

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. Schools, 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, but not necessarily, be graduates of institutions other than La Trobe. In special circumstances, an Honorary Degree can be awarded posthumously.
- (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. Additional Honorary Degrees may be awarded at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor and Academic Board.

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 and/or the Graduations, Ceremonies and Events team (GCE) is/are responsible for the management of the event at which the Honorary Degree is awarded, this is during a graduation, part of another appropriate occasion, or in exceptional circumstances, as a standalone 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. The goals outlined in the 2018-22 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. the Provost

(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 by email to the responsible staff member in the AAO. 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. In exceptional circumstances nominations may be submitted by an academic member of a School, with prior approval from the relevant Dean.

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 Provost or the nominator.

Academic Board Consideration of Nominations

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

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

Notification of Outcomes of Nominations

(23) For each successful application, a responsible person in the AAO should contact the nominee to advise of the award.

(24) A formal letter of congratulations from the Chancellor must be sent out to the successful nominees within three business days of the telephone calls. These letters will be prepared by the Alumni and Advancement Office and signed by the Chancellor.

(25) If the nominee accepts the invitation to receive an Honorary Degree, the next stage in the process is actioned. If they decline the invitation, that is the end of the process.

Liaison with Honorary Degree Recipients

(26) 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;
- c. the Graduations, Ceremonies and Events team (GCE); and
- d. the University Media and Communications.

(27) University Events (UE) will meet with the responsible person in the AAO to receive a brief on the recipient and discuss potential existing events at which the award may be presented. The AAO may engage other parties in this step, as required.

(28) On advice from University Events (UE), the AAO will write to all recipients setting out a reasonable range of date options and options for the conferral of the degree. The AAO will liaise with the Honorary Degree recipients to determine the preferred dates for the ceremony.

(29) Recipients will be encouraged to select a graduation as the event at which the conferral takes place. If no suitable graduation date can be found or in other unusual circumstances, smaller and more tailored events for the Honorary Degree ceremony may be offered.

(30) Where recipients are being conferred at a graduation ceremony, they may be invited to give the Occasional Address at that ceremony.

(31) 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

(32) If the ceremony is built onto an existing event, the management of the Honorary Degree Ceremony event is the responsibility of UE and/or GCE. UE and/or GCE 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
- i. citation for the recipient
- j. photographer

(33) 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
- d. citation for the recipient
- e. photographer

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

(35) Regardless of the method of conferral, the UE and/or GCE will liaise with the relevant Department/School to draft:

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

(36) 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.

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

Section 5 - Definitions

(38) 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 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.

Status and Details

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