

POLICY ON THE AWARDING OF HONORARY DEGREES

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Approving Authority: Board of Governors

Supersedes/Amends: December 16, 2021

Policy Number: BD-15

PREAMBLE

Concordia University (the “University”) confers honorary degrees as a way of honoring the exemplary contributions and accomplishments of distinguished individuals to a specific field or to society in general. Honorary degrees are awarded to inspire and celebrate excellence and shall reflect positively on the public reputation of the recipients as well as the University.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to honorary degrees conferred by the University.

PURPOSE

This Policy presents the selection and eligibility criteria, the types of degrees awarded and the nomination process.

POLICY

Selection Criteria

1. A nominee must have sufficient stature and recognition to ensure that the awarding of an honorary degree brings credit to the University and to the academic community as a whole, upholds the values that lead to the advancement of learning and to the pursuit of greater knowledge and inspires students.
2. Candidates must meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a) *Eminence in a field of activity or profession*
Exceptional record of distinction and achievement in an academic field, in the creative or performing arts, or in a profession or discipline.
 - b) *Outstanding public or community service*
Distinguished service to the community, locally, nationally, or internationally, or exceptional accomplishments having contributed to Canadian culture and society.

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c) Significant connection or benefaction to the University

Extraordinary contribution to the development of the University or magnanimous contribution to the University, creatively, materially or financially.

Eligibility and Exclusions

3. Nominations that reflect the diversity of the University community and Canadian society are encouraged.
4. For reasons of propriety, honorary degrees are not conferred to:
 - a) current members of the Board of Governors (the “Board”) or their family members;
 - b) current members of the Board of Directors or employees of the Concordia University Foundation, eConcordia or KnowledgeOne; or
 - c) current employees or students of the University.
5. Prudence shall also be shown in recommending honorary degrees to elected officials and holders of public office as well as any member of a university or faculty advisory committee.

Types of Degrees Conferred

6. The Honorary Degree Committee of the Board (“HDC”) makes a recommendation on the type of honorary degree to confer. The following honorary degrees are most commonly conferred, although other degrees may be considered as appropriate:
 - a) *LLD (Doctor of Laws)*
Awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the University or the community at large. This generic honorary degree is the most frequently awarded.
 - b) *DSc (Doctor of Science)*
Awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in science or engineering.

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c) *DLitt (Doctor of Letters)*

Awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in the humanities or literature.

d) *DFA (Doctor of Fine Arts)*

Awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in visual or performing arts.

Nomination

7. The Secretary of the HDC issues a call for nominations each year. Normally, such calls occur in the Spring and the Fall. Nominations may be submitted by relevant Faculty Council or by any member of the University community or by another person who has a substantial and enduring connection to the University. A nominator must not inform a nominee at any stage of the process that they have been nominated or approved to receive an honorary degree. A nominator shall not normally be a family member of a nominee.
8. Each nominator must complete and sign a confidential [*Honorary Degree Nomination Form*](#) containing a statement explaining why the University should award a degree to the nominee based on the criteria set out above. Each nomination must be accompanied by the nominee's résumé and must be forwarded to the Secretary of the HDC. The Secretary of the HDC acknowledges receipt of all nominations.
9. Nominations are received by the Secretary of the HDC who consults with the President and Vice-Chancellor (the "President"), when applicable, to decide whether or not the nomination should be returned to the nominator for further information, or be forwarded as is to the HDC for consideration.
10. All complete nominations are reviewed by the HDC, which evaluates the nominations in accordance with the criteria set out in this Policy. A slate of honorary degree recipients is approved by the Board upon recommendation of Senate.
11. Once approved by the Board, nominations are added to a pool of approved candidates, which is managed and reviewed annually by the Office of the President.

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Confidentiality

12. All nominations must be held in the strictest confidence by the nominator or nominating body, by members of the HDC and by members of Senate and the Board.

Selection of Candidates for Convocation Ceremonies

13. Save in exceptional circumstances, there shall be no more than one honorary degree awarded at each convocation ceremony. While a candidate is invited to attend a specific convocation ceremony, the honorary degree is bestowed by the University and not by the relevant faculty.
14. The pool of approved candidates is forwarded to the President by the Secretary of the HDC. The President may confer in confidence with the Dean of each faculty, in a timely manner, in order to determine who is awarded the honorary degree at each of their respective convocation ceremonies. Candidates chosen are contacted directly by the President and invited to receive an honorary degree.
15. Save in exceptional circumstances, candidates must be present at the convocation ceremony to receive an honorary degree. Should a candidate who has accepted an invitation to receive an honorary degree be unable to attend a convocation ceremony, the degree may be awarded at another occasion, such as a major academic conference or major public event, as deemed appropriate by the President. A candidate who declines an invitation, or who cancels an invitation twice without reasonable cause, is removed from the pool of candidates and is not considered eligible for further nomination.
16. Where a candidate for an honorary degree approved for inclusion in the pool of candidates subsequently dies, the name is removed from the pool. Should a candidate who has accepted an invitation to receive an honorary degree die before the convocation at which it is to be awarded, the degree is not normally awarded posthumously, although the President, in consultation with the relevant Dean, is at liberty to consider making an exception to this rule.
17. Once the chosen candidates have accepted, their names and the ceremonies at which their degree is awarded is confirmed to the [Office of the Registrar](#) on a confidential basis and

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shall remain confidential until such time as a public announcement has been made by [University Communications Services](#) with respect to the convocation ceremonies.

Revocation

18. In rare and exceptional circumstances, if the behavior of a recipient or maintaining their honorary degree may harm or undermine the University's reputation, or may be found to be inconsistent with the mission and values of the University, the honorary degree may be revoked or removed in accordance with the *Policy on Revocation of Awards and Other Types of Recognition* ([SG-15](#)).

Policy Responsibility and Review

19. The overall responsibility for implementing and recommending amendments to this Policy shall rest with the Secretary-General.

Approved by the Board of Governors on March 23, 2009, and amended on November 17, 2011, November 16, 2012, April 26, 2013, June 11, 2015, December 16, 2021 and December 14, 2023.