews. At least one calendar week prior to the hearing, the Panel will provide to the disputants copies of any position statements and supporting documentation it has received. At the discretion of the Panel, both parties to the dispute shall attend the hearing. The parties may be accompanied by an advisor of their choice for consultation during the hearing, but the advisor may not participate in the hearing.

The parties are responsible for presenting their positions in good faith, and for maintaining confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and of all documentation, and for cooperating with the Panel’s deliberative process.

The Panel will maintain confidentiality during the process, but may consult with other members of the University community for necessary expertise without sharing identifying information about the disputants. UNC Charlotte will protect the confidentiality of the parties to the dispute and any related documents to the extent permitted under law. Retaliation against individuals for raising authorship dispute claims in good faith or for cooperating in good faith in the University's review of any such claims is strictly prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

Upon concluding its activities, the Panel will prepare a final written report with a recommendation to the Dean of its deliberations and findings. The report will include the (1) the claims reviewed by the Panel, (2) a summary of the evidence considered in support of the claims and in response to the claims, (3) interview summaries, (4) findings and (5) the recommendations of the Panel for resolving the dispute, as well as any other information that the Panel deems relevant to include. The disputant and respondent(s) will have an opportunity to review the draft report before it is finalized. The review period should be no more than seven calendar days. Feedback to the final report from the parties will be appended to the final report.

The Panel should submit the report to the Dean within 30 calendar days of its appointment, unless circumstances clearly warrant a longer period. If a longer period than 30 calendar days is necessary, the Panel will submit to the Dean a written explanation of the extension, and the Dean will document the reasons for extending the process.

The Panel’s recommendation to the Dean is not binding on the parties to the dispute but may be considered as presumptive evidence of the appropriate authorship designation if either the disputant or respondent fails to implement the recommendation. The Dean may notify the non-complying party’s supervisor or other appropriate administrator if the Dean determines that the party’s failure to implement the recommendation warrants consideration of disciplinary or other appropriate action.