

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

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**SESSION:**

Public   
Non-Public

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Decision   
Discussion/Direction

**TO:** Academic Council (AC)

**DATE:** January 23, 2024

**FROM:** Lauren Turner, University Secretary

**SUBJECT:** Honorary Degrees Committee Terms of Reference

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**BACKGROUND:**

It is a good governance practice to regularly review the key governance documents of the University. In March 2023, the Secretariat commenced a review of the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Procedure for Honorary Degrees (Procedure). Following a robust consultation (described below), the TOR is now before AC for recommendation to the Board of Governors for approval.

In accordance with the Policy Framework, the Procedure was approved by Governance and Nominations Committee at its January 16, 2024 meeting.

**MOTION:**

*That Academic Council recommend to the Board of Governors the approval of the revised Terms of Reference for the Honorary Degrees Committee.*

**CONSULTATION:**

Consultation on the Terms of Reference and Procedure took place as follows:

- ✓ GNC (consultation) – March 21, 2023
- ✓ AC (consultation) – March 28, 2023
- ✓ ALT (written consultation) – May 9, 2023
- ✓ Online Consultation (written consultation) – September 2023 (consultation noted on September AC agenda)
- ✓ GNC (procedure approval) – January 16, 2024
- AC (TOR endorsement to Board of Governors) – January 23, 2024
- Board of Governors (TOR approval) – February 22, 2024

Terms of Reference – summary of amendments:

- made explicit the mechanism by which faculty and student members are included in the Committee
- added revocation of honorary degrees to the Committee's mandate
- removed duplicate content found in the Procedure

For information: Procedures – summary of amendments:

- removal of content duplicated in the TOR
- removal of specific timelines to allow discretion to the Committee to meet at such times as best facilitate its work
- reference to multiple convocations instead of one to align with University practice
- revocation clause added on the recommendation of Academic Council
  - content derived from benchmarking across Canadian universities
- minor grammatical fixes

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**SUPPORTING MATERIALS:**

- For Recommendation to the Board of Governors:
  - Honorary Degrees Committee – Revised Terms of Reference
- For Information:
  - Honorary Degrees Procedure as approved by GNC on January 16, 2024

## **Terms of Reference – Honorary Degrees Committee**

### **1. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Honorary Degrees Committee is the body responsible for recommending honorary degree recipients to the President and Vice-Chancellor. The Committee's responsibilities include:

- reviewing honorary degree submissions;
- considering submissions against the criteria set out in the Honorary Degrees Procedures;
- recommending to the President and Vice-Chancellor a list of names of potential honorary degree recipients and the type of degree appropriate; and
- recommending to the President and Vice-Chancellor the convocation at which the degree should be conferred and the convocation speaker.

In rare instances, the Committee will review requests to revoke an honorary degree and will make a recommendation on such requests to the President and Vice-Chancellor.

### **2. MEETINGS**

The Honorary Degrees Committee will meet at least once per year at the call of the Chair. The meeting(s) will be scheduled at such time as best supports the deliberative work of the Committee.

### **3. MEMBERSHIP**

- The President and Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
- The Chancellor
- The Provost and Vice-President Academic
- The Vice-President, Advancement
- Three elected faculty members
- One elected student representative
- The Secretary, Academic Council (ex-officio, non-voting)

### **4. QUORUM**

Quorum requires that a majority of the Committee members entitled to vote be present.



Classification	1599.04
Parent Policy	N/A
Framework Category	Academic
Approving Authority	Academic Council
Policy Owner	President
Approval Date	TBD
Review Date	To be assigned
Last Updated	Editorial Amendments, February 18, 2020
Supersedes	N/A

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## HONORARY DEGREES

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### 1.0 CRITERIA

Honorary degrees are to recognize persons who have:

- made an outstanding intellectual and/or scholarly contribution in their chosen field of academic eminence; or
- provided outstanding service and/or contributions to greater society through non-academic achievements and/or public service; or
- made major contributions in areas relevant to the mission of the University and/or to Durham Region/Northumberland County.

### 2.0 DEGREES CONFERRED

Academic Council may award either of the following honorary degrees:

#### 2.1 Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* (LLD)

Awarded for outstanding achievement in the social sciences in the broadest sense, or significant community contributions at the local, national, or international levels.

#### 2.2 Doctor of Science, *honoris causa* (DSc)

Awarded for outstanding achievements in the pure and applied sciences and engineering, usually through research.

### 3.0 REVOCATION

In rare and exceptional circumstances, if the behaviour of an honoree may harm or undermine the University's reputation or may be found to be inconsistent with the mission, vision and values of the University, an honorary degree may be revoked. Upon receipt of reasons in writing, the Honorary Degrees Committee may consider a request to revoke an honorary degree. In so doing, the Committee may receive and review information and/or documentation or consult with any person deemed appropriate. The Committee's recommendation with respect to revocation shall be made to the President and Vice-Chancellor.

### 4.0 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

The Honorary Degrees Committee is charged with reviewing all nominations and recommending to the President a list of names of potential degree recipients, the type of degree in each case,

the appropriate convocation at which the degree should be granted, and the choice of convocation speaker. The Committee shall operate in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

## **5.0 GUIDELINES**

- 5.1** Faculty and staff at the University are not eligible for nomination until at least three years after retirement.
- 5.2** A nominee may not be an active Canadian politician.
- 5.3** The nominee must be living (if the candidate was to pass away after accepting the nomination, but prior to its award, the degree would be awarded posthumously).
- 5.4** Nominations that reflect the diversity of Canadian society are encouraged.
- 5.5** The University shall be under no obligation to award an honorary doctorate in any year.
- 5.6** Normally not more than one honorary degree will be awarded at each distinct convocation ceremony, although a second single degree may be awarded in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.7** The Committee shall direct particular focus to individuals who have not received honorary degrees from other institutions, but who are clearly meritorious candidates.

## **6.0 SELECTION PROCESS**

- 6.1** The Committee on Honorary Degrees shall call for nominations for honorary degrees. The call shall set out the deadline for nominations.
- 6.2** Nominations may be received from members of the university community and the community at large.
- 6.3** Nominations should include appropriate background information, such as basic personal information, a summary of the nominee's achievements and other appropriate supporting documentation.
- 6.4** The Committee shall meet to develop a list of worthy candidates to serve for each of the convocation ceremonies of the coming year.
- 6.5** Recommendations of the Committee on Honorary Degrees will be forwarded to the President for their consideration. Names of candidates endorsed by the Committee will be kept on a reserve list for three years.
- 6.6** Recipients will be selected by the President from among the approved candidates on the reserve list. Candidates chosen shall be contacted directly by the President.
- 6.7** The outcome of the Committee's deliberations shall not be released out of respect for the nominee and to ensure the integrity of the process.
- 6.8** If the nominee declines the invitation or is unable to be present at the respective convocation, the President may approach the next nominee on the approved list.
- 6.9** In the event that an individual declines acceptance of an honorary degree that has been approved by the Committee, or where the conferring of an approved degree has not been scheduled within three years of approval by the committee, the Honorary Degree will be deemed to be cancelled.
- 6.10** Confidentiality at all points in the nominating process is critical. No discussion concerning nominees shall take place outside of those directly involved in the evaluation process or the

formal evaluation meetings. Discussion and voting will be in executive session by all evaluating groups.

**6.11** Whenever possible, names of Honorary Degree recipients should be reported to Academic Council before being announced to the media.

**6.12** Due to the confidential nature of the proceedings, nominators will be contacted after nomination consideration only if the candidate is selected to receive an honorary degree.

## **7.0 CONVOCATION PROCEEDINGS**

**7.1** The President will identify someone to present each nominee at convocation. This will normally be a University faculty member and frequently the individual who nominated the recipient.

**7.2** Each honoree, and especially those from out-of-town, will be hosted by a University faculty or staff member, usually the individual performing introductions at convocation. The host will be responsible for ensuring that the honoree(s) are met at airports, escorted to and from campus events and generally made to feel welcome and appreciated.

**7.3** Nominees will normally address convocation but, in some cases, may not be asked to do so.

**7.4** Speeches should be brief (not to exceed ten minutes) and introductions should be confined to three minutes. All speeches should be directed to the graduating class.

**7.5** The University will normally host either a luncheon or a dinner for honorees, their immediate families, and special friends.