

SULF:s kongress 2024

Authorship is not currency

Conflicts about authorship and intellectual property are a recurring work environment issue at higher education institutions. There is a need for regulation and consensus-building in Swedish higher education when it comes to publication ethics, claims of co-authorship and the control of knowledge assets.

Due to common power dynamics in higher education and research environments, early career researchers are particularly vulnerable to pressures to include co-authors who have made few or no contributions to a study. They may also experience appropriation of their intellectual property by superiors, or be expected to perform tasks for which their superiors will later claim credit.

These questions are broader than patents and copyright. There is much confusion among university teachers and researchers about the concepts of authorship, intellectual property, patents, copyright, freedom of information, and open science – how these concepts overlap and interact with each other. Different academic disciplines have different norms and traditions in these regards. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure that information and routines are in place so that these concepts are understood and applied correctly.

Compared to universities in English-speaking countries, we have observed that routines regarding authorship and intellectual property disputes at Swedish higher education institutions rely heavily on informal mediation and ad-hoc compromises, rather than a consistent and structured application of agreed standards.

SULF can support its members by providing information that empowers them to challenge unfair practices, and by putting pressure on higher education institutions to improve available information and implement robust routines to address these issues.

The SULF Doctoral Candidate Association therefore submits that the Congress decide:

- that SULF recognises that conflicts about authorship and intellectual property, and the lack of a culture of accountability in regard to these issues, are a recurring work environment issue in higher education and research;
- that SULF shall form a focus group tasked to produce a report on the issue that authorship of scientific publications does not always fairly reflect author contributions, how this may relate organisational cultures and power dynamics, and how these issues might be addressed;

- that SULF shall produce a best practice document describing what internal policies and routines higher education institutions should have in place to protect against authorship malpractice and against theft, appropriation or unauthorised use of knowledge assets; such routines should include mediation mechanisms, enforcement mechanisms and protection against retaliation;
- that SULF shall provide, on its website or in a separate material, an information resource on authorship, intellectual property, patents, copyright, freedom of information, and open science; this resource should provide an overview of these concepts and how they overlap, and link to suitable resources for more in-depth information.

We wrote this motion in English, which is the main working language of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association. Below is our proposal for decision in Swedish.

SULF:s doktorandförening hemställer därför:

- att SULF konstaterar att konflikter om författarskap och immateriella rättigheter, och bristande ansvarskultur kring dessa frågor, är ett återkommande arbetsmiljöproblem inom högre utbildning och forskning;
- att SULF ska utse en fokusgrupp, som ges i uppdrag att ta fram en rapport om problematiken att författarskap av vetenskapliga publikationer inte alltid på rättvisande sätt återspeglar författarnas bidrag, hur denna problematik kan botten i organisationskulturer och maktdynamik, och hur detta kan åtgärdas;
- att SULF ska ta fram ett god praxis-dokument som beskriver de interna policyer och rutiner som ett lärosäte bör ha för att förebygga fusk med författarskap och stöld, appropriering eller obehörig användning av kunskapstillgångar; sådana rutiner bör minimalt inkludera konfliktmedling, utredning av anmälan om misstänkta avvikelser, och skydd mot repressalier;
- att SULF ska tillhandahålla, på sin webbplats eller i ett separat material, en informationsresurs om författarskap, immateriella rättigheter, patent, upphovsrätt, offentlighetsprincipen och öppen vetenskap; denna informationsresurs ska ge en överblick över dessa olika begrepp och hur de överlappar, samt hänvisa till lämpliga källor för mer djupgående information.

Motionen undertecknas för SULF:s doktorandförenings styrelse av:
Mohamed Al-Sabri, Chairperson