Guidelines for Honorary Degrees

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 Civil Law, honoris causa (D.C.L.)
- 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.

Normally, one honorary doctorate is conferred at each Convocation ceremony.

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

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1 The Doctor of Civil Law honoris causa has not been awarded since the mid1960s; it is very unusual for universities to award both an honorary D.C.L and an honorary LL.D.
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 will take 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 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.
- In determining those candidates to recommend, the committee will attempt over time to achieve a balance across academic or professional disciplines and types of contributions, and a diversity of gender and cultural backgrounds.
- The committee will take into consideration the links of the candidate with the University and with the province of Saskatchewan.
- The committee may also take into consideration 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 Board or Senate;
- current or recent\(^2\) 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 Aboriginal community) and members of the federal Senate.

\(^2\) Within the past 5 years. In general, honorary degrees will be awarded on the basis of contributions made outside of the scope of regular duties of a member of the staff or governing bodies. For contributions which are within the scope of the regular duties of its 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.
• 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 getting involved in partisan politics;
• people who are 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
• people who are 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 leaders\(^3\), unless they are being recognized largely for other contributions outside of their religious leadership.

**Procedure for Nominations**

Any member 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. 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. The nominator is responsible for obtaining at least three letters of support from others supporting the nomination.

The nomination should be addressed to the Senate Honorary Degrees Committee in care of the University Secretary.

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.

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

\(^3\) 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.
Guidelines for Preparation of Nominations

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 information should be limited to 15 pages.

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.

The Senate will, at its next meeting, receive the names of those recommended for approval and will vote on each name separately at an *in camera* session. In unusual cases, such as a Special Convocation, 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 University Secretary.

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

Publicizing the Nomination and the Award

Nominators should not approach nominees to inform them that they are under consideration. The University will not release the outcome of any individual nomination, except by making a public announcement of the honorary degree recipients for a particular Convocation. The names approved by the Senate will not be made public until this time.

The Secretary will determine the timing of the public announcement in consultation with the President, who will make the announcement.

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4 If a nomination is rejected, the file is then destroyed.
**Awarding**

Honorary degree recipients are invited to give the Convocation address but may decline the invitation to do so.

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 exploit 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 candidate at Convocation. The citation for the honorary degree should be no longer than three minutes in length. 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 candidate after the ceremony; the gown will be available on loan but is retained by the University.

**Revoking**

The Bylaws of Senate provide that “the Senate may revoke an honorary degree and all the rights and privileges connected therewith.” The Senate would consider revoking the degree on the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee, by means of a vote.