



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR AND SENATE

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University of Alberta Senate Honorary Degree Principles, Policies, and Procedures

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1. Why do we confer honorary degrees?

We confer honorary degrees to:

- a. celebrate extraordinary achievements or extraordinary service to the community or society;
- b. inspire our students; and
- c. connect extraordinary persons to our university, providing opportunities to develop an ongoing connection to the values, teaching, research, or community service priorities of our university.

2. Fundamental principles

The process for nomination and selection of honorary degree candidates and for conferral of honorary degrees shall be informed and guided by the published vision and shared values of our University. The lifetime conduct of honorary degree candidates shall reflect some or all of such shared values and contravene none of such shared values. University of Alberta Honorary Degrees apply only to the lifetime of the recipient.

3. Honorary Degrees Selection Committee

- a. Under the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the Chancellor may, on the authorization of the Senate, grant an honorary degree on a person.
- b. The Senate has delegated its power of authorization to grant honorary degrees to the Honorary Degrees Selection Committee of the Senate (the "Committee").
- c. Membership on the Committee shall include no less than 20 and no more than 23 members of the Senate including the Chancellor, President and Vice-Chancellor, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), and a balance of representation from elected Senators, appointed Senators, and all other Senate constituent groups as determined by the Chancellor in consultation with the Senate Director and the Executive Committee. The Chancellor shall chair the Committee, and the President and Vice-Chancellor shall chair the Committee in the absence of the Chancellor.
- d. In determining the composition and orientation procedures of the Committee, the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion shall be taken into account.
- e. Information about the composition of the Committee shall be published on the Senate's website. To protect the privacy of individual committee members, this information shall not include the publication of their names.
- f. Only members of the Committee in attendance at the meeting shall make decisions on the selection of honorary degree candidates, although comments and opinions regarding the choice of candidates from non-attending members of the Committee may be received as information.

- g. Quorum for meetings shall be 50% plus one of the current committee membership either in person or by teleconference or video conference.
- h. A two-thirds majority of members present and voting shall be required to advance a nomination to an Approved List of candidates for honorary degrees.
- i. Discussion and deliberations on all nominations shall take place in camera and shall remain confidential. Except as provided in Section 7(b), decisions of the Committee on the selection of honorary degree candidates shall be kept confidential until the award of an honorary degree to a candidate is announced by the University.
- j. The Committee may invite one or more additional persons to attend any meeting of the Committee to provide advice. Such persons shall be required to respect the confidentiality of the deliberations of the Committee.

4. Nominations

- a. Any person, either within or outside the University community, may nominate another person for an honorary degree.
- b. The University and the Senate are committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusivity. Nominations for honorary degrees are welcomed for all qualified persons. The University encourages nominations of women; First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons; members of visible minority groups; persons with disabilities; persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity and expression; and all those who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas and the University community.
- c. Individual members of the Committee may participate in the nomination process. A member who participates in the nomination process for an individual shall advise the Committee of such participation in accordance with Section 5(f). The Committee as a whole does not generate or solicit nominations.
- d. The nomination form and deadlines for receipt of nominations shall be determined by the Senate Director in consultation with the Committee and shall be published on the Senate website.
- e. The Senate Director or Senate Portfolio Initiatives Coordinator shall ensure that all completed nominations received at the Senate Office are forwarded in confidence to all Committee members for review prior to each meeting.
- f. The Senate Director shall establish a process for vetting each nomination in advance of the meeting at which a particular nomination is reviewed in accordance with the following principles:
 - i. the vetting process shall use only publicly available information;
 - ii. the research shall be performed by individuals within or seconded to the Senate Office who possess skills comparable to those of a research librarian;

- iii. the results of the vetting process for each nomination shall be provided to the Chancellor as Chair of the Committee;
- iv. the Chancellor, in consultation with the President and Vice-Chancellor, shall determine which of those results are relevant to the selection process;
- v. the Chancellor shall share the relevant results with the Committee; and
- vi. the results of the vetting process shall be kept confidential to members of the Committee.

5. Principles Governing the Selection of Candidates for Honorary Degrees

- a. When evaluating a nomination for an honorary degree, the Committee shall consider:
 - i. whether the nominee is a person of upstanding character;
 - ii. whether the nominee's achievements or service to the community are extraordinary and inspirational and have had a transformative impact; and
 - iii. why our University, in particular, should confer an honorary degree on that nominee, including whether the nominee has a past, current, or potential connection to the values, teaching, research, or community service priorities of the University.
- b. Through the selection of honorary degree candidates, the Committee shall seek to recognize:
 - i. individuals with diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour;
 - ii. individuals with a diversity of breadth of impact (provincial, national, and international); and
 - iii. both established and emerging leaders.
- c. Committee members shall review the nomination form and other information available to the Committee. The Committee may request that additional information be provided to it respecting the nomination before making its decision. The Committee shall consider both the character and the record of achievement of the nominee. Committee members shall seek to determine whether a nominee has displayed a consistent, ongoing commitment to integrity and ethics which extends throughout the nominee's life.
- d. Committee members may wish to consider the important societal and political issues of the day as a backdrop to Committee deliberations in selecting candidates.
- e. In the event that the Committee determines that the conferring of an honorary degree on a particular nominee may give rise to public controversy, the Committee shall use its best judgment to determine whether the risk of such controversy is or is not a legitimate basis for deciding not to confer an honorary degree on such nominee. In so doing, the Committee shall have regard to the nature and extent of such perceived controversy, in the context of an institution that values intellectual integrity, freedom of inquiry and expression, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. For clarity, the Committee

may decide to approve a nominee for an honorary degree notwithstanding the risk that such conferral may give rise to public controversy.

- f. Committee members must act fairly and objectively in selecting candidates for honorary degrees. Committee members must disclose to the Committee any relationship they may have with a nominee before consideration by the Committee of that person's nomination. If a Committee member determines that such Committee member's relationship with a nominee is such that the Committee member cannot act fairly and objectively in considering that person's nomination, or if the Committee determines that the nature of the relationship is such that there is a reasonable perception that the Committee member cannot act fairly and objectively, that Committee member shall be recused from the discussion of that nomination and the vote on that nomination.
- g. In reading the nominations before the Committee meets, members should attempt some tentative evaluation of the nominations but should refrain from making a final decision until all members of the Committee present at the meeting have had an opportunity to express their opinions.
- h. Current members of the Board of Governors, the Senate, the academic staff and the non-academic staff of the University of Alberta will not normally be considered for an honorary degree. However:
 - i. An honorary degree is usually offered to the President of the University after retirement from that position, even if that person remains a member of the academic staff of the University of Alberta.
 - ii. An honorary degree may be offered to a current member of the Board of Governors, the Senate, the academic staff, or the non-academic staff of the University of Alberta in extraordinary circumstances, where the Committee determines that the person is deserving of an honorary degree and that it would be appropriate not to wait until that person is no longer affiliated with the University of Alberta before conferring that honorary degree.

Extraordinary circumstances might include, for example (and without limitation):

- 1. the receipt by the individual of a prestigious national or international award, following which the individual may be invited to receive honorary degrees from other universities; or
- 2. a concern that the individual may otherwise be unable to accept the conferral of an honorary degree by reason of advancing age, ill health, or other reasons.

In the event of a Nobel Prize announcement for a current member of the academic staff of the University of Alberta, the Chancellor, President, and Provost will consult to discuss the award of an honorary degree to such person and will also seek advice from the relevant dean or deans, if practicable. If the three are unanimous in favour of the offer of an honorary degree, that person will be deemed to be approved as a candidate for an honorary degree. If the three are not unanimous then a condensed nomination including the name and CV or biography will be forwarded to the Committee with a request for an electronic vote

within 24 hours.

- i. Current holders of elected office in Canada will not be considered for an honorary degree.
- j. An honorary degree is usually offered to the incumbent Lieutenant Governor at a point early in the Lieutenant Governor's term of office. An honorary degree is usually offered to the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Chancellor after retirement from their respective positions with the University of Alberta.
- k. The three degrees that may be offered are:
 - i. Doctor of Laws (LLD) for outstanding leadership and service to society;
 - ii. Doctor of Letters (DLitt) for outstanding scholarly contributions in the arts; and
 - iii. Doctor of Science (DSc) for outstanding scholarly contributions in the sciences.

6. Procedures for Selection of Honorary Degree Candidates for Convocations at which a Special Faculty Event is Celebrated

- a. From time to time, Faculties at the University may submit nominations in conjunction with Faculty special celebrations or important events (such as 100th anniversaries).
- b. These Faculty-specific honorary degree candidates usually receive their degrees as part of regular Convocation proceedings.
- c. Nominations from a Faculty for a special celebration should come to the Committee only after ratification by the applicable Dean.
- d. Because the decision as to whether a nomination will be approved is at the discretion of the Committee and because candidate calendars are often very busy, a Faculty is encouraged to submit at least two nominations for a Faculty-specific honorary degree. A nominee who is not selected for a Faculty-specific honorary degree may be considered by the Committee for an honorary degree that is not Faculty-specific.

7. Principles Governing the Conferral of Honorary Degrees

- a. The Senate Director or Senate Portfolio Initiatives Coordinator shall prepare a list of candidates for honorary degrees selected by the Committee (the "Active Approved List").
- b. The Chancellor shall advise the Deans, Vice-Presidents, and Vice-Provosts of the University of the name of each person added to the Active Approved List before making an offer to such person. Confidential advice from senior leadership respecting the conduct of or controversy associated with any candidate may be taken into account by the Chancellor in making adjustments deemed appropriate to the timing of an offer to confer an honorary degree. The Chancellor shall advise the Committee of any such adjustments.

- c. The Active Approved List shall be confidential to members of the Committee and members of senior leadership referred to in Section 7(b).
- d. Before making an offer to confer an honorary degree on an individual, the Chancellor may refer a decision to approve a candidate for an honorary degree back to the Committee for reconsideration, based on new information received subsequent to the Committee selection respecting the conduct of or controversy associated with such candidate.
- e. The Chancellor, in consultation with the President and Vice Chancellor, shall select from the Active Approved List the candidate who will be invited to receive an honorary degree at a particular ceremony each convocation cycle. If the Chancellor determines that it is advisable to update the vetting of a candidate before extending an invitation, the Chancellor may request that the Senate Director arrange for such updated vetting following the process outlined in Section 4(f).
- f. For each Convocation cycle, reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure reasonable diversity among the persons receiving honorary degrees.
[RECOMMENDATION 4]
- g. Normally one honorary degree will be conferred at each Convocation ceremony. The Chancellor and the Senate Director shall work with senior leadership to develop a list of alternative Convocation speakers to be available in the event that the depth of the Active Approved List or scheduling constraints do not allow one honorary degree to be conferred at each Convocation ceremony.
[RECOMMENDATION 5, BP 1; PROCESS 9]
- h. Honorary degrees shall not be conferred posthumously or in absentia. Since University of Alberta Honorary Degrees only apply to the lifetime of the Recipient, they cannot be conferred posthumously.
- i. In special circumstances, an honorary degree may be conferred by the Chancellor at a ceremony outside of a Convocation or at a location outside the University.
- j. If a candidate is unable to accept an invitation to receive an honorary degree at a given Convocation, then that candidate, at the discretion of the Chancellor, may be invited to receive a degree at a Convocation within three years of the date of invitation or at a special ceremony in accordance with Section 7(i). If a candidate is unable to accept an honorary degree within three years after an invitation is first given, that candidate's name shall be removed from the Active Approved List and kept on file as a matter of record. That time frame may be extended at the discretion of the Chancellor for any candidate. Also at the discretion of the Chancellor, a name removed from the Active Approved List may be moved back to the Active Approved List to be considered for future potential scheduling.
- k. Unless specifically recommended by the Committee, presenters (those who present honorary degree candidates to Convocation) shall be named by the Senate Director in

consultation with and contingent upon the approval of the Chancellor and the President and Vice Chancellor.

8. Withdrawal of Offers and Revocation of Conferrals

- a. The Chancellor may withdraw an offer to confer an honorary degree or may revoke the conferral of an honorary degree, but only in accordance with the provisions of this Section 8.
- b. Any Committee member may propose at a meeting of the Committee the withdrawal of an offer or the revocation of an honorary degree on the basis that there has been a substantive change in the public record respecting the conduct of the candidate or the honorary degree recipient, as the case may be, that the member believes may constitute Cause as defined in Section 8(g), below. In circumstances where there is a need to deal with such an issue immediately (for example, where withdrawal of an offer is at issue and conferral has been scheduled for a Convocation ceremony in the near future), the Committee member may request a special and expedited meeting of the Committee for this purpose.
- c. The Committee, by majority vote of members present and voting, may direct the Senate Director to give notice to the candidate or recipient in accordance with this Section 8(c). The notice shall:
 - i. advise the person, on the basis of the allegations of fact set out in the notice, that withdrawal of the offer or revocation of the person's degree, as the case may be, is under consideration;
 - ii. advise the person that, within the time prescribed in the notice, the person may:
 - A. decline the offer or return the degree, as the case may be; or
 - B. make written representations respecting the matter under consideration or any allegation of fact set out in the notice;
 - iii. advise the person that the withdrawal or termination process will continue, even if the person omits to reply within the prescribed time; and
 - iv. be sent:
 - A. by courier to the last known address of the person;
 - B. by registered mail to the last known address of the person; or
 - C. by email to the last known email address of the person.

If the Committee directs that notice be given to a candidate, an honorary degree shall not be conferred on that candidate until the Committee has completed its deliberations respecting withdrawal of the offer. If a date for conferral has already been scheduled, that date shall be postponed until the Committee has completed its deliberations respecting withdrawal of the offer.

In the case of honorary degree recipients who have passed away, a revocation is not possible because honorary degrees apply only to the lifetime of the recipient. Instead, the University and Senate may release a special statement concerning an honorary

degree. The individual's name will simply remain as part of the historical record of U of A Honorary Degree recipients.

- d. If the person chooses to decline the offer or return the degree, as the case may be, the person shall notify the Senate Director in writing of that fact within the time prescribed in the notice.
- e. If the person does not decline the offer or return the degree within the prescribed time, the Senate Director shall engage an appropriate individual to undertake a confidential inquiry into the conduct of the person. Such appropriate individual may include, without limitation, internal or external counsel to the University, or a member of the University administration.
- f. A report on the results of the confidential inquiry and the representations of the person, if any, shall be provided to the Committee. The Committee shall then meet to consider the report and the representations, if any, and any other relevant information that may be available to the Committee. The Committee shall also seek advice from senior members of the University administration.
- g. At a subsequent meeting of the Committee allowing for a period of reflection, the Committee shall consider whether there has been a substantive change in the public record respecting the person since the time that person was approved by the Committee (or a former Committee) in respect of one or more of the following ("Cause"):
 - i. conviction for an indictable offence;
 - ii. removal for misconduct from the professional association to which that person belongs;
 - iii. failure of intellectual integrity or unethical conduct in research, teaching, learning, or service, as determined by the Committee;
 - iv. securing of an honorary degree or nomination by fraud, deception or any other inappropriate means, as determined by the Committee; or
 - v. conduct that reflects a significant departure from the values of the University, as determined by the Committee.
- h. If the person is subject to ongoing external processes respecting such conduct (such as a criminal trial or professional review), any action by the Committee may be suspended until the external process has been finally concluded.
- i. If the Committee, by two-thirds majority present and voting, determines that Cause exists, it may do one of the following:
 - i. take no further action;
 - ii. recommend to the Senate the withdrawal of an offer of an honorary degree that has not yet been conferred;
 - iii. recommend to the Senate the revocation of an honorary degree that has been conferred;
 - iv. recommend to the Senate that a public statement be made respecting the conduct of the person.

- j. If the Committee makes a recommendation to the Senate in accordance with Section 8(i), that recommendation shall be considered and determined by a majority vote of the Senate at a closed session of a Senate plenary meeting. The decision of the Senate on that recommendation is final and not subject to review or appeal.
- k. If the Senate accepts the recommendation made by the Committee, it may request that the Chancellor implement that recommendation.

Approved June 1992 / Revised June 1995 / Revised June 1996 / Revised May 2017 / Revised May 2019

REFERENCE - EXCERPT from the February 2019 AD HOC REPORT

Recommendations

The Ad Hoc Committee on Honorary Degrees, having completed a review of the processes for the nomination, selection, and conferral of honorary degrees at the University of Alberta, proposes the following eight recommendations to the Senate for consideration and action. The committee recommends that the Senate:

1. Clearly articulate the reasons for conferring honorary degrees and ensure that these reasons are communicated to all university stakeholders.
2. Ensure that the shared values of the University of Alberta continue to guide the nomination, selection, and conferral of honorary degrees.
3. Consider the past, current, or potential connections between the nominee and the values, teaching, research, or community service priorities of the university, and articulate the reasons why the University of Alberta, in particular, should confer an honorary degree on an individual.
4. Seek to reflect the comprehensive nature of the university's commitment to serve the public good by honouring a wide range of extraordinary individual accomplishments including:

- Individuals who represent diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour;
 - Individuals whose achievements have made an impact at the provincial, national, and/or international level;
 - Individuals who are emerging as leaders at the forefront of their fields and whose accomplishments have not yet received wide recognition; and
 - Individuals who have already been acknowledged for extraordinary lifetime accomplishments.
5. Maintain the following current standards and processes for the function of the Honorary Degree Selection Committee (“Selection Committee”):
- The Chancellor and Senate should seek to confer up to one honorary degree per convocation ceremony, so long as the depth of the selection pool and scheduling constraints allow;
 - The balanced composition of the Selection Committee should be maintained;
 - The composition of the Selection Committee, but not the names of individual members, should be made public;
 - The outcomes of the selection process should remain confidential; the only indication of the outcome of a nomination should be the naming of a recipient; and
 - The Selection Committee should continue to make final decisions regarding the selection of honorary degree recipients.
6. Develop additional processes to ensure that all nominations for honorary degrees are vetted for both nominee conduct and potential areas of controversy, informed by a comprehensive review of publicly available information sources. Information from the vetting process should be shared with all members of the Selection Committee.
7. Expand the honorary degree conferral scheduling process to include formal confidential consultation with the President and Vice-Chancellor and senior leadership of the university.
8. Develop new processes for determining whether to take action in the event of a substantive change in the public record of a nominee or an honorary degree holder, and define a suite of possible responses.

Next Steps

The next steps for the Senate will be to review these recommendations and determine whether or not they should be adopted. If accepted, enacting these recommendations will require changes to the *University of Alberta Senate Honorary Degree Principles, Policies and Procedures*; the development of new risk management processes; and changes to the communication strategies of the Senate and the Office of the Chancellor and Senate.

REFERENCE - EXCERPT from the February 2019 AD HOC REPORT

APPENDIX A

Process changes to support the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee

The Senate and the Office of the Chancellor may wish to pursue the following process-related changes which, if made, could expand the impact of the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations, and the long-term value of honorary degrees to the university and those it honours. These topics were raised in the Ad Hoc Committee deliberations but proposals for implementation were determined to be outside the scope of the committee, and were therefore deferred for future Senate consideration.

1. Rewrite section 2.1 of the *University of Alberta Senate Honorary Degree Principles, Policies, and Procedures* to emphasize the following desired criteria for conferring honorary degrees:
 - o Honouring individuals of upstanding character whose contributions are extraordinary and inspirational;
 - o Celebrating individuals who have had a transformative impact and who represent diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour;
 - o Recognizing individuals with a diversity of breadth of impact (provincial, national and international), including both established and emerging leaders; and
 - o Deepening relationships with individuals with a past, current, or future connection to the values, teaching, research, or community service priorities of the university.

The goal of this change would be to more clearly focus the considerations of the selection committee on the proposed principles for the nomination, selection, and conferral of honorary degrees.

2. Work with the university community to develop mechanisms to support the ongoing connection of honorary degree recipients to the teaching, research, or community service priorities of the university. This work should include models for securing an up-front commitment by nominators, faculties, and/or the university to pursuing a relationship with each recipient beyond the convocation ceremony.
3. Redesign the honorary degree nomination process to ask nominators to:
 - o Describe the connection between the nominee and the university and its values, and/or propose how the University of Alberta might support an ongoing connection for the nominee to the teaching, research, or community service priorities of the university [Supports future connection to the university, see #2, above];
 - o Disclose on the nomination form if they are aware of any information about the nominee which might be a source of controversy [Supports an early consideration of reputational risk]; and
 - o Include an indication as to whether the nominee is an engaging, inspiring speaker and/or has a strong personal presence (if known). [Emphasizes that honorary degree recipients serve as a source of inspiration to members of the university community, and graduands in particular].

4. Make information about the composition of the Selection Committee readily and broadly available, so as to ensure interested parties are able to understand the depth and breadth of representation within the committee membership.

This should not include the publication of the names of committee members. By using this approach, *ex officio* members of the committee, who are members by virtue of their employed, appointed, or elected roles at the university, may be identified from their position titles. At the same time, the names of community volunteers would remain confidential, reducing their potential exposure to lobbying before a decision and negative feedback after a decision.

5. Consider additional opportunities to include principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the composition, training, and deliberations of the Selection Committee.
6. Consult with Indigenous colleagues to determine how to include the perspectives of the University of Alberta Indigenous community in the deliberations of the Selection Committee.
7. Make arrangements to ensure that the Selection Committee has access to additional non-voting advice and support from groups within the university, such as Research, University Relations, Advancement, and the Office of the Registrar to support informed decision-making. This may include a change to the committee Terms of Reference and/or facilitating appropriate access to university technical resources under terms of strict confidentiality.
8. Develop new mechanisms to increase the number of high-quality honorary degree nominations received each year. Suggested approaches may include, but are not limited to:
 - o Produce and distribute a document indicating the characteristics that the Selection Committee often sees in successful nominations as a source of guidance for nominators.
 - o Promote the opportunity to submit honorary degree nominations in publications that are shared with the university community, eg. New Trail, Folio, The Quad, and Faculty alumni magazines. In order to make the opportunity more meaningful, include stories about previous honorees.
 - o Encourage the creation of dedicated committees within faculties whose mandate is to develop honorary degree nominations. Faculties may wish to provide support to the committees for building nomination packages.
 - o Invite Senators and members of the Alumni Association to nominate extraordinary members of their communities.
9. Work with the university community to develop a pool of alternative convocation speakers in the event that it is not possible to schedule one honorary degree conferral per ceremony. For example, the university may consider inviting teaching/research award winners or past honorary degree recipients to speak at a convocation ceremony where no honorary degree is to be awarded. This would provide an opportunity to showcase extraordinary faculty and community members to wider university and public audiences.