

Title: Graduation and Degree Conferral

Category: Academic Affairs

Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose

Students must satisfy all program, college and University requirements to be eligible for graduation. The Office of the University Registrar, in coordination with academic units, conducts degree audits to verify completion of all academic and administrative requirements prior to degree conferral. Participation in commencement does not guarantee degree conferral. Diplomas are issued only after verification of all requirements at the end of a fall, spring or summer term.

Scope

This policy applies to all degree and certificate programs. University commencement convocations are held only in December and May of each academic year. (See also: Faculty Recommendations of Graduation Candidates to the Board of Trustees.)

Degrees

Application for Degrees

Students must apply for graduation by the published deadline using the University's designated application process. The Office of the University Registrar will determine appropriate deadlines for applications for degrees. Upon approval of the Academic Calendar, the Office of the University Registrar will publicize the deadlines. Graduate and professional students may be required to complete additional steps in their respective programs.

Posthumous Award of Earned Degrees

A deceased student who has been determined by the unit faculty, dean and Office of the University Registrar to have satisfied the established degree requirements will be recommended to the Board of Trustees for award of the degree. The diploma will denote the degree was awarded posthumously. Note: this is different from a deceased student who has not satisfied degree requirements. For more guidance on that circumstance, please refer to the In Memoriam Degree Policy.

Late Addition to Degree List

A student who is not included on the official degree list by the published deadline may be considered for a late addition under one of the following circumstances.

Administrative Error

A late addition to the degree list may be approved when the student's omission resulted solely from a documented administrative error by the University or another third party acting on behalf of the University. Administrative errors may include, but are not limited to, processing errors, system failures or other documented actions or omissions that prevented an otherwise eligible student from being included on the degree list.

Requests based on administrative error shall be submitted by the appropriate dean's office to the Office of the Provost and must include documentation demonstrating:

- The nature of the administrative error;
- That the student satisfied all degree requirements and applicable deadlines; and

- That the error was the direct cause of the student's omission from the degree list.

The Office of the Provost may approve a late addition upon verification of the administrative error.

Extraordinary Hardship

In cases where the student's omission from the degree list was not the result of an administrative error, the student may petition the Office of the Provost for an exception based on extraordinary hardship.

A hardship petition must be submitted as a complete packet through the respective dean's office with the endorsement of the academic program and approval of the dean. Submission of a complete petition does not guarantee approval. The petition must be received by the Office of the Provost no later than four (4) business days before the scheduled action of the Board of Trustees on the applicable degree list.

The petition must include:

- A signed statement from the student describing the extraordinary hardship that would result from not being included on the degree list.
- Supporting documentation, including contact information, sufficient to verify the circumstances described by the student.
- A letter of support from the academic program director, co-signed by the dean, that includes the student's name, student identification number, degree program and degree to be awarded.
- A statement from the student explaining why the degree application was not submitted by the published deadline. Lack of awareness of the deadline does not constitute extraordinary hardship.

Graduation Honors: Conditions of Merit and Circumstance for Degree Honors

Undergraduate "University Honors": For all undergraduate University honors, students must attain the requisite GPA for at least 90 quality hours of work at the University of Kentucky.

- Students shall be graduated "Summa Cum Laude" who attain a GPA of 3.8 or higher.
- Students shall be graduated "Magna Cum Laude" who attain a GPA of less than 3.8 to 3.6.
- Students shall be graduated "Cum Laude" who attain a GPA of less than 3.6 to 3.4.
- Students with a minimum of 60 to 90 quality hours of work at the University shall receive the appropriate commencement honors if they attain a GPA of 0.2 greater than the criteria listed above. Under this rule, the cumulative GPA is used to test for qualification for commencement honors. The minimum number of credit hours that must be included in that GPA calculation (i.e., quality hours) is 90 credit hours. The transcript shall show these credentials as "University Honors."
 - Courses taken under Education Abroad and National Student Exchange programs (and for which students pay their tuition to the University of Kentucky) are considered as courses taken at UK for purposes of both the residency requirement and for graduates to be conferred commencement honors at the time of award of their degrees.
 - A student who has invoked the academic forgiveness rule during their University career shall be considered, for the purposes of commencement honors, as having attended the University only for those hours earned subsequent to readmission.
 - A student need not be enrolled full-time to fulfill the years of work necessary to receive commencement honors.
 - A student does not have to be a full-time student to be eligible to qualify for commencement honors.

Honors Related to Undergraduate Degrees and Professional Degrees and Professional Degrees

- **General Policies**

- The bachelor's degree with honors in a student's major (also known as "departmental honors") or a degree with honors from a professional college will be conferred upon a student whom the faculty of the student's department, or college in the case of a professional college, and the dean of the student's college recommend receive the degree with honors. A student may be required to complete additional work for the bachelor's or professional degree to receive a degree with honors.
- For bachelor's degrees, the transcript will show the honor(s) as being associated with the respective program major at the department level. For professional degrees, the transcript will show the honor(s) as being associated with the respective program at the college level.

- **Degree Honors in the J.D. Program (J. David Rosenberg College of Law):** The J. David Rosenberg College of Law awards honors as follows:

- Students with a GPA of 3.8 or higher will be graduated "Summa Cum Laude."
- Students with a GPA of 3.6 or higher will be graduated "Magna Cum Laude."
- Students with a GPA of 3.4 or higher will be graduated "Cum Laude."

Latin Honors will be awarded regardless of the number of graded credit hours (i.e., quality hours) earned by the student.

- **Degree Honors in the PharmD Program (College of Pharmacy):** The College of Pharmacy awards honors as follows:

- Students with a GPA of 3.8 or higher will be graduated "Summa Cum Laude."
- Students with a GPA of 3.6 or higher will be graduated "Magna Cum Laude."
- Students with a GPA of 3.4 or higher will be graduated "Cum Laude."

Latin honors will be awarded regardless of the number of graded credit hours (i.e., quality hours) earned by the student.

- **Degree Honors in the D.M.D. Program (College of Dentistry):** The College of Dentistry awards graduation honors "With High Distinction" or "With Distinction." Students are chosen according to their class rank when they apply for a May degree. The top 12% of the class receives "With High Distinction;" the next 8% of the class receives "With Distinction."

- **Lewis Honors College:** The Lewis Honors College awards a bachelor's degree with University Honors in a student's major or minor upon the successful completion of the Lewis Honors College curriculum, in conjunction with departmental approval of the student's thesis. College approval is required when the major or minor is not from a department but from a college.

Diplomas

The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for producing and distributing diplomas once all institutional approvals have been finalized.

Diplomas Issued to Graduated Students

Diplomas attesting to the award of degrees and honors are issued to students who have satisfied all degree requirements and whose degrees have been recommended by the faculty and approved by the Board of Trustees.

At the December and May Commencement, graduates may receive a ceremonial diploma cover with a replica diploma as part of the ceremony. The official diploma is issued by the Office of the University Registrar after the academic term concludes and all degree requirements have been verified. Official diplomas are mailed to graduates following degree conferral.

Diplomas shall display:

- The name of the University;
- The title of the degree awarded;
- The name of the major;
- The authority under which the degree is conferred; and
- Authorized institutional signatures.

Diplomas shall bear the signature of the President of the University and other academic authorities, including the dean of the college academically responsible for the degree and the University Registrar.

Each college dean shall certify to the Office of the University Registrar the names of graduates who have met the conditions for degree honors. The Office of the University Registrar shall verify eligibility for honors distinctions. Latin Honors shall be displayed on the diploma where applicable.

Upon recommendation of the President, the Board of Trustees may establish additional categories of academic honors pursuant to KRS 164.240.