

Guidelines for the Committee for Honorary Degrees

A. Preamble

1. Focus on Excellence

The Committee's mandate is to recommend individuals who meet the criteria for the awarding of an honorary degree. The single most important criterion for selection for an honorary degree is a level of excellence or exceptionality that the recipient has shown in one or more fields. This principle should govern all deliberations of the Committee for Honorary Degrees (CHD), its Subcommittee for Nominations (SN), and (when it considers nominees for approval), the Governing Council.

2. Extraordinary Achievement

By awarding honorary degrees the University of Toronto seeks to recognize extraordinary achievement, in Canada or abroad, in community, national or international involvement, and to honour those individuals whose accomplishments are of such generally perceived excellence that they provide, through example, inspiration and leadership to the graduates of the University. Their esteem should be such that, by virtue of accepting an honorary degree, their presence will bring honour and distinction to the University of Toronto. The CHD defines as broad a range of categories for achievement as possible in obtaining and considering nominations. In determining the leaders and exemplars to honour, it will seek over time to achieve a balance across disciplines and backgrounds. The CHD also considers the association nominees may have with the University of Toronto or with higher education more broadly.

B. Nomination Process

1. Call for Nominations

In the spring of each year the President issues a call for nominations to the University community and more broadly. Normally, this will consist of a communication to Principals, Deans, Directors and Chairs, and to the heads of the major campus organizations. As well, notices are normally placed in the campus newspapers and on the University of Toronto website. The President and the Provost should actively solicit nominations from Principals and Deans, and encourage them to solicit nominations annually from faculty members and other members of the University community.

2. Nominations

Nominators should ensure that their nomination packages provide reasons for the nomination that are as complete as possible. They should cite the pre-eminence of the individual nominee in his/her respective field, and/or achievements and accomplishments of an outstanding nature. Nomination forms should state clearly that incomplete or sparse information will usually result in a recommendation not to grant a degree.

For two categories of nominees, the conferral of honorary degrees will not normally occur until a minimum of two years has elapsed following their retirement from active service in their field, and consequently, nominations should not be submitted until at least one year has elapsed. First are nominees who are currently active in political life, though exceptions may be considered for Governors-General and Lieutenant-Governors, as well as for judges and others whose appointments place them outside active partisan politics. The second category includes nominees who are serving members of the Governing Council or of the University staff, upon whom honorary degrees should not be conferred until a minimum of two years following their retirement or departure from the University. In exceptional circumstances, the CHD may choose to waive these requirements in order to allow the University to honour truly meritorious individuals.

3. Sub-committee for Nominations

The Sub-committee for Nominations of the Committee for Honorary Degrees serves important nominating, vetting and due diligence functions for the Committee, and has a mandate to enable and facilitate the preparation of consistently well-developed, comprehensively documented nominations for consideration by the CHD. Overall, the SN's function is to ensure that the CHD has full information – in a reasonably standard format – on the broadest and deepest possible pool of potential honorary degree candidates.

Chaired by the President, the Sub-committee comprises four members from the CHD: one member each from the external community (LGIC or other external) and one from the internal constituencies (teaching staff, administrative staff and students), the Chair of the Academic Board and the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Governing Council. Appointments are made by the Chair of the Governing Council in consultation with the President and the Chair of the Academic Board.

(a) Ensuring a Broad and Deep Pool of Nominations

Following the call for nominations, the SN is asked to:

- solicit and generate nominations for consideration by the CHD;
- review nominations to ensure they are complete and ready to be reviewed by the CHD;
- undertake research on nominees to provide, where necessary, additional factual information for consideration by the full Committee;
- investigate the relative merits of the candidates in each category vis-à-vis each other and vis-à-vis other prominent individuals in the field who may not have been nominated; and
- note any special anniversaries or special categories that should be recognized.

The SN also reviews annually the list of individuals for whom a degree has been approved but not yet conferred. It is anticipated that conferral of an honorary degree would be scheduled at the convenience of the honoree. Normally, where reasonable efforts have been made to meet that convenience, and where more than two years have elapsed since the initial offer, the offer shall

lapse. In unusual circumstances, the CHD may be asked by the President to approve extension of this deadline. An updated list of outstanding offers will be presented annually to the CHD following its review by the Sub-committee for Nominations.

The Committee for Honorary Degrees has endeavoured to ensure that, over time, honorary degrees recommended and awarded are balanced across disciplines and reflect the University's commitment to diversity. In supporting the Committee's work, the SN will keep in mind the need for balance over the longer-term and, as appropriate, solicit and generate nominations in under-represented areas or disciplines, or categories in which nominations have not been received for some time. Where multiple nominations are received from a particular discipline or University division in a single year, the SN should make recommendations concerning the most appropriate timing for their consideration over a series of years.

(b) *Presentation of Nominations to the Full Committee*

Early in the fall, the SN presents to the full Committee the complete list of nominations received and generated. During this period, the SN also acts as a steering committee and sets the agenda for the full CHD. It has the responsibility to present to the Committee its preliminary assessments of the pool of nominations and the rationale for those assessments. For example, the SN would note whether or not individual nominations exhibit potential relative to the standards set by the Committee, and indicate those for which more information is required before any further evaluation can be carried out. It would also flag those individuals who, in its view, significantly exceed the standards of excellence espoused by the Committee. Though tasked to make preliminary assessments of candidates, the SN functions primarily as a 'funnel' rather than a 'filter' for nominations.

The timing of this evaluation and decision-making phase of the process is intended to enable the Committee to complete its work in sufficient time for Governing Council to consider the Committee's recommendations at its meeting in December.

C. Assessment of Nominations – Role of the Full Committee

1. General Categories

The CHD works to establish four general classifications of the total pool of potential candidates. Its goal is to determine which individuals should be assigned to a long list, which should be placed on a shortlist, those to be held for future consideration and those to be eliminated from consideration. That is, the CHD's working classifications are: *long list*, *shortlist*, *hold (defer or carry over)* and *drop*.

Normally, with the benefit of the SN's preparation, initial review and due diligence, the CHD endeavours to create its final slate over the course of two meetings.

Nominations generated by the full CHD in the course of its deliberations will be referred to the Sub-committee for development and due diligence, following its normal procedures as outlined in section B(3) above.

2. Long List

The long list is drafted for the CHD's consideration through the SN's initial review of the pool of nominations. It comprises those individuals who, on first assessment, appear to meet the basic threshold for consideration. In contrast, some nominations in the pool are likely to be recommended for elimination immediately because they clearly are below the threshold for consideration. Others, also on initial assessment, may be held for future consideration for various reasons and with various conditions (see below). The remainder form the long list from which the CHD develops its short list through systematic analysis, selection and elimination following steps outlined below.

3. Short List

At its first meeting, the CHD, with the assistance of the SN's initial due diligence, should come to general agreement on the long list. It can then begin to select a preliminary short list of nominees (a "long" short list). The process for moving to a short list is to review the advice of the SN on the overall list, to consider each nominee in a systematic fashion and then to determine – as much as possible by consensus – if the nominee should be retained on the list. In working toward its short list, the CHD will retain on the list for further consideration, candidates who have received a simple majority of votes (that is, 50% + 1, of the members present).

The CHD is encouraged to consider nominees from all walks of life and all areas of the world but, to be recommended for the short list, candidates should ideally have a connection with the University of Toronto and/or with Canada. The CHD should keep in mind the academic nature of convocation when selecting candidates, choosing those who seem most likely to be an inspiration for the graduating class.

4. Convocation Considerations

It is not essential that there be an honorary degree awarded at every Convocation ceremony. If there are fewer recommended nominees than Convocations, the President is empowered to select Convocation speakers who are distinguished faculty members (such as University Professors or members of the Teaching Academy), or other prominent and appropriate individuals, and have the potential to provide an inspiring message to graduands.

5. Further Investigation and Due Diligence

Following establishment of the "long" short list, the CHD is expected to instruct members of the SN on what further investigation or due diligence should be carried out for each continuing nominee. This might include the investigation of a field or discipline that members think should be recognized, or consultation with individuals expert in a particular field to ascertain the relative merits of candidates. As well, CHD members may suggest individuals to be consulted, in confidence, on particular candidates.

D. Recommendations to the Governing Council

1. Balanced Slate

At its final meeting the CHD will hear the additional input of members of the Sub-committee and develop its list of recommendations to be forwarded to the Governing Council for approval.

The CHD will be conscious of the need to present a balanced slate of candidates for the Council's consideration. It may not be possible to achieve balance in any one year. To help achieve a balance the CHD may find it useful to consider the nominations in two groups: those nominated for scholarly endeavour and those nominated in all other categories. The CHD then decides how many candidates to recommend from each of the two groups.

2. Threshold of Support

In order to be recommended by the CHD for a degree a candidate must have the support of at least two-thirds of the members present.

The CHD may decide to vote by show of hands on those who appear to be overwhelmingly favoured. Secret ballots will be conducted if preferable. At each stage of the voting and balloting the CHD may discuss whether consideration needs to be given to a particular category or categories in order to achieve a balanced slate.

3. Motions

At the end of the selection process two formal motions are made. The first recommends to the Governing Council that degrees be awarded; the second recommends that the Chancellor and the President be empowered to determine the degree to be awarded to each candidate and the particular convocation at which each degree is to be awarded.

E. Nominations Not Recommended to the Governing Council

Nominations not recommended to the Governing Council may be designated to a long list for future consideration (that is, either carried over to the subsequent year or deferred indefinitely) or they may be eliminated from further consideration.

1. Carrying Over a Nomination

The CHD may want to keep nominations active beyond the year in which they were originally considered. The CHD may choose to carry over a nominee to the subsequent year if the nominee is overly similar to another nominee; if an overabundance of candidates from a particular discipline or field exists that year; or if the nomination is lacking in information but the CHD has reason to believe that a positive recommendation at a later date is possible. To be considered a second time, carryover nominations would normally be accompanied by updated information. (Such information would be requested of the nominator by the Sub-committee for Nominations.) If, on the second consideration, the nomination is not recommended by the CHD for a degree, it will not normally be considered again.

2. Deferring a Nomination

The CHD may choose to defer consideration of nominees if the nominee has been a member of the Governing Council or the University staff within the last year; or if the nominee is currently active in political life.

3. Eliminating a Nomination

If a nomination does not receive the required two-thirds majority support and is not deferred, and if the CHD also determines that it should not be carried forward with a request for updated information, the nomination will be eliminated from further consideration.

F. Executive Committee and Governing Council Deliberations

1. *In Camera*

Consideration of the recommendations of the CHD at the Executive Committee and at the Governing Council takes place *in camera*.

2. Role of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee considers the recommendations from the Committee for Honorary Degrees regarding the individuals to be awarded degrees, and raises questions or identifies areas of concern, if any, that it might have. Its role is to forward the Report of the Committee for Honorary Degrees to the Governing Council for approval. Normally it “endorses and forwards” the CHD’s recommendations.

3. Threshold of Support at the Governing Council

Each candidate’s name is presented to the Governing Council for consideration individually and requires support of three-quarters of members present and voting. (“Members present and voting” includes the Chancellor and the Chair of the Governing Council.) Abstentions have the effect of a negative vote.

G. Subsequent Role of the President’s Office

1. Offers

The President’s Office is responsible for extending offers of honorary degrees to candidates approved by the Governing Council. Normally this is carried out by a letter from the President making the formal offer of the honorary degree. This letter will emphasize the high level of excellence required for selection for an honorary degree by the University of Toronto, will cite other prominent individuals awarded honorary degrees in recent years, and will indicate the reasons why this distinction is being offered to the candidate in question. In addition, the letter will spell out the requirement for attendance at Convocation, and various expectations regarding the Convocation Address. It will clarify that candidates will not be deemed to have received their honorary degree from the University until it has been conferred in person at a Convocation ceremony.

2. Lapsing of Offers

Offers of honorary degrees are not intended to be open-ended, and the President's letter will further state that offers will lapse under two circumstances. Ordinarily, candidates will be expected to communicate their acceptance of the University's offer within three months, and to attend a convocation ceremony for the conferral of the degree within two years of the offer. In most cases, offers will be extended immediately following the Governing Council meeting in December, acceptances will be required by the end of the following March, and candidates will be expected to attend a regular June or November convocation within two years of the initial offer.

3. Posthumous Honorary Degrees

Honorary degrees will be conferred posthumously only if the honoree was approved by the Governing Council, was offered and accepted the honorary degree, but died before the degree could be conferred.

H. Code of Conduct for Members of the Committee for Honorary Degrees

1. Confidentiality

Nominations made to and the deliberations of the Committee for Honorary Degrees and its Sub-committee on Nominations must be held in strictest confidence. The only names ever made public are the names of those nominees who are **offered and who accept** a degree following the Governing Council's approval of the recommendation.

Normally, the names of nominators are also considered confidential unless they self-identify or are directly involved in the convocation celebration of the relevant honorary graduand.

2. Conflict of Interest

In order to avoid the appearance of conflict, formal nominations from members of the CHD will not be considered. As well, in those cases where a CHD member, or any member of the immediate family of a CHD member is nominated, the CHD member will resign for a period of three years from the CHD if the nomination is to be considered.

In the context of the Sub-committee for Nominations process, members of the Sub-committee, individually and collectively, have a mandate to generate names for consideration. It should be noted, however, that individual members of the Sub-committee may not submit nominations on their own behalf. Only the Sub-committee as a whole has the responsibility for ensuring the preparation of complete nominations for consideration by the full Committee.

Approved by the Committee for Honorary Degrees
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