



## **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 (the "Committee"), its Sub-committee for Nominations (the 'Sub-committee'), 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 Committee 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 Committee also considers the association nominees may have with the University of Toronto or with higher education more broadly. The Committee also attempts, through its recommendation of nominees, to reflect the national character of Canada, the desirable features of its regional and cultural diversity, and the character and diversity of the University itself. As such, it is necessary for the Committee to have a diverse pool of candidates so that it may consider diversity in all of its dimensions.

#### **3. Recognition**

When awarding honorary degrees the University of Toronto is recognizing the achievements of the individual to date.

### **B. Nomination Process**

#### **1. Call for Nominations**

In late winter or early spring of each year, the President issues a call for nominations to the University community and more broadly. 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.

While the President and the Provost will actively solicit nominations from Principals and Deans, all members of the University community are encouraged to consult with relevant divisions to generate and submit nominations.

The call for nominations serves as an important reminder of the nomination process and the relevant deadline for submission for that year. However, continual, year-round discussion and reflection about potential nominees within divisions is encouraged. Compiling a thorough and ordered submission takes time and many of the strongest nominations, year after year, come from divisions that both establish a structure for generating nominations and plan ahead to target potential nominees. It is important to note that submissions will be accepted **at any time** during the year, though only those received by the annual deadline will be considered for that year's nomination cycle.

## **2. Nominations**

Nominators should ensure that their nomination package provides 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. If a division is submitting multiple nominations, they are encouraged to provide a ranking for those nominations. This will both assist the Committee in their deliberations and may reduce the amount of supplementary information requested by the Committee.

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 Committee 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 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 Committee. Overall, the Sub-committee's function is to ensure that the Committee 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 Committee: 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 Sub-committee is asked to:

- solicit and generate nominations for consideration by the Committee;
- review nominations to ensure they are complete and ready to be reviewed by the Committee;
- 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 Sub-committee 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 Committee may be asked by the President to approve extension of this deadline. An updated list of outstanding offers will be presented annually to the Committee following its review by the Sub-committee.

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 Sub-committee 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 Sub-committee should make recommendations concerning the most appropriate timing for their consideration over a series of years.

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

In the fall, the Sub-committee presents to the full Committee the complete list of nominations received and generated. During this period, the Sub-committee also acts as a steering committee and sets the agenda for the Committee. 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 Sub-committee 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 Sub-committee 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 Committee 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 Committee’s working classifications are: *long list*, *shortlist*, *hold (defer or carry over)* and *drop*.

Normally, with the benefit of the Sub-committee’s preparation, initial review and due diligence, the Committee endeavours to create its final slate over the course of two meetings.

Nominations generated by the Committee 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 Committee’s consideration through the Sub-committee’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 Committee develops its short list through systematic analysis, selection and elimination following steps outlined below.

#### **3. Short List**

At its first meeting, the Committee, with the assistance of the Sub-committee’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 Sub-committee 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee is expected to instruct members of the Sub-committee 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, Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee will be conscious of the need to present a balanced slate of candidates for the Governing Council’s consideration. It may not be possible to achieve balance in any one year. To help achieve a balance the Committee may find it useful to consider the nominations in two groups: those nominated for scholarly endeavour and those nominated in all other categories. The Committee then decides how many candidates to recommend from each of the two groups.

#### **2. Threshold of Support**

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

The Committee 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 Committee 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 will fall into three categories: Nominations that are Carried Over; Nominations that are Deferred due to Current Ineligibility; Nominations that are Eliminated.

#### **1. Nominations that are Carried Over**

In exceptional cases, nominations may be kept active beyond the year in which they were originally considered if the Committee has reason to believe that a positive recommendation at a later date is likely. In these cases, the lead nominator will be notified of the Committee's decision to carry over the nomination and will be asked to submit updated information for the candidate. If, on the second consideration, the nomination is not recommended by the Committee, it will normally be eliminated.

#### **2. Nominations that are Deferred due to Current Ineligibility of the Nominee**

Except in exceptional circumstances, a nominee is ineligible for consideration if he/she 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. In these cases, the lead nominator will be notified of the Committee's decision to defer the nomination and may be asked to submit updated information for the candidate.

#### **3. Eliminating a Nomination**

If a nomination does not receive the required two-thirds majority support and is not carried over or deferred, the nomination will be eliminated from further consideration.

#### **4. Re-Nomination of an Unsuccessful Candidate**

For candidates who have not been successful, a waiting period of not less than two years is recommended before re-nomination, unless there are special circumstances. It is also recommended that re-submissions be such that they can stand on their own, rather than recycling or relying on earlier nominations, as this ensures that the Committee will take a fresh look at the submission.

## **F. Executive Committee and Governing Council Deliberations**

### **1. *In Camera***

Consideration of the recommendations of the Committee 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 Committee’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 Committee will not be considered. As well, in those cases where a Committee member, or any member of the immediate family of a Committee member is nominated, the Committee member will resign for a period of three years from the Committee if the nomination is to be considered.

In the context of the Sub-committee 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 Committee.

Approved by the Committee for Honorary Degrees  
May 1, 2006 (to take effect July 1, 2006)  
Revised, October 22, 2009 and September 21, 2010  
Revised, May 21, 2013  
Revised February, 7, 2014  
Revised November 13, 2017