AAAS Board-approved Awards Revocation Policy

Presented for adoption to the
AAAS Board of Directors
on April 23, 2021

Summary: The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) confers honors and awards, including Board-approved Awards (“Awards”), to recognize significant contributions to the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) enterprise. These Awards are determined and issued at AAAS’ sole judgment and discretion and AAAS is in no way obligated to issue or maintain an Award to/for any person. AAAS retains the right to grant, defer, or decline to grant an Award to any person. AAAS also retains the right to revoke an Award already granted, if, in its judgment and discretion, AAAS determines that it is in the best interests of AAAS and/or the STEMM enterprise to do so.

Purpose: While not the only interest that is critical for excellence in the STEMM enterprise and is considered by AAAS in deciding who should be granted an Award, professional ethics is an important such interest. When AAAS grants an Award, the Award reflects AAAS’ judgment that an individual’s contributions to, and effect on, the STEMM enterprise are exemplary. AAAS takes into account the effect on the enterprise of the totality of the individual’s work and professional and ethical conduct and reputation. It expects those who hold Awards to demonstrate that participation in and recognition by the community are privileges, and that the community’s leaders, and others it celebrates, embody highly professional and ethical conduct in their work.

Therefore, as indicated in the documentation for the AAAS Board-approved Awards (“Award”) program1, “All award winners are expected to meet the commonly held standards of professional ethics and scientific integrity.” In the rare case where an Award winner no longer meets this expectation, or otherwise fails to merit the continued status of Award winner, the following set of guidelines and procedures are to be followed to request revocation and for the consideration of the request to revoke an individual’s Award.

Scope: AAAS will not confer any Award on any individual whose ethical conduct is the subject of a credible question known to AAAS, so long as the question has not been finally and favorably determined to AAAS’s satisfaction, in its discretion. A person who is being considered for an Award (upon becoming aware of being considered), or who holds an Award, acknowledges a continuing duty to disclose to AAAS the existence of any fact, situation, or circumstance that could be considered relevant to AAAS’s decision whether to grant the Award under provisions of this policy. Failure to make a disclosure may result in AAAS withholding or revoking an Award, in AAAS’s discretion, in accordance with this policy and the procedures outlined herein.

AAAS will, in its sole discretion, consider revoking an Award in cases of proven scientific misconduct, serious breaches of professional ethics, or when the Award winner in the view of AAAS otherwise no longer merits the continued status of Award winner.
In either case, when applying this policy in situations of credible but undetermined questions, AAAS is withholding judgment and is not making a statement or determination regarding any individual. Rather, AAAS is implementing a prophylactic measure to support the enterprise’s priority efforts to break down longstanding barriers to excellence.

All requests to revoke Award status will be handled in accordance with the procedures provided herein.2

Breaches of professional ethics might include sexual misconduct, racial discrimination, or other ethical violations. Sexual harassment or retaliation for declining, objecting to, or reporting harassment or other sexual conduct may constitute a serious breach of professional ethics. This policy covers professional activities wherever they take place. This includes, but is not limited to, academic buildings, laboratories, field sites, research stations, field course venues, professional meetings, or any such professional settings. This policy includes interactions with persons such as, but not limited to, colleagues, subordinates, students, teaching or research assistants or others with whom the Award winner interacts as part of the Award winner’s professional activities.

A request for revocation of an award must include an investigative report that documents findings, sanctions, or actions taken from an independent organization or agency, an organization affiliated with AAAS, or AAAS itself3. Alternatively, a public announcement of the information in a report, or actions that have been taken, may be submitted. Media reports alone may not be sufficient to support a revocation request. AAAS will only consider requests for revocation filed within four years of publication of the report or announcement of the finding, sanction, or action, and will not consider requests when the Award winner is deceased.

If an Award winner has had his/her status as a Fellow of AAAS revoked in accordance with the AAAS Fellow Revocation Policy adopted by the AAAS Council on September 15, 2018, the Board may, in its sole discretion, determine that the revocation of any or all Awards is also appropriate and may rely on the determination of the Fellow Revocation Panel and, by majority vote, revoke any such Awards without further deliberation. In such cases, following the Procedures herein will not be required.

**Procedures:**

1. A request for revocation of an Award (“Request”) should be made in writing to the Director of Governance in the AAAS Executive Office. Requests must be sent via email to: awardinquiry@aaas.org. In all steps of these Procedures, the identity of the requestor will generally not be revealed by the Executive Office except as may be required by a court of competent jurisdiction or as otherwise required to comply with AAAS’ legal obligations.

2. A Request must include an investigative report and/or public announcement of findings or actions taken (or links thereto) from a credible body such as the Federal government’s Office of Research Integrity, other Federal or state agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH), a professional organization, an academic institution, a court of law, or admission(s) of conduct by the Award winner. Requests may only be made by a member of AAAS. The member must include detailed information about the sources used in order to enable verification of information. In addition, the member must agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of the matter until its conclusion at AAAS.
3. AAAS Executive Office staff will conduct a preliminary review to determine if the Request is substantive, contains adequate documentation, and complies with this Policy and these Procedures. As a result of this review, either these Procedures will continue or the Request will be dismissed without prejudice. In either case, staff will provide a report to the AAAS Board of Directors (“Board”).

4. During revocation procedures, deliberations on claims will be based on the evidence provided. Investigations by AAAS of complaints or charges beyond information presented in the Request or otherwise available publicly (such as publications or court records) will not occur as part of revocation procedures.4

5. Based on the submitted documents, the Board will decide whether to proceed with revocation procedures or to dismiss the Request. A majority vote of the Board members present is sufficient to proceed with the Request. If the Board proceeds, it will appoint a Revocation Panel made up of at least two current Board members and two other members, to be appointed at the Board’s discretion. The Revocation Panel will remain active until a determination has been made on the Request, even if the term of office of an involved Board member expires during this period.

6. If the Board decides to proceed, the Board will define a timeline for the process, and the Award winner and the relevant Award Selection Committee will be notified of the Request in writing and in confidence. The Award winner will be given notice of the Request, with the supporting documentation. The Award winner will be offered the option to relinquish their Award. The Award winner will be invited to respond in writing to the Request, and if desired, to make an oral presentation to the Revocation Panel which will ordinarily occur via telephone conference. Such conference will not include any representatives of the Award winner and will be limited in time and scope per the direction of the Revocation Panel. The Award Selection Committee may provide a written response within the timeframe defined by the Revocation Panel.

7. After the deadline for responses has passed, the Revocation Panel will consider the original Request, any responses, including the oral presentation/conference with the Award winner, if any, and may also consider any other pertinent information of public or official record. The Revocation Panel will discuss and vote on a motion of revocation. An affirmative vote of three of the four members of the Revocation Panel is required for this motion to pass. The decision of the Revocation Panel is final and there is no appeal.5

8. After the decision is made, the Revocation Panel will provide a summary report to the Board of Directors. The report will indicate if the motion passed, but neither the vote tally nor the decisions of individual members of the Revocation Panel will be included. AAAS Executive Office staff will share the report with the relevant Award Selection Committee, the member who submitted the request, and the former Awardee.

9. In the event of a revocation, the former Awardee’s name will be removed from all public listings of Award winners. If the AAAS Executive Office staff determine that there should be a public statement of the decision to revoke the Award, the background factors
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or bases for the revocation may be included in the announcement, but all other information about the requestor, the Revocation Panel, or its deliberations will remain confidential.

Proviso: The four-year time limit for submitting revocation requests will be waived for the first two years this policy is in effect.

1 This policy will be available publicly on the AAAS web site with other Award winners program policies.

2 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board, or their designee, working with AAAS Executive Office staff, to ensure that all steps are followed in a timely manner and to make procedural decisions consistent with this document.

3 A finding from AAAS itself could be the basis for a revocation request, such as a report produced following an investigation of alleged inappropriate behavior at a AAAS event.

4 Among statements that would be relevant when deliberating on “commonly held standards” is the AAAS Statement of Scientific Freedom and Responsibility: https://www.aaas.org/page/aaas-statement-scientific-freedom-responsibility.

5 If a revocation request based on a specific finding (e.g., a report) is not supported in the process, anew documented finding would be necessary if another revocation request is made for the same Award winner.