From the Editor in Chief

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The journal *Nature* in April 2009 published information concerning its policy with respect to authorship and coauthorship (*Nature*, vol. 458, p. 1078, April 30, 2009). Considering this question exceptionally important from the point of view of the observance of the standards of scientific (and even general human) ethics, the editorial staff of the journal *Fizika i Khimiya Stekla* (Glass Physics and Chemistry) decided to publish a brief summary of this article. We are ready to open a discussion on this issue. We have already published earlier the recommendations of some chemical societies (*Fizika i Khimiya Stekla*, 2007, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 609–619 [*Glass Physics and Chemistry* (Engl. transl.), 2007, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 439–444]) concerning questions of author ethics.

Academician V. Shevchenko

Authorship Policies

We are clarifying the duties of lead authors and making author-contribution statements mandatory.

The *Nature* journals encourage authors to treat their data and their collaborators with the respect that their communities demand. High-profile journals have a duty to reinforce the trends towards greater transparency and to help scientists to fulfil their responsibilities as researchers and authors. We are therefore introducing small but important changes in our policies to reflect these goals.

In a previous Editorial (*Nature* **450**, 1; 2007), we asked for feedback about whether we should require senior or corresponding authors to sign a statement that they had taken some specific “integrity insurance” steps before the manuscript was submitted. Some applauded this idea, but most were not in favour. (Some of the feedback can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/ddjsxa>). Major doubts were expressed about the ability of corresponding authors to take on such responsibility given the diversity of collaborations. The belief was also expressed that such signed statements would too often be worthless box-ticking exercises. Although we regretfully accept these realities, we believe that we should go further in spelling out the responsibilities of co-authors, and in requiring an implicit acceptance of them.

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Accordingly, we have modified the *Nature* journal policy on authorship, which is detailed on our website (<http://tinyurl.com/dkgbf8>). For papers submitted by collaborations, we now delineate the responsibilities of the senior members of each collaboration group on the paper. Before submitting the paper, at least one senior member from each collaborating group must take responsibility for their group’s contribution. Three major responsibilities are covered: preservation of the original data on which the paper is based, verification that the figures and conclusions accurately reflect the data collected and that manipulations to images are in accordance with *Nature* journal guidelines (<http://tinyurl.com/cmmrp7>), and minimization of obstacles to sharing materials, data and algorithms through appropriate planning.

Corresponding authors have multiple responsibilities, but we now make it clearer that the author list should include all appropriate researchers and no others, and that the order has been agreed to by all authors. They are expected to have notified all authors when the manuscript was submitted, they are the point of contact with the editor and they must communicate any matters that arise after publication to their co-authors.

Another change is that we have strengthened our policy for statements of authors’ contributions. This policy was first introduced nearly 10 years ago (*Nature* **399**, 393; 1999) to make the credit due to individual co-authors more explicit. Since then, authors of *Nature* papers have had the opportunity to include in their papers a statement that details each author’s role in the published work. Over the past 10 years, the proportion of authors who choose to include this has risen dramatically.

This acceptance, and discussions with authors who have chosen not to include such a statement, has led us to change our policy. Rather than “strongly encouraging” such statements, we now require them for publication of original research papers in *Nature* and the *Nature* research journals. The detail provided can vary tremendously (<http://tinyurl.com/39mmyw>) and authors are left to structure them as they see fit. We insist only that no author be left out.

To ensure that authors are familiar with these changes, we will shortly require the corresponding author to confirm that he or she has read the *Nature* journal policies on author responsibilities (<http://tinyurl.com/dkgbf8>) and is submitting the manuscript in accordance with those policies.