

System-wide Policy:	
BT0005 - Policy on Awarding of Degrees and Certificates in Memoriam	
Version: 4	Effective Date:10/22/2021

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
POLICY ON AWARDING OF DEGREES AND
CERTIFICATES IN MEMORIAM**

PURPOSE

The policy outlines the requirements and guidelines, including various delegations of responsibilities, applicable to the conferral and revocation of degrees, honorary degrees, posthumous degrees and memorial certificates. This policy is applicable to all University campuses.

CONFERRAL AND REVOCATION OF DEGREES

In accordance with the requirements of Tennessee law and the University's Bylaws, the President and Chancellors of the University, with the advice and consent of a majority of the Board of Trustees, are authorized to confer any bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree approved by the Board upon certification by the appropriate university offices that a student has satisfied all degree requirements and all obligations to the University.

Diplomas shall be issued in the name of The University of Tennessee and shall adhere to the guidelines attached hereto as [BT0005 - Policy on Awarding of Degrees and Certificates in Memoriam \(Appendix A\)](#) ("Diploma Guidelines").

HONORARY DEGREES

An honorary degree is the highest form of recognition offered by the University. The Board of Trustees authorizes the awarding of honorary degrees to recognize individuals who have benefited the institution or society through outstanding achievements or leadership.

Maximum Awards, Eligibility Criteria, and Other Considerations

The following criteria shall guide the campuses in considering and nominating candidates for honorary degrees.

- A. Each campus may award up to three honorary degrees each year.

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- B. University employees shall not be eligible for nomination during their employment. In addition, members of the Board of Trustees and elected officials shall not be eligible for nomination prior to completion of their terms of service.

- C. Honorary degrees awarded shall be doctoral degrees, with the specific title to be appropriate to the campus and the recipient. Honorary degree titles must not duplicate the title of any existing for-credit academic degree. The honorary degree title shall be included in the materials provided to the Board.

- D. All degrees, honorary and for-credit, are awarded by the Board, based on recommendations by the faculty of a specific campus. As such, it is possible for an individual to be nominated for and receive more than one honorary degree from the University. Any additional honorary degree shall, in most instances, be from a campus other than the first honorary degree. No recipient shall receive more than one honorary degree with the same specific title.

- E. All honorary degrees awarded shall be in the name of The University of Tennessee and shall adhere to the Diploma Guidelines.

- F. The University expects honorary degree recipients to participate fully in commencement exercises; however, exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances.

Nomination Process

Each campus shall develop specific procedures for considering and nominating honorary degree recipients, which procedures shall be approved by the Chancellor. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the campus procedures shall be consistent with the following provisions:

- A. The nominating committee shall include members of the faculty, as selected by the faculty governing body of the respective campus, and the chief academic officer of the campus, who shall serve ex-officio as chair of the nominating committee and may vote in the event of a tie. The nominating committee may also include other members of the campus community.

- B. The composition of the committee shall include individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise.

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- C. The process shall promote broad engagement and participation by representative groups and individuals on campus.
- D. The nominating committee shall be responsible for soliciting, receiving and screening nominations, and recommending candidates to the Chancellor for consideration.
- E. All honorary degree nominee(s) shall be subject to the recommendation and approval of the Chancellor and President, consecutively. Final approval of the award of all honorary degrees rests with the Board of Trustees.

POSTHUMOUS DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES IN MEMORIAM

Posthumous Degrees

The University seeks to extend sympathy and compassion to families of deceased students nearing completion of their degrees, to recognize the academic achievements of students who would have fulfilled the requirements of the degree, as well as honor the memory of deceased students whose degrees were in process.

The Board of Trustees authorizes the awarding of posthumous degrees or memorial certificates to undergraduate, graduate, or professional students, subject to the guidelines set forth below.

Eligibility Criteria

- A. At the time of death, the student was enrolled or on an approved leave of absence;
- B. The student was in good standing, both academically and with respect to conduct; and
- C. The student was nearing completion of work required for the award of degree. For undergraduate students, “nearing completion” is defined as having been in the final semester of their degree program or within 18 hours of degree completion. For students in graduate and professional programs, “nearing

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completion” is defined as having completed approximately eighty-five percent (85%) of the program.

- D. In exceptional circumstances, the school/college dean’s request may include justification for another definition of “nearing completion” of the program of study.

Award Process

Each campus shall develop specific procedures for considering requests for posthumous degree recipients. At a minimum, the process shall include the following:

- A. A recommendation for the award of the degree as approved by the faculty in the student’s major department or program, the department head/chair or program director, and school/college dean.
- B. A school/college dean shall initiate the request for conferral of a posthumous degree by notifying the chief academic officer of the request in writing and by providing information about the academic progress and standing of the student in support of the conferral of the degree.
- C. Upon approval by the chief academic officer, the recommendation of the conferral of a posthumous degree shall be presented to the Chancellor.
- D. All posthumous degree conferrals shall be subject to the approval of the Chancellor and President, consecutively.
- E. The campus registrar shall be responsible for documenting posthumous degrees. The registrar shall prepare a transcript showing the student’s completed course work and with special notation indicating posthumous conferral of the degree. The registrar shall also prepare a diploma indicating the degree in the declared area of study, with the graduation date noted as the nearest official graduation date following the student’s death. The diploma shall be consistent with the Diploma Guidelines and need not contain a notation of posthumous conferral. The registrar shall maintain the student’s records in compliance with all applicable state and federal guidelines pertaining to the accuracy of graduation data.

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- F. At the Chancellor’s discretion, a school/ college may recognize the student and the conferral of the posthumous degree at commencement, subject to the consent of the student’s family.

Certificates in Memoriam

A Certificate in Memoriam is issued in recognition of a deceased student’s progress toward the degree and to honor the student’s memory as a member of the University community. The Certificate in Memoriam is not included in the official count of degrees and shall not be considered a conferral of a degree by the University.

Eligibility Criteria

Any student who at the time of his or her death meets the eligibility requirements for the conferral of a posthumous degree except for the condition of “nearing completion” may be awarded a Certificate in Memoriam.

Award Process

Each campus shall develop specific procedures for considering requests for the issuance of Certificates of Memoriam. At a minimum, the process shall include the following:

- A. A recommendation for the issuance of the certificate as approved by the faculty in the student’s major department or program, the department head/chair or program director, and school/college dean.
- B. A school/college dean shall initiate the request for the issuance of the certificate by notifying the chief academic officer of the request in writing and by providing information about the academic progress and standing of the student in support of the certificate.
- C. Upon approval by the chief academic officer, the registrar shall issue the certificate in the name of The University of Tennessee, which shall indicate the student’s dates of enrollment, and, if applicable, major, academic department or program, and school/college. Latin Honors are not awarded for Certificates in Memoriam.
- D. The size and style of the Certificates of Memoriam shall be in substantially the same form and shall be distinguishable from diplomas issued by the University. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success, in consultation with

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the Secretary to the Board, shall be responsible for approving the standard template for the certificate and any permissible exceptions thereto.

- E. The campus registrar shall be responsible for documenting the issuances of all Certificates of Memoriam. The registrar shall prepare a transcript showing the student’s completed course work and with special notation indicating posthumous issuance of the certificate.
- F. The Certificate of Memoriam shall be delivered to the dean of the school/college for appropriate mailing or in-person presentation to the student’s family.

REVOCAION OF DEGREES

In accordance with the University’s Bylaws, the Board of Trustees has delegated to the Chancellors authority to revoke a degree if the degree was awarded in error or if degree revocation is imposed pursuant to University policies and procedures as a disciplinary penalty for academic or research misconduct.

History:

Adopted	10/22/2021*
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(*) This policy supersedes and replaces the prior Board Policy on Awarding of Honorary Degrees (BT0005) adopted on June 17, 1999, as amended through June 21, 2019.