



Guidelines for the Senate Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee

PREAMBLE

An honorary degree is the highest honour within the power of the University to confer, and the manner of conferral of such a degree is to reflect McGill University's highest aspirations and ideals.

McGill honorary degrees are to be awarded to distinguished individuals, in recognition of a lifetime of scholarly, scientific or artistic achievement, or of exceptional contribution to the public good through professional or philanthropic activity. Individuals selected to receive a McGill honorary degree will have a record of contribution and accomplishment such that they will serve as an inspiration and role model to our students, graduates and our community as a whole, and which positions them to enhance the reputation of McGill University.

The primary criterion for selection of a candidate for a McGill honorary degree is the level of excellence the candidate has demonstrated in scholarship, scientific inquiry or artistic endeavour, or the exceptional nature of his or her contribution to the public good. The Committee may honour individuals whose outstanding contributions to their fields or to society may not yet have been widely recognized, as well as those who have received recognition.

Through its recommendations of outstanding individuals, the Senate Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee (the "Committee") will endeavour to reflect the intellectual and cultural diversity of the McGill community and the broader communities in Quebec and Canada, and the international impact and reach of the University.

I. GENERAL

1. Eligibility

- 1.1 Nationals of any country are eligible for the award of honorary degrees at McGill University.
- 1.2 With the exception of section 2.3, active staff or staff who have retired from the University within the past three years, current students, members of the Board of Governors of McGill University, and Canadian politicians currently in office will not normally be eligible for McGill honorary degrees.
- 1.3 Normally, honorary degrees will not be awarded posthumously or in absentia.

2. Criteria

In selecting candidates for submission to Senate, the Committee shall consider the following factors:

- 2.1 Scientific or scholarly distinction, or outstanding contribution to the creative or performing arts;

- 2.2 Outstanding service to the community, through professional or philanthropic activities, including distinguished public service nationally, internationally or locally;
- 2.3 Longstanding and distinguished record of service to the University, as can be reflected in the tradition of conferring an honorary degree on the Visitor, on the Chair of the Board of Governors when that person no longer holds that office, and on the President when he or she retires or is no longer in the employ of the University.
- 2.4 Relevance to a McGill anniversary or other special event may be considered by the Committee in support of a particular candidacy, but will not be the primary criterion for selection of candidates.

3. Honorary Degrees

The following honorary degrees may be conferred by the University:

- 3.1 *Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa (DD)*: Awarded for outstanding scholarship in theology or exceptional service to a religious community;
- 3.2 *Doctor of Laws, honoris causa (LLD)*: Awarded for outstanding scholarly achievement in law or for exceptional service to the University or the community-at-large;
- 3.3 *Doctor of Letters, honoris causa (DLitt)*: Awarded for outstanding achievement in the humanities or social sciences, or for outstanding achievement in the arts, whether of a scholarly or creative nature;
- 3.4 *Doctor of Music, honoris causa (DMus)*: Awarded for outstanding achievement in music, including scholarship, composition and performance; and
- 3.5 *Doctor of Science, honoris causa (DSc)*: Awarded for outstanding achievement in the pure and applied sciences, whether of a scholarly nature or in scientific, technological or social innovation.

II. PROCEDURES

4. Nomination

- 4.1 Nominations to the Committee are made on a strictly confidential basis.
- 4.2 Given the confidential nature of the decision making process, which may result in a decision not to grant the nominee the award, nominators should not discuss their nomination with the nominee.
- 4.3 On at least an annual basis, the Secretary-General will issue, on behalf of the Committee, a call to the University community inviting nominations for honorary degrees to be awarded at Convocations.

Notices soliciting candidacies will be communicated widely using established University media.

- 4.4 The Secretary-General shall receive, on behalf of the Committee, nominations for honorary degrees by the deadline specified in the call for nominations.
- 4.5 Late submissions may need to be considered at a subsequent meeting.
- 4.6 Incomplete submissions will be returned to the nominators and, once complete, may be resubmitted for consideration by the Committee.
- 4.7 Nominations must be submitted on the established nomination form and include the following information:
 - a) Name and address of nominee;
 - b) Career summary;
 - c) Summary of education;
 - d) List of awards and recognitions; and
 - e) Reasons for recommending award, with consideration to the suitability of the nominee as a convocation speaker.

Supporting documentation may be attached to the nomination form (e.g., curriculum vitae, news clippings, etc.).
- 4.8 The Committee will review nominations received, with a view to recommending candidates for honorary degrees to Senate.
- 4.9 In all cases, the name of a nominee will be kept in the strictest confidence until the University publicly announces the candidacy, following approval by Senate and acceptance by the nominee.
- 4.10 The names of nominators shall remain confidential.

5. Selection

- 5.1 In considering all nominations, the Committee will apply uniformly rigorous selection standards.
- 5.2 Candidates recommended by the Committee will be brought to Senate for approval.
- 5.3 The Committee shall recommend the degree to be conferred as part of its submission of a candidacy to Senate.
- 5.4 The President shall select the individuals for the conferral of honorary degrees from among the Senate approved candidates and shall assign them to a particular ceremony, on behalf of the Committee, keeping in mind the following considerations:
 - a) Recognizing the prestige of a McGill honorary degree, the University will not normally confer more than one honorary degree per Convocation ceremony. When a suitable candidate is not identified for a given ceremony, no honorary degree will be awarded at such a ceremony.
 - b) Candidates for the conferral of an honorary degree at Spring Convocation shall normally be endorsed by a Dean of a Faculty or School but need not be.
 - c) One of the candidates for the conferral of an honorary degree at Fall Convocation shall normally be (but need not be) selected from among nominations received from the McGill Alumni Association.

- 5.5 The Committee will endeavour to ensure that, over time, honorary degrees recommended and awarded reflect the University's commitment to intellectual diversity and principles of equity.

6. Time Limits and the Standing List

- 6.1 Materials relating to nominations not selected by the Committee for submission to Senate will be destroyed by the University Secretariat in accordance with the *McGill University Records Retention Schedule*.
- 6.2 The Committee shall maintain a Standing List of nominations to consider at a later date. The Standing List shall also include those nominations, subject to 6.3, approved by Senate but for which the conferral of the degree remains pending.
- 6.3 Candidates approved by Senate for the conferral of an honorary degree who do not receive their degree within five years will normally be eliminated from the Standing List unless and until they are selected by the Committee and approved by Senate a second time, following a resubmission of the nomination to the Committee.

7. Revocation of Honorary Degrees

- 7.1 In situations where maintaining the honorary degree would be prejudicial to the University's reputation and/or found to be in contradiction to the University's mission or values, the Committee may recommend to Senate the revocation of an honorary degree from an honorary degree recipient.
- 7.2 In such situations, the Committee Chair, in consultation with the Secretary-General, will form and convene an *ad hoc* sub-committee composed of the President and three to five members of the Committee, to consider the matter and to advise the Committee accordingly.

*Approved on March 12, 2020 by the
Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee*