

Title: University of Kentucky Honorary Degree Policy

Category: Academic Affairs

Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the criteria, procedures and governance structure for awarding honorary degrees at the University of Kentucky (UK). Honorary degrees recognize individuals who have achieved extraordinary accomplishments or contributed significantly to society, aligning with the mission and values of the University.

Scope

This policy applies to all honorary degree nominations and degrees conferred by the University of Kentucky. The process is overseen by the Office of the Provost with collaboration from key University leadership and a designated review council.

Governance and Review Council

The Honorary Degree Review Council shall consist of the following members:

- Provost (Chair) or delegate (ex officio, non-voting)
- Four (4) Faculty (voting)
- Two (2) Faculty Senate Representatives (voting)
- A representative from the Board of Trustees (BOT) (ex officio, non-voting)
- Vice President of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement (ex officio, non-voting)
- Vice President for University Relations (ex officio, non-voting)
- General Counsel (ex officio, non-voting)

Appointment of Council

Four (4) faculty members will be appointed by the Provost; additionally, four (4) Faculty Senators will be identified by the Faculty Senate and sent to the Office of the Provost, two (2) of these nominees from the Faculty Senate will be appointed by the Provost to serve. One appointed member of the BOT shall be selected by the chair of the BOT to serve as the Board Liaison (non-voting) to the council.

The six (6) council members appointed from the University faculty shall have staggered three-year appointments (the Faculty Senate appointees will remain in that role for the term of the appointment, even if their term on Faculty Senate has completed). The Board Liaison shall have

a one-year appointment and may be renewed at the discretion of the chair of the BOT. Ex officio members are standing members of the council.

Criteria for Honorary Degrees

Candidates for honorary degrees must demonstrate significant achievements in one or more of the following areas:

- Academic and scholarly contributions
- Public service and civic engagement
- Leadership in business, industry or government
- Artistic, cultural or humanitarian accomplishments
- Advancement of the mission and values of the University of Kentucky

Nomination Process

1. Nominations must include a comprehensive biography, a statement of accomplishments and a justification for why the candidate aligns with the University's criteria.
2. Nominations shall be submitted to the Office of the Provost by the start of the semester (as defined by the start of classes) the nominator would like them to be considered for the honorary degree.
3. Candidates will undergo initial vetting; this may include background checks, social media review and potential consultation with parties external to the University. Approved candidates after this review will be moved to the Honorary Degree Review Council for consideration.
4. The Honorary Degree Review Council will conduct a review under attorney-client privilege, facilitated by University Legal Counsel and approve candidates forward for an honorary degree based on a simple majority of voting members.

Approval Process

1. For the privacy of those nominated for consideration, the council shall review all nominations under attorney-client privilege to ensure confidentiality and legal compliance during the selection process; confidentiality agreements will also be signed by members of the council.
2. Following the council's review and determination, any approved candidates will be submitted to the University Registrar to be added to the list of candidates for conferral of degrees to be reviewed and voted on in the regular process.

3. If approved, candidates for honorary degrees will be notified in conjunction with their nominator.

Conferral of Honorary Degrees

Honorary degrees will typically be awarded during commencement ceremonies. The awardee will receive formal recognition, and their accomplishments will be highlighted through official University communications.

Restrictions and Limitations

- Current university employees and sitting trustees are not eligible for honorary degrees.
- Except on special occasions or in unusual circumstances, the number of honorary degrees awarded at any given ceremony shall be limited to four (4).

Title of Honorary Degrees

- Honorary Doctor of Arts: To recognize extraordinary accomplishments in the creative arts, fine arts, performing arts or related fields.
- Honorary Doctor of Laws: To recognize extraordinary accomplishments in law, politics, governance, diplomacy or related fields.
- Honorary Doctor of Science: To recognize extraordinary accomplishments in scientific fields.
- Honorary Doctor of Engineering: To recognize extraordinary accomplishments in engineering, design, technology or related fields.
- Honorary Doctor of Humanities: To recognize extraordinary accomplishments in the humanities.
- Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters: To recognize extraordinary contributions to philanthropy, human development, education or societal well-being.

Policy Review and Amendments

This policy shall be reviewed biennially by the Office of the Provost.