
Honorary Doctorates, Hunter Fellowships, and Distinguished Alumni Awards Statute

1. Purpose

This Statute sets out the high-level rules and procedures governing the granting and rescission of Honorary Doctorates, Hunter Fellowships, and Distinguished Alumni Awards at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington (the University).

2. Application of Statute

This Statute applies to Staff Members.

Note: This Statute does not cover topics that fall under the University's [Higher Doctorate Regulations](#).

Statute Content

3. Honorary Doctorates and Hunter Fellowships

- 3.1 The University seeks to honour individuals whose achievements exhibit the intellectual and imaginative powers that align with the University's values and Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities as an academic institution. The University confers Honorary Doctorates and awards Hunter Fellowships to recognise the outstanding contributions of certain individuals which reflect its goals and to welcome them to its whānau of graduates.
- 3.2 The University Council (Council) may, at its discretion, confer the following Honorary Doctorates:
 - (i) Doctor of Commerce (Hon. DCom)
 - (ii) Doctor of Laws (Hon. LL.D)
 - (iii) Doctor of Literature (Hon. DLitt)
 - (iv) Doctor of Music (Hon. DMus)
 - (v) Doctor of Science (Hon. DSc)
- 3.3 The Council may, at its discretion, also award the prestigious title of Hunter Fellow to individuals who provide exceptional support to the University in pursuing its goals and objectives.
- 3.4 Honorary Doctorates shall not be conferred, and Hunter Fellowships shall not be awarded in recognition of the achievements of a Staff Member during their employment at the University, nor to a current member of the University Council in recognition of Council duties. However, this shall not preclude the possibility that a former Staff Member may be recognised for achievements outside the responsibilities covered by the employment contract/agreement, or that recognition may be given to a former member of the University Council.
- 3.5 Unless otherwise determined by the Manukura – Chancellor and the Tumu Whakarae – Vice-Chancellor, Honorary Doctorates shall be conferred in Wellington at the University's Graduation Ceremonies. Hunter Fellowships shall be awarded at a special reception held in Wellington.
- 3.6 Council decisions regarding Honorary Doctorates and Hunter Fellowships are shared with the wider University community via the University News or other channels.

4. Distinguished Alumni Awards

- 4.1 The University also presents Distinguished Alumni Awards to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of its graduates who have made exceptional contributions to their profession, communities, or Aotearoa New Zealand as a whole.
- 4.2 Based on a delegated authority from the Council, recipients are selected every two years by the Victoria Honours Committee (hereafter referred to as ‘the Committee’). The criteria for selection include outstanding professional or voluntary service, sustained contributions to the social, cultural, environmental, or economic wellbeing of their communities, and exceptional achievements in team or individual sports at a national level.
- 4.3 Individuals who are currently employed by the University, current members of the University Council, members of the selection panel, recipients of an Honorary Doctorate or Hunter Fellowship from the University and serving Members of Parliament are ineligible for the Distinguished Alumni Award.
- 4.4 Unless otherwise determined by the Manukura – Chancellor and the Tumu Whakarae – Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Alumni Awards shall be presented at a special reception held in Wellington.
- 4.5 Committee decisions regarding Distinguished Alumni Awards are shared with the wider University community via the University News or other channels.

5. Nomination

- 5.1 Nominations for Honorary Doctorates and Hunter Fellowships may be made to the Vice-Chancellor confidentially in writing by any member of the Council, the Committee, the Academic Board, other Staff Members, and Students of the University.

Note: Nomination forms can be accessed via the following links: [Honorary Doctorates](#) [Hunter Fellowships](#)

- 5.2 The Committee may recommend to the Council for conferment of an Honorary Doctorate to:
- (a) A graduate of the University who has achieved national or international distinction in their chosen field, whether or not that field be directly related to the current academic interests of the University; or
 - (b) A person who, not being a graduate of the University, has achieved national or international distinction in disciplines and fields of relevance to the academic programmes of the University. In this context, preference will be given to an individual who also has a connection with, or has given service to, the University, and/or Wellington City; or
 - (c) A person who has provided significant support for the academic interests and programmes of the University, particularly when that support has been provided over a sustained period.
- 5.3 The Committee may recommend to the Council, for the award of a Hunter Fellowship a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the University, either directly or through its associated bodies, in activities relevant to the University’s strategic directions and interests.
- 5.4 Each nomination shall be accompanied by a statement of the nominee’s career and achievements, and the grounds for conferring the Honorary Doctorate or Hunter Fellowship in terms of the criteria specified in clauses 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 above. Its preparation must not involve consultation with the nominee. The Vice-Chancellor shall bring each nomination and the accompanying statement before the Committee.
- 5.5 For Honorary Doctorates, the Vice-Chancellor shall bring the recommendation of the Committee before the Academic Board. The Academic Board may provide advice on the recommendation to the Council. The Vice-Chancellor shall then bring the recommendation before the Council, who shall

determine whether the Honorary Doctorate proposed in the recommendation shall be conferred.

- 5.6 For Hunter Fellowships, the Vice-Chancellor shall bring the recommendation of the Committee before the Council, who shall determine whether the fellowship proposed in the recommendation shall be awarded.
- 5.7 Nominations for Distinguished Alumni Awards may be made to the Committee via the Development and Alumni Relations Office by completing a nomination form including the following information:
- (a) name and contact information for the nominator and nominee
 - (b) the nominee's academic achievements and awards or honours received
 - (c) the nominee's current occupation
 - (d) a statement of support explaining the grounds for the nomination
 - (e) names and contact details for at least two referees.

Note: More information on Distinguished Alumni Awards (including processes and key dates) is available on the University's [website](#).

- 5.8 All proceedings under this Statute shall be confidential and taken in Committee. A resolution of the Council conferring an Honorary Doctorate or awarding a Hunter Fellowship shall also be taken in Committee and shall remain confidential until the offer is accepted. The requirement for confidentiality also pertains to the Committee's decisions on Distinguished Alumni Awards.

6. Rescission

- 6.1 The Council may rescind any Honorary Doctorates, Hunter Fellowships, or Distinguished Alumni Awards if, in its judgement, and considering the recommendation of the Committee or another person or committee appointed by the Council to report to it on the matter, a recipient has engaged in conduct or activities which bring or have brought significant disrepute to the University, including those that:
- (a) result in a conviction for a serious criminal offence or being struck off by a professional body;
 - (b) in the Council's judgment, materially misrepresent or undermine the accomplishments that formed the basis for awarding the honorary degree/award; or
 - (c) are otherwise harmful to the reputation of the University.

Note: Honorary Doctorates, Hunter Fellowships, or Distinguished Alumni Awards will not be rescinded from deceased recipients. At the Council's direction, the University may add a statement to the citation granting the award and on the individual's graduation record, if applicable, to provide additional context.

- 6.2 The University makes best efforts to ensure that candidates are appropriate before a decision regarding an Honorary Doctorate, a Hunter Fellowship, or a Distinguished Alumni Award is made. However, it is recognised that new information may subsequently come to light or events occur which call into question the University's decision to honour an individual in this way. New information may relate to historical, recent, or contemporary events and give grounds for rescission under clause 6.1.
- 6.3 The Committee, or other person or committee appointed by the Council (hereafter referred to as nominee) to report to it on the matter, will make a recommendation to the Council for the rescission of an Honorary Doctorate, a Hunter Fellowship, or a Distinguished Alumni Award where the Committee (or nominee) considers, based on the available information, that one or more of the criteria under clause 6.1 has been met.

7. Review Procedures

- 7.1 The Secretary to Council is in charge of ensuring that the following review procedures are carried

out efficiently and with proper record-keeping. These steps should be completed as quickly and effectively as possible, taking into account the relevant information and circumstances. If needed, Committee business related to these procedures can be conducted outside of scheduled meetings, such as through written resolutions.

- 7.2 All parties should maintain confidentiality regarding all stages of the procedure, except for any public statements issued by the Vice-Chancellor or a person expressly authorised by the Vice-Chancellor for that purpose. This includes all relevant deliberations of the Committee and/or the Council.
- 7.3 Requests to review an Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award may be submitted by Staff Members or Students of the University, or by individuals or organisations external to the University. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the Vice-Chancellor in the first instance. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted. However, if requested, the identity of the party/parties concerned may be protected where practicable and as far as reasonable throughout the review process. Any such requests must provide the substantive grounds for review, supported by appropriate evidence, with reference to the criteria set out in clause 6.1 above.
- 7.4 The Committee will assess whether there is a case for review in accordance with this Statute. Where the Committee considers that a request for a review warrants further enquiry, further investigation and due diligence will be undertaken as appropriate. This may include identifying any other institutions with a relationship with the award holder.
- 7.5 If the Committee (or nominee) decides that a review is necessary, they will consider the case, and all gathered information for further examination. Afterwards, the Secretary to Council will inform the original requesters whether or not the Committee (or nominee) is considering the case.
- 7.6 The Committee (or nominee) will review the case for rescission based on the criteria outlined above and may request additional advice or information from relevant sources.
- 7.7 Having reviewed the information, the Committee (or nominee) will provide a report of its review to the Council, including its recommendation on whether or not the Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award be rescinded with reference to the criteria for rescission set out in Section 6. Unless there are good reasons not to, the Committee is to provide the holder of the Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award with an opportunity to respond to any draft report and any associated recommendation within a reasonable timeframe before they are finalised and communicated to the Council. If the full draft report is not being disclosed, the Committee (or nominee) will endeavour to consult with the recipient to the extent possible.

8. Rescission Decisions

- 8.1 Upon receipt of the report and recommendation from the Committee, the Council will decide by formal resolution whether to approve the Committee's recommendation to rescind the Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award in question.
- 8.2 The effect of a rescission decision is that the Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award is rescinded, and the relevant individual no longer has or holds it. If the Council decides to rescind an Honorary Doctorate, a Hunter Fellowship, or a Distinguished Alumni Award, the University must send notice of that decision to the holder within 14 working days after the Council made it to the holder's last known address (which may be an email address). A rescission decision will take effect from the date determined by the Council.
- 8.3 The decision of the Council is final and there is no right of appeal.
- 8.4 The notice of the Council's decision to the holder of an Honorary Doctorate, Hunter Fellowship, or Distinguished Alumni Award that has been rescinded should:
 - (a) inform the holder that they:

- (i) must return the original degree certificate to the University within the period specified in the notice, and
 - (ii) are no longer entitled to represent to any person or body, whether using post-nominals or otherwise, that they are a recipient of the rescinded honorary degree, fellowship, or award.
- (b) give the reason/s for the rescission decision, and
- (c) state the date on which the rescission takes effect.
- 8.5 At any time, the Council may notify any individual or organisation of the review if it considers it reasonably necessary to do so in the public interest or to preserve the University's reputation.
- 8.6 The Council's decision will be formally reported to the Committee.

9. Definitions

In this Statute, unless the context otherwise requires:

Committee	refers to the Victoria Honours Committee, a committee of the University Council.
Staff Member	means an employee of the University.
Student	means any person enrolled in a personal course of study at the University or a person studying at the University under an exchange agreement with another institution and includes a resident in a Hall of Residence.

Related Documents and Information

10. Related Documents

[Education and Training Act 2020](#)
[Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961](#)

[Delegations Statute](#)
[General Academic Statute](#)
[Higher Doctorate Regulations](#)
[Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute](#)

11. Document Management and Control

Essential Record

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Policy Sponsor	Tumu Whakarae – Vice-Chancellor
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6 May 2024	Te Rūnanga – Council	Full review. Major amendment.