

Guidelines for Honorary Degrees

Revised November 13, 2007; February 26, 2008; March 4, 2009; June 6, 2011;
February 28, 2012; March 6, 2015; October 20, 2018; April 22, 2023; April 26, 2025

Statutory Authority

The *University of Saskatchewan Act* gives the University power to grant honorary degrees and assigns to the University Senate the role of providing for the granting of honorary degrees, and to Convocation the authority to confer honorary degrees approved by the Senate.

The bylaws of Senate provide for an Honorary Degrees Committee which has the task of encouraging and recommending nominees for honorary degrees and submitting names to the Senate for consideration for honorary degrees. The bylaws provide that degrees *honoris causa* may be conferred at any Convocation provided that the names of such persons shall have been considered and approved by the Honorary Degrees Committee and shall have been recommended by the Senate.

Under Senate's bylaws, the following honorary degrees may be granted by the University:

Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* (LL.D.) – awarded for outstanding scholarly achievement or for exceptional service to the University or the community at large.

Doctor of Science, *honoris causa* (D.Sc.) – awarded for outstanding achievement in the pure and applied sciences, usually of a scholarly nature.

Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa* (D.Litt.) – awarded for outstanding achievement in the humanities, social sciences, or in the performing arts, of a scholarly or creative nature.

Principles/Statement of Purpose

An honorary degree is the highest honour the University can bestow. Acceptance of an honorary degree by a candidate brings honour to both the recipient and the University.

Typically, four honorary doctorate(s) are conferred at Spring Convocation ceremonies and one at Fall Convocation.

Honorary degrees are awarded to outstanding individuals who have made a worthy and unique contribution.

Criteria for Selection

Through conferring honorary degrees the University recognizes individuals who have achieved outstanding accomplishments in research, scholarly and artistic works; performed exceptional public service; contributed significantly to the community through their professional or philanthropic activity; or demonstrated great athletic prowess.

The Honorary Degrees Committee may take any of the following considerations into account in selecting candidates:

- The level of excellence and eminence the candidate has demonstrated in scholarship, scientific inquiry or artistic endeavors, gaining high and sustained recognition nationally or internationally.
- The extraordinary nature of the candidate’s public service to humankind, Canada, Saskatchewan or a particular community.
- The candidate’s significant creative, material and/or financial contributions that have greatly benefited the University.
- The level of significant athletic prowess demonstrated by the candidate.
- The degree to which the candidate’s presence at Convocation would be an inspiration to the graduating students.
- The level to which the candidate will engage with students and the campus community.
- The balance across academic or professional disciplines and types of contributions, and to foster a culture of honoring that embraces equity diversity and inclusion.
- The links of the candidate with the University and with the province of Saskatchewan.
- The commitment to honor those who, for reasons attributable to social prejudice or ignorance, may have been passed over for other recognition.

The following persons are not **normally** eligible for consideration for an honorary degree:

- current members of the USask Board of Governors or Senate;
- current or recent¹ members of the faculty or staff of the University;
- current students;
- current holders of elected office at any level (municipal, provincial, federal, or within any Canadian Indigenous community) and members of the federal Senate.
 - for clarification, elected officials are not normally eligible for the following reasons:
 - a) to protect the University from the perception of a conflict of interest; and
 - b) to protect the University from the perception that it is involved in partisan politics;
 - elected officials in other countries may be considered if they do not have political influence over the University and if the University likely does not have influence over their electorate; and
 - former holders of an elected office or former federal Senators are eligible for consideration; and people who have been awarded an honorary degree in the past are in no way restricted from running for elected offices in the future.
- religious leaders², unless they are being recognized largely for other contributions outside of their religious leadership.

¹ “Recent” is considered to be within the past 5 years. In general, honorary degrees will be awarded on the basis of contributions made outside the scope of regular duties of a member of the staff or governing bodies. For contributions that are within scope of the regular duties of current and former faculty and staff, the University has established a number of awards and honours, including the University Staff Excellence Award, the Distinguished Researcher Award, the New Researcher Award, the Distinguished Graduate Supervisor Award, the Master Teacher Award, the G.W. Ivany Internationalization Award, the Earned Doctor of Letters and Earned Doctor of Science, Chairs and Professorships, and Emeritus status.

² For religious leaders, the degree most appropriate to be awarded is an honorary doctor of divinity (D.D.); this degree is normally awarded by the University’s affiliated theological colleges.



Procedure and Guidelines for Nominations

Any member(s) of the University community or the public may put forward a nomination. The nomination must be signed by one nominator, who should complete the nomination form and obtain at least three letters of support from others supporting the nomination. Nominators should declare on the nomination form the basis for their knowledge of the nominee's achievements. Nominators should not be members of the nominee's family.

Nominations must follow the format stipulated on the Nomination Form and must include the following:

- The name and signature of one nominator;
- A statement of up to 250 words summarizing the nominee's accomplishments;
- A *curriculum vitae* or narrative biography for the nominee (where possible);
- Letters of support.

Additional or supplementary information, if necessary (e.g., photographs, newspaper articles, media citations, brochures, etc.) should be limited to 15 pages.

The nomination should be addressed to the Senate Honorary Degrees Committee in care of the Governance Office. An acknowledgement of receipt of a nomination package will be sent by email to the nominator.

The Honorary Degrees Committee will meet at least once a year, usually in the spring, to review nominations received since their last meeting.

Decisions

The Honorary Degrees Committee will consider only complete nominations, and may

- Recommend the nominee for approval by Senate for one of the honorary degrees named in the Senate Bylaws;
- Invite the nominators or others to resubmit the nomination with more information, for future consideration; or
- Reject the nomination.

In any case where a member of the committee has a personal or close business connection to a nominee it should be disclosed to the committee. Such individuals are not required to recuse themselves from discussion, nor should they necessarily refrain from voting, but they may elect to do so depending on the nature of the conflict, or if asked to recuse by the committee.

Individuals who are members of the Honorary Degrees Committee may sign a nomination and may submit a letter of support, but having done so should declare a conflict of interest when the nomination is considered by the committee, and refrain from voting on the nomination.

The Senate will, at its next meeting following a meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee, receive the names of those recommended for approval and will vote on each name separately at an *in camera* session. In unusual cases, the Honorary Degrees Committee may make its recommendation to the Executive Committee for approval. The Executive Committee is empowered by Senate's bylaws (Section V.2.d.vii) to act on Senate's behalf to approve candidates for honorary degrees in special circumstances.



Those approved for the awarding of a degree will be added to a reserve list of approved candidates maintained by the Governance Office.

Prior to each Convocation ceremony, the President and the University Secretary will review the standing list of those names that have been approved for the awarding of honorary degrees and will choose the recipients to be honoured at Convocation. Wherever practical, degrees will be awarded within three years of their approval by Senate.

Confidentiality

Nominations are made on a strictly confidential basis. Nominees are not to be made aware of the nomination or of the deliberations or decisions of the Honorary Degrees Committee. A successful nominee will be notified in confidence, following the approval by Senate.

The nominators will be contacted regarding the outcomes of the nomination after the nominee has been approved by the Senate and has accepted the offering of the honorary degree.. Normally, nominators would be contacted in order to invite them to the Convocation ceremony where their nominee will receive an honorary degree.

The nominators of unsuccessful candidates will be contacted regarding the outcome of the nomination.

Awarding

Honorary degree recipients are normally expected to give a Convocation address.

Honorary degrees are not awarded *in absentia*. In exceptional circumstances, however, the President may authorize the award of the degree in absentia, and shall provide a rationale for doing so to the Honorary Degrees Committee. “Exceptional circumstances” may include, but are not limited to, health issues, serious logistical challenges, or situations where it may be desirable to highlight the presence of the honoree in a particular location. In such circumstances, the President may consider whether attendance at Convocation by remote means is a reasonable option.

Honorary degrees are not awarded posthumously. An exception may be made in the case of the honour having been accepted and arrangements made for its awarding prior to the death of the nominee.

The President will appoint someone to present the honorary degree to the recipient at Convocation. The citation for the honorary degree should be no longer than three minutes. In accordance with Council Bylaws, “each recipient of an honorary degree shall be presented for admission [to the degree] by the President or by a person designated for that purpose by the President” (*Council Bylaws*, Part Three, I.2).

The gown worn by candidates for the honorary degree is the black doctoral robe of the University of Saskatchewan, faced with emerald green chevrons. The honorary degree hood is lined with gold, with white trim. The University will make a gift of the honorary degree hood to the recipient after the ceremony. The gown will be loaned but is retained by the University.



Privileges

An Honorary Degree is the highest honour a University can bestow. In general, the “powers, rights and privileges” pertaining to honorary degrees are as follows:

- The right to include the postnominal letters (LL.D., D.Sc., D.Litt. or D.C.L.) after their name. They may choose to include (*hon.*) after the letters to indicate that this is an honorary degree, although this is not necessary, as all three of these degrees are usually awarded *honoris causa*.
- The right to use the courtesy title “Dr.” before their name, particularly at ceremonial functions and at events connected with the University of Saskatchewan.
- The right to wear the academic regalia for the USask honorary degree at Convocations and other ceremonies at any University that might invite them to participate in its academic procession.
- Membership in the Convocation of the University of Saskatchewan. As a member of Convocation, honourees are eligible to vote in elections, to stand for election to Senate, to receive the Green & White Alumni Magazine, and other benefits.

Revocation

The Bylaws of Senate provide that “the Senate may revoke an honorary degree and all the rights and privileges connected therewith.”

In such cases, the Senate would consider revoking the degree on the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee, by means of a vote.

Circumstances that may justify consideration of a revocation include, but are not limited to:

- The individual has been convicted of an indictable offence;
- The individual, after investigation, has obtained the honorary degree or been added to the honorary degree nominees list by fraud, deception, or any other inappropriate means;
- The individual has been removed for misconduct by a properly constituted legal authority from any official register or roll of members of the profession to which the individual belongs;
- The individual has engaged in some action or has conducted themselves in such a way as to bring the University into disrepute; or
- There are other extenuating factors that, in the reasonable opinion of the committee, justify the revocation.



Honorary Degrees Committee Terms of Reference

The Senate members of the Honorary Degrees Committee shall be nominated by the Nominations Committee and elected annually by Senate.

(a) Membership

Membership on the Committee shall be composed of:

- (i) The Chancellor;
- (ii) The President;
- (iii) The Provost and Vice-President (Academic);
- (iv) Two ex officio members;
- (v) Two appointed members of Senate;
- (vi) Two elected members of Senate;
- (vii) One student member of Senate; and
- (viii) The University Secretary (non-voting member).

(b) Term

The term of a Senate member on the Committee is one year, renewable annually for up to two additional years for a maximum of three years. The Chancellor, President and Provost are members for the duration of their terms as long as they hold office.

(c) Chair

The President will serve as Chair and the Chancellor as Vice-Chair.

(d) Duties and Powers

- (i) To encourage nominations and recommend to Senate nominees for honorary degrees.
- (ii) To submit names to the Senate for consideration at its next meeting or in special circumstances to the Executive Committee for consideration between Senate meetings.
- (iii) Develop guidelines and procedures for honorary degrees including criteria and procedures for nominations, awarding and revocation.
- (iv) To recommend to Senate the revocation of an honorary degree from those already awarded or those approved and not yet awarded.

