

Pre amble - New policy guidelines regarding authorship changes

In 2013 Springer introduced guidelines for authors to inform them about their responsibilities concerning integrity of the research they submit for potential publication. It focuses on accepted principles of ethical and professional conduct.

In recent years we noticed a considerable increase in:

- Unexplained changes in authorship during peer review;
- Adding and deleting of authors at proof stage (with potentially could lead to authorship disputes or are the result of an authorship dispute);
- Requests for changes in the order of authors during peer review, after revision, and after acceptance of a manuscript.

Unexplained changes in authorship during peer review as well as adding and deleting authors at proof stage require careful attention.

Making changes in the order of authors may be considered a minor issue, but puts pressure on time and resources with Editors-in-Chief and Springer Nature production. Authors should make sure the order of the authors is known upon submission.

Springer has set up a workflow that will flag changes in authorship during peer review by the Journal Editorial Assistant to the Scientific Editor once a manuscript comes back after revision. There may be sound reasons for adding or deleting authors during revision stages of the manuscript. The Journal Editorial Assistant will ask the corresponding author for clarification via an 'authorship change form'. Upon receipt of the response, the revision will be assigned to the Editor along with the author's response. The decision to accept or reject the change is at the discretion of the Scientific Editor. If the change is reason for concern, because misconduct is suspected, the Scientific Editor should look into this carefully and follow up appropriately.

More background information on authorship and authorship responsibilities can be found [here](#).

If a manuscript has been accepted and the corresponding author ask for changes at proof stage Production Editors have been instructed to flag additions and deletions of authors to the Scientific Editor. The corresponding author is requested to explain the changes via an 'authorship change form'. The decision to accept or reject the change is at the discretion of the Scientific Editor.

The following pages explain what is allowed and what is not allowed in terms of authorship changes. Please note that the current workflow is based on examples which have occurred now and in the past. If the request for change is not listed below, please inform your Journal Editorial Assistant who will flag it to the Journals Editorial Office management.

Pre- and post-acceptance changes in authorship

What is allowed?

- Minor spelling errors (for example change from “Geun Ho Ahn” to “Geun Ho An” or from “Yuxi Dai” to “Xiyu Dai”)
- Addition/change of particle, suffix, prefix, degrees, hyphenation
 - These changes do not alter the surname (for example from “Signe Cold Ravn-Kilde” to “Signe Cold-Ravnkilde”)
- Spelling out initials (for example from “A. S. Malehi” to “Saki Malehi”)
- Interchanging givenname/familyname
 - These could happen with Chinese, Indian, Latin names (for example from “Banothu Dasmabai” to “Dasmabai Banothu” or from “Otieno Francis Xavier” to “Francis Xavier Otieno”)
- Expansion of existing givenname, familyname or native name elements (e.g. changing first name “Ruben” to “Ruben Arnold”)

What is not allowed?

- Request to change order of authors

In general our Instructions for Authors mention the following: “Authors are strongly advised to ensure the correct author group, corresponding author, and order of authors at submission.”

Therefore changes in the order of authors are not accepted during peer review, after revision, nor after acceptance of a manuscript.

- Author(s) on the original submission are exchanged for (a) partly or completely different (group of) author(s) at revision stage or proofing stage

When is approval required?

- Request to change corresponding author

NB: One author is assigned as corresponding author, acts on behalf of all co-authors and is the primary point of contact for the manuscript.

The corresponding author may be changed under exceptional circumstances. For example when someone is unable to provide the stability that is required to be a corresponding author for a longer period of time. Usually the corresponding author is replaced by another member of the author group. Written explanation (including approval from all authors) for the request must be given to the Scientific Editor and must be stored in the peer review system. Approving the change is at the discretion of the Scientific Editor.

- Request to add or delete (an) author(s)

Our instructions for authors mention the following: *“Adding and/or deleting authors at revision stage may be justifiably warranted. A letter must accompany the revised manuscript to explain the role of the added and/or deleted author(s). Further documentation may be required to support your request.”*

Pre-acceptance: If this situation occurs the authors are required to complete an ‘authorship change form’ (see HIVE: Category “Authorship Changes forms”). The form will be provided by the Journal Editorial Assistant to the authors and upon receipt shared with the Scientific Editor. Note: Even if authors have provided an explanation via a cover letter, the authors need to complete the form. Approving the change is at the discretion of the Scientific Editor. The form including the decision by the Scientific Editor will be stored in the peer review system.

COPE has provided the following guidelines:

[Corresponding author requests addition of extra author before publication](#)

[Corresponding author requests removal of author before publication](#)

Post-acceptance: If this situation occurs the authors are required to complete an ‘authorship change form’. This form will be provided by production to the authors and upon receipt shared with the Scientific Editor. Approving the change is at the discretion of the Scientific Editor.

- Authorship disputes

NB: Editors-in-Chief should not get involved in authorship disputes. Authors should solve this amongst themselves and/or they should be referred to their institution(s).

Our instructions for authors mention the following: *“Requests for addition or removal of authors as a result of authorship disputes (after acceptance) are honored after formal notification by the institute or independent body and/or when there is agreement between all authors.”*

Related issue(s) * (please note that these are not flagged).

- Change in affiliation (before and/or after publication of the manuscript)

The primary affiliation for each author should be the institution where the majority of their work was done. If an author has subsequently moved, the current address may also be stated.

What happens when changes are not approved (by the Scientific Editor) pre- and post-acceptance?

Possible reasons for refusing an authorship change include:

- The reason given by the (corresponding) author(s) is too trivial, unjustified or inappropriate (e.g. gift or guest authorship). This would require further correspondence from the Scientific Editor with the authors to explain the reason for refusal and to obtain agreement from all authors to proceed with the original authors. The manuscript is put on hold until agreement has been reached.

- Because misconduct is suspected. This would need an investigation following COPE guidelines. The manuscript is put on hold and the Publishing Editor should be alerted by the Scientific Editor. The issue will need to be investigated by the Scientific Editor and Editorial Board (with help from the Publishing Editor and the Ethics Team as appropriate).

In both circumstances, manuscripts will be taken off hold and further processed once a final decision has been made and shared.

What happens if the authors do not reply to the request to complete the authorship change form?

Pre-acceptance: This would require further follow-up with the authors via a reminder policy initiated by the Journal Editorial Assistant. If the authors do not respond 30 days the manuscript is removed from the peer review system with a message to the corresponding author to alert him of the withdrawal of the manuscript.

Post-acceptance: This would require further correspondence from the Scientific Editor with the authors to obtain agreement from all authors to proceed with the original authors. Until a final decision has been made and shared, the manuscript is put on hold.

*** End of instructions ***