Duke University Degree Revocation Policy

In order to preserve the integrity of its academic standards and the earned degrees\(^1\) it grants, Duke University may exercise its right to revoke a previously conferred degree. Such action may be taken upon a determination by the University that the degree has been obtained by fraud or other serious academic, scientific, or research misconduct. Examples of fraud or serious misconduct include, but are not limited to, falsifying information on an application for admission, cheating on an examination, tampering with student records, plagiarism, or research misconduct while enrolled in the degree program.

Reports of violations of this policy will be investigated and adjudicated under the Degree Revocation Procedure. This Policy applies where the University discovers the fraud or other serious misconduct after the degree has been conferred, and it applies to all earned degrees conferred (whether conferred before or after the date of publication of this Policy). Where the misconduct is discovered during the student’s enrollment, existing University policies and procedures will apply and, where appropriate, a hold will be placed on the student’s degree if the conduct matter is unresolved before the scheduled date for degree conferral.

\(^1\) This policy applies only to degrees that were conferred upon students who matriculated at the University and met all requirements for graduation. It does not apply to honorary degrees.
Degree Revocation Process

The following sets forth the general process that the University will follow if and when it receives a report that implicates the Degree Revocation Policy. The process is designed to be flexible to ensure that the individuals responsible for responding to a report have sufficient ability to tailor an investigation and adjudication process to the unique circumstances of the allegations. The University reserves the right to revise this Process in its sole discretion. The University’s ability to investigate and/or adjudicate a report may be limited by the passage of time, the availability of potential witnesses, and whether documentary or other written information relevant to the allegations still exists.

Reporting and Initiation of Process

i. Information that implicates the Policy should be reported or referred to the dean of the school that houses the program in which the degree holder was enrolled.

ii. It is the responsibility of the dean or their designee to evaluate the information and, where appropriate, initiate an investigation and a hearing according to the procedures outlined below. In evaluating whether it is feasible to launch an investigation, the dean may consider, among other factors, the passage of time between the alleged conduct and the filing of the complaint; the availability of potential witnesses; and whether documentary or other written information relevant to the allegations still exists.

iii. In cases where there are two or more degrees housed in different schools, the deans of the schools involved shall confer and act in concert. In such cases, the word “dean” in this document shall mean the deans acting together. ²

Investigation

i. Upon discovery or receipt of credible information that a graduate may have obtained a degree by fraud or other serious misconduct, the dean may initiate an investigation by appointing an investigative committee, composed of at least two faculty, and other staff as appropriate, to review the matter. The graduate will be notified in writing of the investigation. The written notice will include a summary of the allegations, the names of the members of the investigative committee, and the procedures to be followed during the investigation.

ii. Allegations of research or scientific misconduct must be referred to the appropriate Duke office for consideration of whether they implicate Duke’s research misconduct policies. In such cases, the investigative committee should await the result of the research misconduct process before proceeding, and will base its recommendations on the results of that process.

iii. The investigative committee will provide the graduate an opportunity to submit relevant information, including a written statement responding to the allegations. At the completion of its investigation, the investigative committee will submit a written summary of its findings and recommendations to the dean.

² Where a degree is conferred by an academic unit at Duke that is not under the supervision of a dean, the director of that academic unit shall have the same responsibility and authority as the dean as set forth in this Process.
iv. A copy of the committee’s report and recommendations will be provided to the graduate, who may submit a written response to the dean no later than five business days after receipt of the report.

v. Based on a review of the committee’s recommendation and the graduate’s response (if any), the dean will decide whether to invoke the degree revocation hearing procedures described below, drop the matter, or take other action as the dean deems appropriate.

### Hearing Procedures

i. The hearing committee is charged with evaluating whether the graduate’s degree was obtained by fraud or other serious academic, scientific, or research misconduct. All determinations made by the hearing committee must be by majority vote, using the clear and convincing evidence standard.

ii. The hearing committee at the school or unit that is responsible for student academic matters will handle the degree revocation hearing. If the school or unit does not have such a committee, or in the case of a graduate with degrees from two or more schools or units, the dean will appoint a five-member panel of faculty from the school(s) or unit to consider the allegations.

iii. The following procedural rules apply to the hearing process; provided, however, that the hearing committee may modify these rules upon written notice to the graduate:
   a. The hearing committee will appoint a chair, who is responsible for the conduct of the hearing.
   b. The chair will provide the graduate written notice of the hearing at least 15 days in advance of the hearing, to include at minimum the names of the hearing panelists, details about the hearing, and the procedures for challenging panelists based on conflict of interest.
   c. The graduate may bring an advisor to the hearing, whose role is limited to quietly conferring with the graduate.
   d. Members of the hearing committee will receive the investigative report, the graduate’s response to it, if any, and supporting documentation in advance of the hearing. The graduate may submit other relevant information in advance of the hearing. Both the graduate and the dean (or designee) may identify witnesses to appear at the hearing.
   e. The dean (or designee) and the graduate will have an opportunity to present evidence and to question witnesses. Members of the hearing committee may ask questions of any participant or witness.
   f. The hearing committee may establish procedural rules for the conduct of the hearing and shall communicate those rules to the graduate and the dean (or designee) at least five business days in advance of the hearing.

iv. After the hearing, the hearing committee will prepare a written summary of its findings and determination. If the hearing committee concludes that a graduate’s degree was obtained by fraud or other serious academic, scientific, or research misconduct, it must determine (by majority vote) the appropriate sanction, up to and including degree revocation, and any other academic sanctions or remedies as it deems appropriate. The hearing committee’s decision will be transmitted to the Provost and the President with a copy to the dean, along with copies of all documents reviewed by the hearing committee.
Appeal Procedures

i. The graduate may appeal an adverse determination to the Provost, no later than ten business days after notification of the hearing committee’s decision. The appeal must be in writing, limited to no more than five pages, and state the specific grounds upon which it is based.

ii. The grounds for an appeal are limited to the following bases: a) that there was procedural error in the investigation or hearing process that materially impacted the hearing committee’s decision; and b) that there is new information that would materially impact the hearing committee’s decision.

iii. Appellate review will be based solely on the record of the hearing (including written submissions and responses provided by the parties). When an appeal is received, the Provost will be provided with the full record.

iv. After consideration of the appeal, the Provost will issue a written decision and provide copies of it to the graduate, the dean, and other appropriate parties.

v. If the Provost determines that the appeal grounds are substantiated, the Provost can remand the matter to the hearing panel for further proceedings or reverse the decision and dismiss the charges.

vi. If Provost determines that the appeal grounds are not substantiated (or if the graduate does not submit an appeal), the case is final and will be referred to the appropriate office at Duke to implement the determined sanctions and/or remedies.

vii. In all cases the President will receive notice of the outcome of the appeal.