

HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE & CRITERIA

The Award of Honorary Degrees

“Proposals for the conferment of honorary degrees shall be considered by a Joint Committee of the Council and the Senate.” (Ordinance 25.2)

1. Background

Honorary Degrees conferred by the University recognise the exceptional contributions made by the individuals concerned. In addition, the awards made should:

- **reflect the University’s key values** – academic freedom, integrity and accountability, sustainability, critical thinking, and intellectual creativity.
- **demonstrate the University’s commitment to the creation, development and communication of knowledge** and acknowledge the economic, social, and cultural benefits of these activities.
- **indicate the University’s primary roles** as a major research-led institution, as a regional leader in Higher Education and as the UK’s European University and its international outlook.
- recognise and support the University’s commitment to the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

2. Honorary Degrees available to be awarded

The following degrees are available to be conferred on appropriate individuals who meet the University’s criteria for the award of honorary degrees subject to approval by Senate and Council:

D.Arts	Doctor of Arts
D.C.L.	Doctor of Civil Law
D.D.	Doctor of Divinity
L.L.D.	Doctor of Laws
D.Litt.	Doctor of Letters
D.Mus.	Doctor of Music
D.Sc.	Doctor of Science
D.El	Doctor of Enterprise and Innovation
D.Univ.	Doctor of the University

3. Consideration of suggestions for awards

In considering suggestions for awards the Honorary Degrees Committee will determine its recommendations for approval by Senate and Council using the criteria set out below having regard to the other considerations which follow as these are relevant. The Committee particularly welcomes proposals that reflect the cultural diversity of the University and which promote its commitments to equality, diversity and inclusivity more widely.

An honorary degree may be conferred on an individual who has a direct or indirect association with the University or its region and meets at least one of the following criteria (further expanded in the guidance notes at the end of this document*):

- (i) the achievement of academic distinction in an academic discipline of the University
- (ii) Significant achievement, distinction and contribution to the arts, sciences, sport, industry and business
- (iii) an exceptional and distinguished contribution to public life, or service, locally, in the University's region, nationally or internationally.

Note: it is recognised that notwithstanding the above there may be exceptional circumstances where it is appropriate to confer an honorary degree on an outstanding individual who meets one or both of (i), (ii) and (iii) above but who has no direct or indirect association with the University or the region.

In applying these criteria and determining its recommendations for approval the Committee should:

- reflect a range of academic disciplines/other contributions.
- seek to honour individuals of distinction or achievement not already over-burdened with honorary degrees from other universities, except in the case of exceptional service to the University and/or the Kent region.
- recognise diversity in all its aspects.
- reflect key elements of the University Plan and strategy such as research excellence, internationalisation, the Kent region, widening participation, the importance of the environment and sustainability.
- acknowledge significant University anniversaries or other key events or themes when appropriate.

Note: Normally no serving member of staff or Council should be recommended for the award of an honorary degree. In addition the Committee has determined that no award should be made to an MP in office (or equivalent in, for example, the EU) or anyone holding a ministerial appointment while he/she held such office, but that there might be some flexibility when considering those in other political roles. The Committee will also make reference to the criteria in paragraph 4.1 of the University's Ethical Investment Policy when considering nominations for an Honorary Degree award, which states as follows:

The University will not:

- a) *invest directly in companies the major part of whose business is pornography, gambling, tobacco, fossil fuels or armaments, or*
- b) *invest in pooled investment funds where there is a significant exposure to companies the major part of whose business is pornography, gambling, tobacco, fossil fuels or armaments.*

4. Procedures for the consideration of suggestions for the award of honorary degrees

- (i) Nominations should be submitted using the online nomination form by the deadline indicated. Suggestions may be made by individuals or by a

group/school(s)/department(s) of the University or by persons external to the University.

- (ii) The case for an award should outline the exceptional contribution of the nominee and the reasons why they are deserving an honorary degree, including their relationship to the University or its region. The Committee is looking for a strong narrative that could be the basis of an inspirational oration at a degree congregation. A successful candidate is likely to have reached a high level of attainment within their profession or calling and the nomination should include a list of verifiable outputs and achievements. It would be helpful if it could be demonstrated that the person nominated has acted as a role model or has encouraged and supported students or those less experienced in their field.
- (iii) The University very much values its Honorary Degree recipients and there can be much gained for both parties through future contact. If there is the potential for an ongoing relationship with the nominee, this should be indicated in the appropriate section of the Nomination Form. An ongoing relationship could entail activity such as a Guest Lecture, a specialist expertise talk to students, an In Conversation or Open Lecture to both the University and public.
- (iv) All nominations will be submitted to the Honorary Degrees Committee for its consideration.
- (v) The Committee's recommendations are subject to approval by Senate and Council. They remain confidential until the individuals concerned have been approached informally by the Vice-Chancellor and have agreed to accept the awards and this is published in one or more news releases by the Media Office.
- (vi) Honorary Degrees are conferred in person at Congregations of the University.
- (vii) *Detailed feedback on nominations will not be given. No public announcement is made until after the successful nominee recommendations have been approved by Senate and Council, and the nominees concerned have accepted the award. For those nominations that are unsuccessful the proposer will be informed in confidence of the outcome.*

5. Guidance Notes for assistance with Honorary Degree Nominations*

1) For an academic nomination

Has the person achieved academic distinction in an academic discipline of the University?

Is the person very successful and pre-eminent in their field, a field that is important to the University's scholarship and research, with a verifiable body of work and significant outputs?

Is the person recognised nationally and internationally within their field, for example are they a member or fellow of a learned society, and/or have they received a national or international honour?

Is the person considered an inspirational figure and have they encouraged or supported others, or acted as a role model?

Have they already received a considerable number of honorary degrees from other universities? The University prefers to honour those not over-burdened with other honorary degrees, if possible.

Does the person have a link to the University or the region? This is not essential but may strengthen a nomination.

2) For a non-academic nomination

Has the person made an exceptional and distinguished contribution to the arts, sciences, sport, business, industry, public life or service?

Is the person very successful and pre-eminent in their field, a field that is aligned to the University's interests and values, with a verifiable list of achievements?

Is the person recognised at least nationally within their field, for example have they received a national or international honour or won a national or international prize?

Is the person considered an inspirational figure, to the University's students and wider community, and have they encouraged or supported others, or acted as a role model?

Have they already received a considerable number of honorary degrees from other universities? The University prefers to honour those not over-burdened with other honorary degrees, if possible.

Does the person have a link to the University or the region? They could be a former student, someone originally from Kent or someone who currently lives in Kent and contributes to the county. This is not essential but may strengthen a nomination.

6. Membership

The Committee shall comprise: the Vice-Chancellor as Chair; 3 ex officio members (the Chancellor, the Chair of Council and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience); 3 Lay Members; 3 members appointed by Senate; a Public Orator (from among the number of University Public Orators); and the Student Union President.

The following shall be in attendance:

- Events Manager
- Director of Governance and Assurance (Secretary to Council)
- Governance Support Officer

Honorary Degrees Committee - Terms of Reference

7. Frequency of Meetings:

At least twice a year in Autumn and Winter Terms, with additional meetings if required.

8. Quoracy:

One third of membership and to include at least one Lay member.

9. Review

The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed for effectiveness at least every three years.

10. Queries

Any queries on the above should be sent to the Secretary of the Honorary Degrees Committee (councilsec@kent.ac.uk)

Version Control

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1.0			

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