

Honorary Degree Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

Background

- (1) Honorary Degrees are offered to influential people who may or may not be alumni of La Trobe University.
- (2) La Trobe University identifies people to whom it would like to offer an Honorary Degree on the basis of existing connections and/or synergies with the strategic objectives of the University.
- (3) The processes around the identification, nomination, notification and awarding of Honorary Degrees must be extremely well coordinated and managed with a high degree of sensitivity and respect.

Purpose

- (4) To ensure coordinated management of all processes relating to the identification, application, notification and awarding of Honorary Degrees at La Trobe University.

Section 2 - Scope

- (5) This Policy applies to all:
 - a. Colleges, campuses, divisions and organisational units of the University
 - b. Honorary Degrees

Section 3 - Policy Statement

- (6) Honorary Degrees are a mechanism for engaging with influential people with whom the University would like to establish a platform for engagement. These would normally be graduates of institutions other than La Trobe.
- (7) Honorary Degrees are regarded as a strategic program for the University and therefore the identification of Honorary Degree nominations requires a careful and thorough process to ensure that nominees align with the University's mission, vision and goals.
- (8) Normally a maximum of 4 Honorary Degrees will be awarded in any one year.

Section 4 - Procedures

General

- (9) The Alumni and Advancement Office (AAO) is responsible for the co-ordination of the nomination, application and notification processes relating to the awarding of Honorary Degrees at La Trobe University.
- (10) The University Events (UE) team is responsible for the management of the event at which the Honorary Degree is

awarded, whether this is during a graduation, part of another appropriate occasion or, in exceptional circumstances, as a stand-alone event.

(11) The Academic Board is the University committee with responsibility for the approval of the nominations for Honorary Degrees received by the University. Approved Honorary Degree applications must be noted by Council.

Identification of a Potential Honorary Degree Nominee

(12) The University has a well-developed plan for its future direction: "Future Ready". The goals outlined in the Strategic Plan provide a framework for identifying the individuals of influence who might be interested in developing (deeper) connections with La Trobe University and working with the organisation on major initiatives.

(13) Nominations for Honorary Degree recipients will come from the highest level:

- a. University Council members
- b. The Vice-Chancellor
- c. Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors
- d. College Pro Vice-Chancellors
- e. RFA Leaders

(14) Nominations may also be identified through direct prospect research (which is to be carried out by the AAO for individuals in specific and targeted areas of activity).

(15) Individual staff members may no longer make direct nominations but may make nominations through any member of the senior leadership as outlined above.

Nomination Process for Honorary Degrees

(16) The process for the nomination of an Honorary Degree recipient has been brought into alignment with the process for nominating a recipient of an Alumni Award.

(17) Nominations are made by a nominator, on-line, and may be submitted at any time during the year. A specific nomination period will also be promoted to the University community in the first quarter of each year, with nominations for both Honorary Degrees and Alumni Awards closing simultaneously in May each year. In exceptional circumstances, with approval from the Chair, Academic Board, nominations may be considered outside the formal nomination period ([La Trobe Honorary Degrees Webpage](#)).

(18) Nominators will normally be a member of the Senior Executive team of the University or a College Pro Vice-Chancellor. In exceptional circumstances nominations may be submitted by an academic member of a College, with prior approval from the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Review of Nominations

(19) Following the closing date, the AAO will screen all applications to ensure they meet the criteria. The AAO will then forward the applications to the Vice-Chancellor for endorsement and referral to Academic Board for approval.

(20) Before forwarding applications to Academic Board, the AAO must identify the internal person best placed to communicate with the Honorary Degree nominee. This will depend on the position of the nominee and in most circumstances the person to communicate with the nominee will be the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. In some circumstances it may be the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the relevant College or the nominator.

(21) The person identified to communicate with the nominee must contact the nominee prior to consideration by Academic Board to determine whether the nominee would accept if he/she were to be invited to receive an Honorary

Degree.

Academic Board Consideration of Nominations

(22) Honorary Degree nominations are submitted to the Academic Board by the AAO for consideration.

(23) Academic Board will consider and, where appropriate, approve the applications. Successful applications will be forwarded to Council for noting.

Notification of Outcomes of Nominations

(24) For each successful application, the internal stakeholder identified as the person to communicate with the nominee should telephone the nominee to advise of the award and to let him/her know that he/she can expect a letter of congratulations to follow by mail.

(25) A formal letter of congratulations must be sent out to the successful nominees within three business days of the telephone calls.

(26) These letters will be prepared by the Alumni and Advancement Office and signed by the Chancellor.

(27) If the nominee accepts the invitation to receive an Honorary Degree, the next stage in the process is actioned. If he/she declines the invitation, that is the end of the process.

Liaison with Honorary Degree Recipients

(28) Formal written acceptance of the invitation to receive an Honorary Degree must be passed on from the Chancellor's office to:

- a. the Alumni and Advancement Office
- b. the University Events team and
- c. the University Media and Communications

(29) University Events (UE) will meet with the nominator to receive a brief on the recipient and discuss potential existing events at which the award may be presented.

(30) UE will encourage recipients to select smaller and more tailored events for the Honorary Degree ceremony. If no suitable event/date can be found, graduations may be offered as the event at which the conferral takes place.

(31) UE will then write to all recipients. The letter will set out the options for the conferring the degree, whether at a graduation ceremony or other relevant events. A reasonable range of date options will be provided to the recipients.

(32) UE will liaise with the Honorary Degree recipients to determine the preferred dates for the ceremony. In the event that a recipient cannot attend any dates offered the University Events will offer the next available range of dates for appropriate ceremonies.

(33) The nominating department or school must make all necessary travel arrangements for the recipient to attend the event and must cover the cost of all necessary travel, accommodation and incidental expenses for the recipient to attend the conferral ceremony.

Management of the Honorary Degree Award Ceremony

(34) If the ceremony is built onto an existing event, the management of the Honorary Degree Ceremony event is the responsibility of UE. UE will undertake the following arrangements relating to:

- a. announcement of the Honorary Degree conferral ceremony in the UniNews
- b. cap and gown sizing and hire
- c. logistics for the event – including the recipients speech
- d. invitations to and RSVPs for the event
- e. venue hire
- f. catering as required
- g. a program for the ceremony
- h. a testamur for the recipient

(35) If a dedicated ceremony is being developed for the conferral, the University Events team will undertake only:

- a. Announcement of the Honorary Degree conferral ceremony in the UniNews
- b. cap and gown sizing and hire
- c. production of a testamur.

(36) The department/school or College will be responsible for making and covering the cost of all other necessary arrangements.

(37) Regardless of the method of conferral, the department/school or College is responsible for:

- a. Drafting a citation for the Honorary Degree for the recipient
- b. drafting a program for the Honorary Degree recipient (for the duration of the recipient's time at La Trobe University for the ceremony).

(38) The AAO will arrange a private car to collect the recipient either from their hotel in Melbourne or the airport as appropriate and will cover the cost of the car.

(39) A member of the AAO team will go with the car to meet the recipient and will take responsibility for greeting him/her and bringing him/her to the ceremony venue.

(40) The AAO will determine if there are any synergies with any alumni cohorts and offer information and advice on activities/events that may be included in the program.

(41) Media and communications relating to the Honorary Degree is the responsibility of the Media and Communications.

(42) The Media and Communications or the AAO will engage a photographer to cover the conferral ceremony.

Section 5 - Definitions

(43) For the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Honorary Degree: An honorary degree is an academic degree for which the university has waived the usual requirements. It is often awarded to someone who has done an undergraduate program only or to someone who has no prior connection with the academic institution. It is a way of honouring a distinguished individual's contribution to a specific field, or to society in general.
- b. Strategy: A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.
- c. Influential: Having or exercising influence or power.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Head, Services and Support.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Senior Director, Alumni and Advancement and the Chair of Academic Board.

Status and Details

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