

# Fair Attribution in Research Policy and Procedures

Version 1. November 2025

Fair attribution in research ensures that everyone who contributes is properly recognised for their work in a way that is accurate, transparent, and consistent.

This policy utilises the UKRIO Authorship Integrity Toolkit<sup>1</sup> and has been developed in conjunction with the Hidden REF whose remit is to promote and support hidden roles working within UK higher education and research and draws on information contained in their 2024 white paper<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Harper Adams University recognises the importance of all roles, equipment, facilities and funding sources in conducting research within the University.

Researchers, whether staff or students, will interact with a variety of people, at a variety of different stages in the research process and engage with different facilities and services. These may occur: during the development of grant applications, when project planning, during help with literature and database searches, when refining research strategies, when sourcing items related to experiments, during the preparation of materials, when receiving training on equipment, during the running of routine samples, when developing an experimental design, during discussion and analysis of results and when receiving support with outputs.

The contributions of all individuals, facilities and services that contribute to research success must be fairly attributed in the appropriate manner, not just the contributions of academic staff and funders.

Harper Adams is committed to the establishment of a positive, inclusive and open research culture and increasing the visibility and recognition of all involved, particularly as roles and services can often be hidden or forgotten.

“Authorships and acknowledgements in papers are highly valuable to technical and other professional services staff who may have infrequent chances to demonstrate their contribution to research outputs.

Authorships and acknowledgements are critical success metrics and enable allocation of funding to core facilities and technology platforms.”

(University College London, 2025, p1<sup>3</sup>)

At Harper Adams these roles include, but are not exclusive to: technicians, facility managers, librarians, research office staff, academic guidance staff, learner support staff, legal experts, finance staff and statisticians. A more expansive list of roles found within UK higher education and research can be seen on page 18 of the white paper<sup>2</sup> and are reproduced in Appendix I.

## Policy

The University expects everyone engaged in research at all levels to adhere to the requirements of this policy.

Researchers are expected to plan how they will give fair attribution in advance of conducting their work and when arranging access to facilities and services. This should be included in the protocol.

Use of the UKRIO toolkit<sup>1</sup>, including the Guidance on Good Authorship Practice<sup>4</sup>, which, together with the Template Authorship Strategy Agreement<sup>5</sup>, will aid in determining who should be included in the authorship and who in the acknowledgements. Copies of both are available in Appendix II.

There are seven distinct cases in which fair attribution is required:

1. User led experiments within the University, with initial training provided by others, for example by technicians.
2. Support in experimental design and delivery (protocol development and active support in delivering the experiment), refinement of research strategies and questions, and/or data and/or materials acquisition and/or data interpretation and analysis, for example by technicians, librarians, data analysts and statisticians.
3. Collaboration with external users as per points 1 and 2 above.
4. Occasional use of a facility or service to obtain data, where technicians or others perform routine characterisation and send data to the user to analyse.
5. The preparation of items or materials used during experiments.
6. Support with bid-writing, costings, ethics applications, general project support, presentation or design of outputs.
7. Provision of research funding, whether governmental, charitable, commercial or by individuals.

**For Harper Adams staff and for postgraduate research students**, in all seven cases, all outputs will include one of the following acknowledgement statements:

“The Authors acknowledge use of [insert equipment or service or facility used or funding] provided by [insert team or department name], Harper Adams University.”

“The Authors acknowledge use of [insert equipment or service or facility used] provided by [insert team or department name] at Harper Adams University and funding provided by [insert name(s) of funder(s)]”

In cases (2) and (3) the research has required intellectual contributions or significant support in delivering the experiment from one or more individuals. These individuals must be included within the author list of the resultant output and included in discussions during drafting and publication.

In cases (4), (5) and (6) those assisting with the experiment should be acknowledged by name:

“The Authors would like to acknowledge the help of [insert name] and the use of [insert service or facilities] within the [insert team or department name] at Harper Adams University.”

In situations where an individual or body feels that they have contributed to the work, or a researcher wishes to engage the support of an individual a discussion should be initiated with the researcher on what would be fair attribution in this instance.

**Taught students** (undergraduate and Masters levels) are required, as part of their thesis submission, to declare all forms of support received by completion of a

structured acknowledgment template and are encouraged to provide detailed acknowledgments.

## **Ensuring Fair Attribution**

### **Recommendations**

Harper Adams recommends the following measures to assist with ensuring this fair attribution policy is followed:

- As well as planning how fair attribution will be given, researchers should maintain an ongoing live record of all interactions relevant to the successful completion of a research project. A spread sheet is provided in Appendix 2 which may be helpful and can be used by PIs/research groups when reporting on outputs, for example ResearchFish, REF.
- All individuals, including technical and professional services staff, will find it helpful to set up an ORCID iD – a free, unique, persistent identifier for individuals which links them to the research they are involved in.
- Individuals are encouraged to show an interest in the research work they have been asked to participate in or support. This can be by requesting copies of publications and reports, attending research seminars where the work is being presented, and periodically asking how fair attribution is planned to be given.
- Where outputs are shared on social media for example on LinkedIn or X, thank the poster for any acknowledgements given and consider including the hashtag #fairattribution.

### **Guidance**

Harper Adams is committed to increasing the awareness of the importance of fair attribution and has built fair attribution into other research-related policies and guidance, for example in the Research Integrity Policy and the Major Project Expectations, and Research Student Expectations documents.

Taught students, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, are also provided with extensive guidance on thesis writing and on good academic practice, integrity and misconduct which includes information and expectations about fair attribution. For further advice, please contact the Academic Guidance office.

### **Mechanisms**

Harper Adams will implement mechanisms to facilitate adherence to this policy. Such mechanisms may also include, but are not exclusive to, a requirement to agree to adhere to the policy when booking equipment or when building grant applications within Worktribe. Researchers will also be required to actively agree to fair attribution as part of their PDR and academic promotion process.

## **Failure to Adhere to Policy**

To achieve a fair outcome in situations where this policy has not been followed, the following arrangements have been put in place:

### **Taught Students' Major Projects (DRPs, HRPs, MRPs)**

Failure to properly acknowledge contributions will be treated under normal arrangements for dealing with academic misconduct.

### **Staff and Research Students (MRes, MPhil, PhD)**

Failure to give fair attribution constitutes research misconduct.

Where it is felt that there has been a failure to give fair attribution, the impacted individual, or their line manager, or other individual or organisation should write to the Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) providing full details\*.

The committee will then handle the complaint following the process outlined in the "Harper Adams University Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct in Research", which is adapted from the Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research, UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)<sup>6</sup>.

Allegations of minor infractions may often be addressed informally, and HAU will seek to do this wherever possible.

However, where informal processes are unsuccessful, or likely to be unsuccessful, for example in the case of a power imbalance, or because allegations include or relate to allegations of bullying/harassment, the investigator will discuss with HR whether these allegations should be dealt with under this procedure or other appropriate process, such as the Staff Disciplinary Process.

Full details of the procedure are available at <http://harper.ac.uk/1ivm>.

After the investigation has completed, the RKEC will notify the impacted individual of the conclusion along with an explanation.

A complaint that is upheld either in whole or in part, will result in the following:

- A formal apology to the impacted individual or manager of the facility concerned from the member of staff or research student and an outline of measures that will be taken (or have been taken) to correct the error.

And may also result in measures including, but not exclusive to, any of the following:

- Instruction to the staff member/research student to initiate a request to retract, correct and resubmit any formal outputs.
- Exclusion of non-corrected outputs in promotions processes. Instruction to the staff member/research student to reprint posters and publications with corrections.
- Instruction to the staff member/research student to correct slides with subsequent redistribution as appropriate.

- In the case of social media use, instruction to the staff member/research student to release a new post highlighting the contributions of those not originally included.
- Instruction to the staff member/research student to ensure corrections to websites.
- Other, formal disciplinary measures.

Where a complaint is not upheld, and/or the impacted individual is not satisfied that the correct outcome has been achieved, the impacted individual can follow the appeals process as outlined in the procedure.

**\*Please note:** an impacted individual can also raise a concern about lack of fair attribution with HR under the All Staff Grievance Procedure. This can be done in addition to, and run in parallel with, escalation via the Fair Attribution Policy to the RKEC.

However, where the only concern is that of Fair Attribution, HR will direct the individual in the first instance to contact the chair of the RKEC for it to be dealt with under the process described.

## References

1. United Kingdom Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). “The Authorship Integrity Toolkit *Practical resources to support responsible authorship in research*”. 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025. <https://ukrio.org/resources/the-authorship-integrity-toolkit/> [last accessed 10/10/2025].
2. The Hidden REF Whitepaper. “Shaping the future of research evaluation. Insights from The Festival of Hidden REF.” April 2024. DOI: [10.1108/EGP-02-2024-0001](https://doi.org/10.1108/EGP-02-2024-0001).
3. University College London. UCL Guideline: Fair Attribution of Technical and other Professional Services Staff and Research Facilities in Publications and on Funding Applications<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/sites/human\\_resources/files/ucl-fairattributionguideline-final-jan25-7jul25.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/sites/human_resources/files/ucl-fairattributionguideline-final-jan25-7jul25.pdf) [last accessed 10/10/25].
4. United Kingdom Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). “Guidance on Good Authorship Practice”. <https://ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/Good-Authorship-Practice-1.pdf> 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 [last accessed 10/10/25].
5. United Kingdom Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). “Template Authorship Strategy Agreement”. 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025. <https://ukrio.org/resources/the-authorship-integrity-toolkit/> [last accessed 10/10/25].
6. United Kingdom Research Integrity Office (UKRIO). “Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research” <https://ukrio.org/resources/publications/misconduct-investigation-procedure/> [last accessed 12/11/25].

## Acknowledgements

1. Victoria Talbot, Head of Technical Development and Laboratory Manager, and Chair of the Facilities Group and Technician Commitment Steering Group. Policy author and owner.



## Appendix I

Table 1: Table of roles from the icebreaker activity in the Hidden Roles session at the Festival of Hidden Ref 2023

Sub-category from Hidden Ref 2021	Roles from Festival Icebreaker question
Community Manager	Community partners Community manager Cross initiative staff Public Health/NHS interface role
Data Stewards/Managers	Data archivist Data management advisor Data Officer
Librarians	Archivist Digital preservation staff Librarian
Lived Experience Contributors	Not written
Professional Research Investment Strategy Managers (PRISMs)	Business development lead Grant writers/coordinators/managers Impact administrator Impact lead Impact officer Impact support REF support team Research development manager Research funding officer/managers Research impact manager Research partnerships manager
Professional Services Personnel	Doctoral support managers
Research Managers and Administrators	Clinical trial manager Core facility staff Finance manager Health and safety officer Legal officer/lead/manager Operations manager Project officer Project managers Research administrators Research managers Research systems manager/officer
Research Software Engineers	Data analyst Research software engineer
Technicians	Electronic specialists Technicians Technical leads

Other	Artists Designers Careers staff Commercialisation/tech transfer staff Creative practitioners Curator EDI/Diversity lead/manager/officer Engineers Ethics officers Events manager Experts Method author Museum and gallery staff Policy advisor Public/community engagement experts Public engagement professional Public engagement staff Research assistant Translators Web and digital content staff
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## Appendix II



Research  
Contribution Templa



Good-Authorship-Prac  
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Authorship-Templa  
te-Strategy-Agreem



Model-Authorship-  
Dispute-Procedure.p