

## Policy Revision

<b>Policy Title</b>	Posthumous Degree & Posthumous Certificate of Achievement		
<b>Policy URL</b>	<a href="https://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/program-graduation/student/posthumous-degree-certificate">https://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/program-graduation/student/posthumous-degree-certificate</a>		
<b>Suggested updates</b>	-Implement Compassionate Certificate of Achievement for students with diagnoses that permanently prevent them from completing their degree.		
<b>Rationale for updates</b>	-Students with a terminal illness/diagnosis are not currently eligible to receive recognition unless they pass away.		
<b>Contact Person for Questions</b>	Abbie Sorg		
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Office of the Registrar	<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://registrar.arizona.edu/">https://registrar.arizona.edu/</a>
<b>Career Applicability</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Law <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medicine <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Veterinary Medicine		
<b>Approvals Granted</b> <i>(for council use only)</i>	UGC Policies Subcommittee	Scheduled: 11/04/25, 12/02/25	Status: Approved with updates 12/02/25
	Undergraduate Council	Scheduled: 1/13/26	Status: Approved 1/13/26
	Graduate Council	Scheduled: 2/13/26	Status: Approved 2/13/26
	Undergraduate CAAC	Scheduled: 2/24/26	Status: Approved 2/24/26
	Graduate CAAC	Scheduled: 2/10/26	Status: Approved 2/10/26
	Faculty Senate Executive Committee	Scheduled: 2/16/26	Status: N/A; action taken at full senate
	Faculty Senate	Scheduled: 3/2/26	Status:
	Provost	Scheduled:	Status:

### Policy Revision Side by Side

Additions in Green – Deletions in Yellow

Existing Policy	Proposed Edit
<p><b>Posthumous Degree &amp; Posthumous Certificate of Achievement</b></p> <p>The University of Arizona extends compassion and understanding to the families of students who pass away near the completion of their degrees. This policy outlines the criteria and procedure for requesting a posthumous degree or a certificate of achievement. In recognition of the student's achievements, students awarded a posthumous degree or certificate of achievement will be included in the next Commencement program.</p> <p>To be eligible for a posthumous degree, the student must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be in Eligible or Good Academic standing during the last completed term (Undergraduates: cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater and major GPA of 2.0 or greater. Graduates: cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater.)</li> <li>• Undergraduate: have reached Senior standing (90 completed units)</li> <li>• Graduate &amp; Professional: have completed 75% of the coursework required for the respective degree</li> <li>• Have completed at least one semester at the University of Arizona</li> </ul> <p>A student who does not meet the criteria for a posthumous degree may be awarded a Certificate of Achievement at the family's request and support of the College.</p> <p>A posthumous degree or certificate of achievement is awarded at the request of the student's family. To initiate a request, family members or a representative from the student's college should contact the <a href="#">Dean of Students</a>.</p>	<p><b>Posthumous Degree, Posthumous Certificate of Achievement, and Compassionate Certificate of Achievement</b></p> <p>The University of Arizona extends compassion and understanding to students whose academic progress is permanently halted due to significant medical events. This policy outlines the criteria and procedure for requesting a certificate of achievement or posthumous degree when a student passes away or when an extraordinary circumstance, such as terminal illness, prevents them from completing their academic program.</p> <p><b>Posthumous Degree &amp; Posthumous Certificate of Achievement</b></p> <p>To be eligible for a posthumous degree, the student must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be in Eligible or Good Academic standing during the last completed term (Undergraduates: cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater and major GPA of 2.0 or greater. Graduates: cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater.)</li> <li>• Undergraduate: have reached Senior standing (90 completed units)</li> <li>• Graduate &amp; Professional: have completed 75% of the coursework required for the respective degree</li> <li>• Have completed at least one semester at the University of Arizona</li> </ul> <p>A <b>deceased</b> student who does not meet the criteria for a posthumous degree may be awarded a Certificate of Achievement at the family's request and support of the College.</p> <p>A posthumous degree or certificate of achievement is awarded at the request of the student's family, and may be included in the next Commencement program if requested. To initiate a request, family members or a representative from the student's college should contact the <a href="#">Dean of Students</a>.</p>

Existing Policy	Proposed Edit
	<p data-bbox="1052 183 1619 220"><b>Compassionate Certificate of Achievement</b></p> <p data-bbox="1052 248 1969 440">Students facing extraordinary circumstances that permanently prevent the completion of a degree program, such as terminal illness, may be awarded a Certificate of Achievement at the University's discretion. To initiate the request, the student, family members, or a representative from the student's college should contact the <a href="#">Dean of Students</a>.</p>

# Posthumous Degrees & Certificates – Policy Benchmarking

## I. Summary

A review of 17 ABOR and peer institutions reveals that all but one institution currently grant some form of posthumous recognition. One institution, Michigan State University, recognizes living students unable to complete their program of study due to terminal illness/exceptional circumstances.

Six institutions, including Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University, offer a single level of posthumous degree. Ten institutions more closely match the University of Arizona, offering a secondary recognition (certificate, mark of achievement, or in memoriam degree) for students that have not met the eligibility requirements for a posthumous degree.

While the University of California – LA does not currently have a policy on posthumous degrees, a summer 2025 letter from the chair of the Academic Council provides systemwide guidance on posthumous recognition of students.

Eligibility considerations for recognition include grade-point-average, progress toward degree, academic standing, units in residence, and likelihood that the student would've passed current/future coursework. Most graduate programs entailing research, thesis, or dissertation require substantial progress and approved quality of work.

## Overview

INSTITUTION	POSTHUMOUS DEGREE	POSTHUMOUS CERTIFICATE	COMPASSIONATE CERTIFICATE OF ACHEIVEMENT
University of Arizona	Y	Y	N
Arizona State University	Y	N	N
Northern Arizona University	Y	Y	N
University of California – Davis	Y	Y	N
University of California – LA	N <sup>1</sup>	N <sup>1</sup>	N
University of Florida	Y	Y	N
University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign	Y	Y	N
University of Iowa	Y	Y	N
University of Maryland – College Park	Y	Y	N
Michigan State University	Y	Y	Y
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities	Y	Y	N
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	Y	Y	N
Ohio State University	Y <sup>2</sup>	N	N
Pennsylvania State University	Y	Y	N
Texas A&M University	Y	N	N
University of Texas – Austin	Y	N	N
University of Washington – Seattle	Y	N	N
University of Wisconsin – Madison	Y	Y	N

1. No academic policy; systemwide guidance provided by Academic Council.

2. Institutional practice; no academic policy

## Comprehensive View

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
<b>University of Arizona</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Min. 2.0 cumulative &amp; major GPA</li> <li>• Senior standing (90+ units)</li> <li>• 1+ semester in residence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Min. 3.0 cumulative GPA</li> <li>• Min. 75% coursework complete (professional careers too)</li> <li>• 1+ semester in residence</li> </ul>	Family member	Not specified	Recognized at commencement
	Posthumous Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't met above criteria</li> <li>• Must be supported by college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't met above criteria</li> <li>• Must be supported by college</li> </ul>	Family member	Not specified	Recognized at commencement
<b>Arizona State University</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100+ units</li> <li>• 30+ units in residence</li> <li>• In degree program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial progress to degree (such as completion of coursework, comprehensive exams, and/or progress in thesis/ dissertation)</li> </ul>	Any member of university community	Office of the Provost	Diploma comes at no cost to family

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
<b>Northern Arizona University</b>	Posthumous Degree	Good academic & student life standing	Good academic & student life standing	Dean of Students office	Vice Provost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applies to deceased students diagnosed with terminal illness within one year of last enrollment</li> <li>Diploma text includes "In Memoriam"</li> </ul>
<b>University of California – Davis</b>	Posthumous Recognition (Bachelor's degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Min. 2.0 cumulative GPA</li> <li>Senior standing</li> </ul>	No policy on graduate posthumous recognition	Not specified	Not specified	
	Posthumous Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Min. 2.0 cumulative GPA</li> <li>84+ quarter units</li> </ul>	No policy on graduate posthumous certificate	Not specified	Not specified	
<b>University of California – LA</b>	Posthumous degree  (Guidance sent from the UC system; not current academic policy)	Good academic standing	Good academic standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member</li> <li>Faculty</li> <li>MSU Admin</li> <li>other students</li> </ul>	Appropriate senate committee	Proposed by academic council; not yet approved as policy
<b>University of Florida</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 80% of degree complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No set requirements; request needs to indicate proximity to degree</li> </ul>	Not specified	Provost	Optional Additional Recognition: Student's college may write letter to

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of program faculty supports</li> </ul>				family describing student's endeavors, participation, personal qualities, etc.
	In Memoriam Degree	Hasn't met above criteria	Hasn't met above criteria	Not specified	Provost	See above
<b>University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</b>	Standard degree	Has potentially completed all degree requirements	Has potentially completed all degree requirements	Member of university community	Provost; Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs	
	Posthumous Citation	Enrolled in coursework	Enrolled in coursework	Member of university community	Provost; Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citation indicates student's major/ minor</li> <li>Annual student memorial to award citations to families</li> </ul>
<b>University of Iowa</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 75% of degree complete</li> <li>30+ units in residence</li> <li>Likely that student would pass present/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 75% of degree complete</li> <li>Thesis/ dissertation must be near completion; worthy of degree (if applicable)</li> <li>Likely that student would pass present/ future coursework</li> </ul>	Collegiate Dean's office	Executive Vice President; Provost	

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
		future coursework				
	Posthumous Certificate	Hasn't met above criteria	Hasn't met above criteria	Collegiate Dean's office	Executive Vice President; Provost	
<b>University of Maryland – College Park</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 75% of degree complete</li> <li>30+ units in residence</li> <li>Good Academic Standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 75% of degree complete</li> <li>Good Academic Standing</li> <li>Thesis/ dissertation must be near completion; worthy of degree (if applicable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member</li> <li>Student's Academic Dean/ Dept</li> <li>Chair of student's graduate committee</li> </ul>	Provost	Recognized at commencement
	Posthumous Certificate	Hasn't met above criteria	Hasn't met above criteria	See above	Provost	Recognized at commencement
<b>Michigan State University</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Junior standing</li> <li>Good academic standing</li> </ul>	Only awarded in special circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member</li> <li>Faculty of student's department/ school/ college</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>	Provost; President	
	Special Circumstances Degree (Terminal illness; rare circumstance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmed by qualified healthcare provider/ university physician</li> <li>Good standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmed by qualified healthcare provider/ university physician</li> <li>Good standing</li> <li>At least 80% of degree completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student</li> <li>Family member</li> <li>Faculty of student's department/</li> </ul>	Provost; President	Transcript notation: "Degree granted posthumously" or "Degree Granted Under Special Circumstances"

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 80% of degree completed</li> </ul>		school/ college <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admin</li> </ul>		
<b>University of Minnesota – Twin Cities</b>	Posthumous Degree	Completed sufficient portion of planned degree program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed sufficient portion of planned degree program</li> <li>Sufficient progress to thesis/ dissertation (if applicable)</li> </ul>	Not specified	College; Chief Academic Officer; Vice Chancellor	Transcript and diploma look standard
	Certificate of Attendance	Hasn't met above criteria	Hasn't met above criteria	Not specified	College; Chief Academic Officer; Vice Chancellor	
<b>University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 90% of degree completed</li> <li>Good academic standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good academic standing</li> <li>At least 90% of degree completed</li> <li>For degrees requiring research/practicum: all coursework complete; thesis/ dissertation/ etc. near completion and worthy of degree</li> </ul>	Not specified	Not specified	
	Memorial Degree of Achievement	Hasn't met above criteria	Hasn't met above criteria	Not specified	Not specified	
	Certificate of Achievement	Hasn't met above criteria; not appropriate to award degree	Hasn't met above criteria; not appropriate to award degree	Not specified	Not specified	

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
<b>Ohio State University</b>	Posthumous Degree  (Institutional practice, but not an academic policy)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Board of Trustees	Recognized at commencement
<b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	Standard Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If all reqs met: standard bachelor's degree</li> <li>• If all associate's reqs met: student receives standard AA degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctoral only: Master's degree may be awarded in lieu of posthumous/ in memoriam degree, if appropriate</li> </ul>			
	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• within 1 semester (~19 units) of degree completion</li> </ul>	<p>Doctoral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In good academic standing</li> <li>• Passed comprehensive exam</li> </ul> <p>Master's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• At least 75% of degree complete</li> </ul>			

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
	In Memoriam Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• At least 50% of degree complete</li> </ul>	Doctoral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In good academic standing</li> <li>• Passed qualifying exam</li> </ul> Master's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• At least 50% of degree complete</li> </ul>			
	Certificate of Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• Hasn't met above criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good academic standing</li> <li>• Hasn't met above criteria</li> </ul>	Undergrad: student's college dean (with support from family)  Grad: Student's program head; primary advisor	President	Recognized at commencement
<b>Texas A&amp;M University</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was enrolled in courses at time of death that would have completed degree</li> <li>• Has approval of academic department and college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was enrolled in courses at time of death that would have completed degree</li> <li>• Significant portion of research must be complete and found acceptable (if applicable)</li> <li>• Must have been admitted to candidacy (PhD only)</li> </ul>	Undergrad: Academic department  Grad: Chair of student's advisory committee	College; President in exceptional cases	

INSTITUTION	RECOGNITION	UNDERGRAD ELIGIBILITY	GRADUATE/ PROF. ELIGIBILITY	INITIATOR	APPROVER	OTHER INFORMATION
<b>University of Texas – Ausin</b>	Posthumous Degree	No undergraduate policy/ procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All degree requirements complete, including dissertation defense (if applicable)</li> </ul>	Family member; student’s program	Graduate school	
<b>University of Washington – Seattle</b>	Posthumous Degree	Within 2 quarters of degree completion	Within 2 quarters of degree completion	Family member	College Dean; Grad school (grad only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transcript notation: Posthumous Degree</li> <li>Diploma is standard</li> <li>Letter of condolence sent to family from Registrar</li> </ul>
<b>University of Wisconsin – Madison</b>	Posthumous Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior standing</li> <li>Good academic standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was enrolled in courses at time of death that would have completed degree</li> </ul> <p>Research degrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All coursework complete</li> <li>Near completion of dissertation/ thesis; substantial work worthy of degree</li> </ul>	Not specified	Chancellor	Recognized at commencement
	Posthumous Commendation in Memoriam	Doesn’t apply to undergraduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hasn’t met above criteria</li> <li>Substantial progress</li> <li>Achieved distinction</li> </ul>	Not specified	Chancellor	Recognized at commencement

## II. Full Policy Texts

### University of Arizona

<https://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/program-graduation/student/posthumous-degree-certificate>

#### Posthumous Degree & Posthumous Certificate of Achievement

The University of Arizona extends compassion and understanding to the families of students who pass away near the completion of their degrees. This policy outlines the criteria and procedure for requesting a posthumous degree or a certificate of achievement. In recognition of the student's achievements, students awarded a posthumous degree or certificate of achievement will be included in the next Commencement program.

To be eligible for a posthumous degree, the student must:

- Be in Eligible or Good Academic standing during the last completed term (Undergraduates: cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater and major GPA of 2.0 or greater. Graduates: cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater.)
- Undergraduate: have reached Senior standing (90 completed units)
- Graduate & Professional: have completed 75% of the coursework required for the respective degree
- Have completed at least one semester at the University of Arizona

A student who does not meet the criteria for a posthumous degree may be awarded a Certificate of Achievement at the family's request and support of the College.

A posthumous degree or certificate of achievement is awarded at the request of the student's family. To initiate a request, family members or a representative from the student's college should contact the [Dean of Students](#).

### Arizona State University

<https://public.powerdms.com/ASU/documents/1560534>

#### Awarding Posthumous Degrees

##### **Purpose**

To provide a consistent procedure for the awarding of posthumous degrees when appropriate criteria have been met

## Sources

Office of the Provost of the University

Academic Administration Advisory Council

University Registrar Services

Office of the Dean of Students

## Policy

A degree may be awarded for a deceased student upon the recommendation of the college in which the student was pursuing a degree, with the approval of the provost of the university.

## Procedure

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Action</b>
Any member of the university community who wishes to recommend award of a posthumous degree	1. Submit official notification of student's death to the Office of the Dean of Students.
Office of the Dean of Students	2. Receive official notification of a student's death. Notify University Registrar Services to post an administrative hold on the student's academic records.
	For requests regarding undergraduate students:
University Registrar Services	3. Use 100 total earned semester hours (which include 30 hours completed in residence at ASU) as a minimum guideline. Send the "Awarding a Posthumous Degree" memorandum and supporting documents (unofficial transcript and DARS audit or Program of Study) to the dean of the college in which the student was enrolled. Request an audit of the student's record for consideration of awarding a posthumous degree.
	For requests regarding graduate students:
	4. Send the "Awarding a Posthumous Degree" memorandum and supporting documents (unofficial transcript and

	Program of Study, if available) to the dean 2 of the college in which the student was enrolled. Request an audit of the student's record for consideration of awarding a posthumous degree.
	For requests regarding undergraduate students:
Dean (or designee)	5. Review the student's record in consultation with the school/department of the student's major to determine if the student was in a degree program and qualifies for the awarding of a posthumous degree.
	For requests regarding graduate students:
	6. Review the student's record in consultation with the school/department of the student's major to determine if the student had made substantial progress toward completion of the degree. Indicators could be, but are not limited to, completion of course work, completion of comprehensive examinations, or progress in thesis or dissertation.
	Note: Completion of an Undergraduate or Graduate Program of Study or Declaration of Graduation by the college, if one is not already on file, is optional. If required by the college, the Program of Study or Declaration of Graduation should be completed by a member of the college staff.
	7. Sign the memorandum indicating approval or denial of the request or submit the memorandum/petition to the college standards committee for consideration, if applicable.
	If the request is not approved:
	8. Notify University Registrar Services by returning the memorandum with the appropriate signatures.

	If the request is approved:
	9. For undergraduate students, forward the approved memorandum to the Office of the Provost of the University. 10. For graduate students, forward the approved memorandum to the vice provost for Graduate College.
Vice Provost for Graduate College	11. Review the college's recommendation, verify student's progress toward degree completion. Forward recommendation to the Office of the Provost of the University.
Office of the Provost of the University	12. Review the request. Notify University Registrar Services of approval or disapproval by returning the memorandum with appropriate signatures
	If not approved:
University Registrar Services	13. Notify the individual who made the original request (i.e., faculty, staff, or family)
	If approved:
	14. Post the degree to the student's transcript and order the diploma at no cost to the family.
	15. Verify that an administrative hold is posted to the student's record. If an administrative hold has not yet been posted, forward a copy of the approved memo to the Records Section.
	16. Post the administrative hold.
	17. When the diploma is received, inform the college dean (or designee) that the diploma is ready for delivery.
Dean (or designee)	18. Send or present the diploma to the family.

## Northern Arizona University

<https://legacy.nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/Posthumous-Degree-Policy.pdf>

Awarding Posthumous Degrees

### **POLICY SUMMARY**

The University may award posthumous undergraduate and graduate degrees to deceased students in good standing.

### **REASON FOR THIS POLICY**

Awarding posthumous degrees to deceased students recognizes their academic achievements and contributions to the Northern Arizona University community and honors the support their family and friends offered them.

### **ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY**

- All colleges and instructional units
- Office of the Dean of Students
- Office of the Registrar
- University Advising

### **WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY**

- All faculty, academic unit administrators, and staff

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Posthumous Degree:** A diploma that may be awarded to a deceased student, differentiated from other academic awards by containing the text “In Memoriam.”

### **POLICY**

Students eligible for a posthumous degree include all undergraduate and graduate degree-seeking students who were enrolled and in good academic and student life standing at the time of their death or deceased students who were diagnosed with a terminal illness within one year of their last enrollment. Final approval for awarding posthumous degrees rests with the Provost of the University or their designee.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Academic unit leaders and faculty: share remembrances, distinctive achievements, and points of pride about deceased students.

Office of the Dean of Students: communicate with the deceased student’s family to determine appropriate composition and delivery of the posthumous degree.

Office of the Registrar: order the posthumous diploma and relevant materials for delivery to the Vice Provost of Academic Operations.

Vice Provost Academic Operations: On behalf of the Provost, reviews and approves the posthumous degree award.

## **PROCEDURES**

The Office of the Dean of Students, after verifying a student's death, will initiate the posthumous recognition process by beginning and routing the Posthumous Recognition form. The Office of the Registrar will verify academic requirements, order the diploma and then academic unit leaders and faculty may provide remembrances, distinctive achievements, and points of pride about the deceased student. The Office of the Registrar will deliver the materials to the Vice Provost of Academic Operations, who will consider awarding a posthumous degree.

## **RELATED INFORMATION**

### **Forms or Tools**

[Posthumous Recognition Form](#).

### **Cross-References**

There are no cross-references associated with this policy. Sources There are no external sources associated with this policy.

## **APPENDIX**

None.

## University of California – Davis

<https://academicssenate.ucdavis.edu/bylaws-regulations/regulations#DEGREES%20AND%20CERTIFICATES>

### Posthumous Recognition of Undergraduate Achievements

- A. A student with a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 or higher who had senior-level standing, shall be awarded the Bachelor's Degree. (Am. 9/1/2021)
- B. A student with a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 or higher who had completed 84.0 or more quarter units, but who would not have been eligible for the award of the Bachelor's Degree under the provisions of Paragraph (A) above, shall be posthumously awarded a certificate recognizing the student's upper division standing. (En. 2/02/90; Am. 02/03/06; effective 02/03/06)

University of California – LA

<https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/ucep/council-chair-senate-divisions-principles-for-awarding-degrees-posthumously.pdf>

Re: Systemwide Principles for Awarding Degrees Posthumously

Dear Division Chairs,

On behalf of the Academic Council, I am forwarding for your information and dissemination the attached UC Systemwide Academic Senate Principles for Awarding Degrees Posthumously, developed by the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) and the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP).

These principles were developed in response to questions and concerns raised during the 2024 systemwide review of a proposed Senate Regulation 627, which considered codification of a policy for awarding University degrees posthumously. After reviewing feedback from the divisions and further discussion with Council members, CCGA and UCEP determined that issuing systemwide principles would be a better approach than introducing a formal regulation. Such principles provide a common framework for honoring students who pass away while enrolled at UC and still retain campus flexibility to address unforeseen circumstances.

The principles are intended to balance the need for compassion with respect for academic integrity. In particular, they emphasize flexibility over rigid criteria, recognizing that the circumstances leading to a student's death may also affect their academic standing or ability to complete required coursework. They also include recommendations for local processes and a set of frequently asked questions that clarify the committees' rationale.

By articulating these principles, the Academic Senate seeks to provide campuses with a compassionate, consistent, and equitable foundation for making decisions about the posthumous awarding of degrees. We hope this resource proves helpful as you review or refine your local policies and practices.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Cheung  
Chair, Academic Council

**University of California Systemwide Academic Senate Principles for Awarding Degrees Posthumously**

**Purpose**

By awarding degrees posthumously, the University of California seeks to recognize the academic achievements of students who die while engaged in their studies and to extend sympathy and compassion towards their families. Like honorary degrees, these are not aimed at certifying a particular level of advancement or professional readiness.

**Procedures**

The process for identifying and reviewing candidates for the posthumous conferring of degrees will vary from campus to campus, but should consider the following components and principles:

**Considerations for Eligibility:**

Given the above purpose, it is recommended that the approach to awarding degrees posthumously be as generous as possible. The following general points should be considered, but flexibility may be required depending on the unique circumstances of each potential awardee:

- (1) Posthumous conferral of a degree is primarily intended for students who have started their studies and are currently enrolled or on leave at the time of death.
- (2) Such degrees should be routinely granted to students who have maintained good academic and administrative standing (excluding financial status).
- (3) Students who do not fall in the categories above should also be considered, in particular in situations where the circumstances that led to the student's death (e.g. serious illness), also contributed to a deterioration in performance and/or an inability to continue with the degree program.
- (4) Awarding a degree to a student whose actions/behavior might have led to dismissal from the university may be considered under exceptional circumstances but should involve additional review.

**Request Process:**

- (1) Each campus should have a process for requesting consideration for a degree to be awarded posthumously that is clearly defined and made easily accessible to all impacted families.
- (2) To accommodate students' varying circumstances, it is recommended that the list of people who can initiate a request be as broad as possible, including but not limited to family members and/or survivors, faculty members, administrators, or fellow students.

(3) Clear guidelines for communication should be established, especially for circumstances in which the request is not made by a family member or there is a difference of opinion. Whenever possible, families should be consulted before proceeding with a potential award.

### **Approval Process:**

Each campus should establish a systematic process for reviewing requests to award degrees posthumously, including rules governing exceptional cases. The official recommendation for the conferral of the degree should be made by the appropriate Senate committee (Regents Policy Bylaw 40).

### **Recommendations for the Recognition/Conferral of the Degree:**

(1) The student's diploma should be released or mailed to the person(s) who made the degree request.

(2) The diploma provided should be standard issue, avoiding any special labeling indicating it is being awarded posthumously, to minimize distress to families and loved ones.

(3) Any fees associated with the administration of the degree should be waived.

(4) A request from family and/or loved ones for the student's name to be included in graduation programs should be considered.

### **Principles for Awarding Degrees Posthumously Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**

Q. Why do the guidelines not suggest specific progress thresholds for degree eligibility, e.g. minimum time enrolled, completed coursework, advancement to candidacy, or similar? Why is there no suggested time-limit for submitting a request?

A. As the purpose of awarding a degree posthumously is to provide comfort to the family and loved ones of the student, rather than to certify a particular level of advancement or professional readiness, the committees drafting the guidelines felt that it was best to allow broad eligibility. In the case of graduate students, campuses may feel it is more appropriate to award a Master's degree posthumously than a doctoral degree if a student has not yet advanced to candidacy.

Q. Why do the guidelines not require or include formal definitions of "good academic and administrative standing"?

A. Because posthumous conferral of the degree is intended for the family and loved ones of the student and not to be used as a representation to another entity of UC's endorsement of the quality or depth of the student's work, the principles emphasize compassion over rigid criteria such as GPA or credit completion thresholds. Moreover, it may frequently be the case that the same circumstances that led to the death of the student may also have contributed to poor performance and/or behavior. Saying that a student cannot be awarded a degree posthumously because, e.g., their illness led to poor grades and they did not move quickly enough to drop classes or take a leave of absence, runs contrary to the compassionate purpose of a degree awarded posthumously.

Q. What is the reason for not labelling the diploma as posthumous?

A. The audience for the diploma consists of the family and loved ones of the deceased student. Including the label may both serve to exacerbate their distress and signal to them that the degree is of lesser value. Since the diploma will not be used for any formal purpose, it was strongly felt that omitting such a label would not create any substantive problems for UC, and that for equity reasons the structure of the diploma should not differ across campuses.

Q. Does this document supersede divisional policies for awarding degrees posthumously?

A. No. The relevant systemwide committees initially proposed a formal policy and corresponding regulations. The goal was to ensure consistency and equity across campuses. Following feedback from the formal review and discussions at the subsequent Academic Council meetings, the previous policy document has been revised as set of principles and guidelines, attempting to create a balance between local autonomy and an overarching common framework.

## University of Florida

<https://aa.ufl.edu/media/aaufledu/policies/Posthumous-Degree-Policy.pdf>

### Policy on Posthumous Recognition of UF Students

The University of Florida seeks to provide to the families of deceased students a meaningful symbol that reflects the achievements and legacy of the student and, at the same time, upholds academic and institutional integrity. To meet that need, colleges may award a Posthumous Degree or an In Memoriam Degree.

### **Conferring Posthumous Degrees**

A Posthumous Degree recognizes academic work completed by a student who has made progress toward completion of a degree. The Posthumous Degree is a regular UF degree and is reported to the Board of Governors, but awarded posthumously.

Undergraduate Degree:

- Departments should notify their college dean of a proposed degree to be awarded posthumously.
- The dean's office should consult with the student's degree program to review the student's academic record. If the student has completed at least 80% of the requirements for the degree program and the majority of the degree program faculty supports the awarding of the degree, the Dean's Office should request the approval of the degree by submitting a request to the Provost.
- The dean's letter should include the degree and the term for which the students should be awarded the degree posthumously.
- If the Provost approves the request, the college dean will be notified in writing, with a copy sent to the Office of the University Registrar.

Professional Degree:

- These include Dentistry, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy and Veterinary Medicine.
- A college desiring to award a degree posthumously should address a letter from the dean to the provost requesting permission to grant a posthumous degree. • The dean's letter should include the degree and the term for which the student should be awarded the degree. It also should indicate the student's proximity to the completion of the degree.
- If the provost approves the request, the college dean will be notified in writing, with a copy to the Office of the University Registrar.

Graduate Degree:

- A department desiring to award a degree posthumously should address a letter, approved by the college dean, to the dean of the Graduate School, requesting permission to grant the posthumous degree.
- If the Graduate School dean approves, s/he should submit a written request for approval of the degree to the provost.
- The Graduate School dean's letter should include the degree and the term for which the student should be awarded the degree posthumously. It also should indicate the student's proximity to completion of the degree.

## **Conferring In Memoriam Degrees**

An In Memoriam Degree allows for recognition of a student's connection to the University of Florida regardless of their progress toward completion of degree requirements. The In Memoriam Degree is not reported to the Board of Governors. The resulting document is similar to a degree, is signed by the Provost and the Dean of the deceased student's college, and issued by the Office of the University Registrar. Undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who were registered in a degree program at the time of their death are eligible for an In Memoriam Degree, without regard to the likelihood of completing the requirements for the degree program. The University may choose to make this award to other individuals (such as previously enrolled students) in special circumstances.

- The Dean's Office of the student's college consults with the student's degree program and the Dean of Students Office to review the student's academic record.
- The Dean's Office forwards the request for an In Memoriam Degree to the Provost for approval.
- If the Provost approves the request, the college dean will be notified in writing, with a copy sent to the Office of the University Registrar.
- The Dean's Office requests that the Office of University Registrar prepare an In Memoriam Degree for the student's family.

## **Additional Recognition**

To further acknowledge a student's contribution, the student's department or college may choose to create a separate document such as a letter or card that may include comments regarding:

- The nature and significance of the student's scholarly endeavors, participation in student leadership and other extra and co-curricular activities;
- The esteem in which the individual was held by faculty members, fellow students, and/or other campus groups and organizations, and;
- Other personal qualities that might be considered suitable for inclusion.

This latter document is optional and separate from either the Posthumous Degree or the In Memoriam degree. It should originate in the deceased student's department, and can be given to the family along with the Posthumous Degree or the In Memoriam Degree. If the college would like for the President to issue the letter to the family, the dean's office should contact the President's Office at 392-1311 to make the request and provide information.

## University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign

<https://cam.illinois.edu/policies/asa-03/>

### Awarding Posthumous Citations

#### **Purpose**

This policy establishes the eligibility for and process to award a Posthumous Citation and standardizes the approach across colleges such that all students are recognized in a consistent manner.

#### **Scope**

This policy applies to the campus community, including all university employees, agents, and students.

#### **Authority**

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

#### **Policy**

The university may award a Posthumous Citation through the Office of the Dean of Students within one year of the death of a student who had been enrolled in coursework. The Office of the Dean of Students reserves the right to withhold Posthumous Citations for students who engaged in a course of conduct that significantly endangered the health or safety of others or who were not in good standing at the time of death.

#### **Definitions**

Posthumous Citation: A formal non-degree recognition of the student's time with the university and academic focus represented by their major(s) and minor.

#### **Processes/Procedures/Guidelines**

Members of the university community who become aware of the death of a student should notify the Office of the Dean of Students.

Awarding of Posthumous Citations for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students is initiated by the Office of the Dean of Students.

The Office of the Dean of Students establishes eligibility and provides the list of students known to the Office of the Dean of Students who will be awarded a

Posthumous Citation to the Office of the Registrar. The Office of the Registrar is responsible for ordering the Posthumous Citation.

Posthumous Citations are distributed to the families of deceased students at the annual student memorial, generally held in the fall semester of each academic year. In the absence of a family member's attendance, the citation will be mailed. The exact date and nature of the ceremony is determined by the Office of the Dean of Students.

Departmental representatives and the broader campus community will be invited to attend the memorial.

### **Exceptions**

Students who have potentially completed their degree requirements are reviewed by the academic unit in which they were enrolled in consideration of the awarding of their degree rather than the citation.

### **Contact**

Office of the Dean of Students

## University of Iowa

<https://policy.uiowa.edu/students/degree-candidates#PosthumousDegreesandCertificates>

### Posthumous Degrees and Certificates

The University may grant undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees posthumously. Decisions regarding posthumous degrees are made on a case-by-case basis, based on the general criteria below. Any exception to these criteria requires strong justification. Requests to award a posthumous degree should emanate from the collegiate dean's office and must receive approval from the executive vice president and provost, and from the president. The Office of the Registrar will be notified of decisions regarding posthumous degrees and posthumous certificates.

- a. Posthumous baccalaureate degree. At the time of death, the student had completed at least 75 percent (e.g., 90 of 120 hours) of the required credit hours toward the degree requirements, at least 30 of which were taken at the degree-granting institution, and was in good academic standing.

- b. Posthumous graduate or professional degree.
  - 1. For graduate or professional degrees not requiring a thesis or dissertation, at the time of death, the student had completed at least 75 percent of the required credit hours toward the degree requirements and was in good academic standing.
  - 2. For graduate degrees requiring a thesis or dissertation, the student was near completion of the thesis or dissertation and was in good academic standing. The student's faculty advisor has reviewed the materials being prepared for defense and has found the work to be worthy of the degree. These include PhDs as well as graduate degrees such as the master of fine arts (MFA) or the doctor of musical arts (DMA) requiring a thesis or dissertation that may include artistic, performance, and design components.
- c. Posthumous certificate. In the event that the student does not meet the requirements described above, a posthumous certificate can be given. The posthumous certificate is prepared at the request of the family and has no minimum credit completion requirements.

## University of Maryland – College Park

<https://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionIII/iii730.pdf>

### Policy on the Awarding of Posthumous Degrees

(Approved by the Board of Regents, December 1, 2006; Amended June 19, 2015)

- I. Purpose

The University System of Maryland recognizes that its degree-granting institutions may seek to extend sympathy and compassion to families of deceased students near completion of their degrees and to recognize the academic achievement of these students who have made significant progress toward the requirements of the degree. It is critical, however, that these actions are balanced appropriately with attention to academic and institutional integrity.
- II. Policy

No institution in the USM is required to award posthumous degrees. Those that do, however, will make decisions regarding such awards on a case-by-case basis using the following criteria.

  - A. For the Posthumous Baccalaureate Degree

At the time of death, the student had completed at least 75% (i.e., 90 of 120 hours) of the required credit hours toward the degree requirements, at least 30 of which were taken at the degree-granting institution, and in all likelihood the student would have passed present or future courses with an acceptable grade and fulfilled the requirements of the degree.

B. For the Posthumous Graduate Degree

- i. For graduate degrees not requiring a thesis or dissertation, at the time of death, the student had completed at least 75% of the required credit hours toward the degree requirements, and in all likelihood the student would have passed present or future courses with an acceptable grade and fulfilled the requirements of the degree.
- ii. For graduate degrees requiring a thesis or dissertation, the student was near completion of the thesis or dissertation. The student's committee has reviewed the materials being prepared for defense and has found the work to be worthy of the degree. These include graduate degrees such as the master of fine arts (MFA) or the doctor of musical arts (DMA) requiring a thesis or dissertation that may include artistic, performance, and design components.

C. Posthumous Certificate

In the event that the student does not meet the degree requirements described above, a posthumous certificate can be given. The posthumous certificate is prepared at the request of the family and has no minimum credit completion requirements.

In all instances, the institution shall take into account whether the student has engaged in serious criminal activity or misconduct.

III. Procedure

A formal request for a posthumous degree may be initiated by any of the following: a family member, the student's academic dean or department, or the chair of the student's graduate committee. If the request is not made by a family member, the family should be contacted and found to be receptive of the possible award. The student's academic department and appropriate student academic services offices certify that the student had made significant progress toward the degree as defined in Section II above. The dean or division head responsible for the student's academic department or the dean of the graduate school in the case of a graduate student shall

forward a recommendation to the provost/vice president for academic affairs. The provost has final approval in awarding the posthumous degree. Upon approval, the office of registration and records will record the award of the degree on the student's transcript. The appropriate office will send a diploma to the student's family and will invite the family to send a representative to participate in the commencement ceremony on behalf of the deceased student. The graduation application fee, if any, will be waived, and the student's name will be listed in the appropriate commencement ceremony program.

## Michigan State University

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=7803>

### Posthumous Degrees

An undergraduate student who has achieved junior class status and is in good standing at MSU and whose degree completion is prevented due to the student's death may be awarded a Posthumous Degree.

Requests for a Posthumous Degree may be initiated by the student's family, the faculty of the department/school/college, or an MSU administrator. Requests from the student's family can be made through the Critical Incident Response Unit or to the department/school/college for initial review. The Provost will be notified by the Dean or the Vice Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Education of the request for a Posthumous Degree. The Provost will confirm with the University Registrar that the student was in good standing at the time of death. Requests require the approval of the Provost and the President. If approved, the degree will be noted as "Degree Granted Posthumously" on the transcript. Generally, the awarding of posthumous degrees will only be considered at the baccalaureate degree level unless special circumstances arise.

### **Degree Granted Under Special Circumstances**

An undergraduate student or graduate/professional student who is active and in good standing and whose degree completion is prevented due to terminal illness or extraordinary or rare circumstances, as described below, may be awarded a degree under special circumstances.

### **Terminal Illness**

Special consideration may be given to awarding a degree to an undergraduate or graduate/professional student who has a terminal illness, confirmed by a qualified healthcare provider or the University physician, where such illness prevents continued progress towards degree completion. A terminal illness is an illness or condition which cannot be cured and will lead to death and where projected life expectancy prevents the student from completion of the degree. To be considered, students must be active and in good standing with significant progress toward the degree completed (e.g., 80% of the credit hour completion for undergraduate students and similar progress for graduate/professional students is recommended).

Requests for degrees granted under special circumstances may be initiated by the student, student's family, the faculty of the department/school/college, or an MSU administrator. Requests from the student and/or student's family should be made to the department/school/college for initial review. The Provost will be notified by the Dean or the Vice Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Education of the request for a Degree Granted under Special Circumstances. Requests require approval of the respective Dean, the Provost, and the President. If approved, the degree will be noted as "Degree Granted under Special Circumstances" on the transcript.

### **Extraordinary or Rare Circumstances**

Special consideration may be given to awarding a degree to an undergraduate student not meeting the criteria above or a graduate/professional student due to extraordinary or rare circumstances that prevented progress towards degree completion. These situations are extremely rare and unusual and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Requests for degrees granted under special circumstances which describe the extraordinary and rare circumstances may be initiated by the student, if applicable, the student's family, the faculty of the department/school/college, or an MSU administrator. Requests from the student, if applicable, and/or student's family should be made to the department/school/college for initial review. The Provost will be notified by the Dean or Vice Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Education of the request for a Degree Granted under Special Circumstances. Requests require approval of the respective Dean, the Provost, and the President. If approved, the degree will be noted, as appropriate, as either "Degree Granted Posthumously" or "Degree Granted under Special Circumstances" on the transcript.

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=16260>

## Mark of Achievement

Any student (undergraduate or graduate/professional) whose progression towards degree completion is halted due to extraordinary or rare circumstances, such as the onset of terminal illness or an accident/injury that prevents the student from completing the degree or in the case of the student's death, is eligible for a Mark of Achievement as long as that student was an active student in good standing at MSU at the time of the onset of the extraordinary or rare circumstance or at the time of death.

Requests for the Mark of Achievement may be initiated by the student, if applicable, the student's family, the faculty of the department/school/college, or an MSU administrator. Requests from the student, if applicable, or the student's family can be made through the Critical Incident Response Unit or to the department/school/college for initial review. The Provost will be notified by the Dean or Vice Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Education of the request for the Mark of Achievement. The Provost will confirm with the Registrar that the student was an active student in good standing. If confirmed, the Mark of Achievement is approved. The Mark of Achievement will note progress made toward the degree level (e.g., Bachelor, Master or Doctoral).

## University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

<https://policy.umn.edu/education/posthumous>

### Awarding Posthumous Degrees

#### **Policy Statement**

The University may grant undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees posthumously. If a college determines that a deceased student has completed a sufficient portion of the planned degree program to be awarded a degree, the college (Twin Cities only) or chief academic officer (or designee) on each system campus has the authority to grant the degree posthumously. Graduate students must have completed enough work toward the thesis or dissertation, if required for the degree.

#### **Reason for Policy**

To recognize the academic achievement of students who have died, and to empower colleges and vice chancellors to award degrees posthumously where the student has completed a sufficient portion of the planned degree program.

**Procedures**

There are no procedures associated with this policy.

**Forms/Instructions**

There are no forms associated with this policy.

**Appendices**

There are no appendices associated with this policy.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. If a college or chief academic officer determines that a sufficient portion of the planned degree program was not completed, are there other options to recognize a student’s achievements?

Yes. The college or chief academic officer can work with their campus Student Affairs office and Twin Cities Office of the Registrar to produce a Certificate of Attendance.

2. Is there an notation on the diploma or transcript that a degree was awarded posthumously?

No. The transcript and diploma text is standard regardless of whether a degree was awarded posthumously.

**Responsible Individuals**

Responsible Officer	Policy Owner	Primary Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Executive Vice President and Provost</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Associate Vice Provost – Academic Support Resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amber Cellotti Deputy Registrar and Director, Office of the Registrar</li></ul>

**Definitions**

Posthumous: Following or occurring after one's death.

**Responsibilities**

## Office of the Registrar

- Post the degree to the student's record.
- Work with the department or college to facilitate appropriate presentation of the degree to the student's family.

## College (Twin Cities)

- In consultation with the academic department of the degree, determine if posthumous degree should be awarded.
- Notify the Office of the Registrar of the request and approval to issue a posthumous degree.
- Facilitate appropriate presentation of the degree.
- As a courtesy, notify the Executive Vice President and Provost of the awarding of the posthumous degree.

## Collegiate Office (Crookston, Duluth, Morris & Rochester)

- In consultation with the academic department of the degree, make a request of the campus Chief Academic Officer that the degree be awarded.

## Chief Academic Officer (Crookston, Duluth, Morris & Rochester)

- In consultation with the college requesting the posthumous degree, determine if posthumous degree should be awarded.
- Notify the Office of the Registrar of the request and approval to issue a posthumous degree.

## Related Information

There is no related information associated with this policy.

## History

### Amended:

March 2024 - Comprehensive Review.

1. Adjusted language in the Policy Statement and Reason for Policy sections to have this language consistent between the two, "completed a sufficient portion of the planned degree program."
2. Addition of two FAQs to provide:
  - a. information about alternative options for recognizing student achievement who don't meet the "sufficient portion" standard and

- b. clarification that there is not a separate notation on the transcript or diploma to indicate that a degree was awarded posthumously.

**Amended:**

April 2020 - Comprehensive review, minor revision. Simplifies responsibilities.

**Amended:**

March 2016 - Comprehensive Review, Minor Revision. Administrative Procedure: Requesting a Posthumous Degree incorporated into the Responsibilities section of the policy. Minor wording changes to Statement and Reason.

**Reviewed:**

September 2011 - Comprehensive Review.

**Amended:**

April 2008 - Updated contacts section. Added definitions for "Posthumous" and "Eligible Student". "Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs" changed to "Chief academic officer" in responsibilities section. Additional edits made to clarify policy, but not to change meaning.

**Effective:**

June 2003

## University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/transcripts/#text>

### Posthumous and Memorial Degree

In the unfortunate event of a recently enrolled student death, the University may award a degree posthumously or a memorial degree of achievement to the next of kin of the decedent. The following criteria are used to determine awarding a degree posthumously and it is included in the official degree count. Detailed information on the criteria for awarding of a posthumous degree or memorial degree of achievement are in [UPM#13 Authorized Degrees, Major Fields in Each Degree, and Assigned Code Numbers](#).

### Undergraduate Students

Upon the recommendation of the Dean of Students Office in conjunction with the dean's office of the student's academic college/school, a posthumous degree may be awarded to a deceased undergraduate student if the student was in good academic standing and at least 90 percent of academic requirements for earning the degree are already completed. This is typically in the last two semesters or year of study for undergraduate degrees.

### **Graduate and Professional Students**

Upon the recommendation of the Dean of Students Office in conjunction with the dean's office(s) of the student's academic college/school(s), a posthumous degree may be awarded to a deceased graduate or professional student if the student was in good academic standing and significant progress had been made toward academic requirements for earning the degree. For graduate and professional degrees this can vary but generally the following considerations apply:

- For degrees requiring a research or other creative/practicum activity, the student must have completed all course and other requirements pursuant to the degree and must have been near completion of the dissertation/thesis/substitute product; and the student's committee must have determined the scholarship to be substantial work and worthy of the degree.
- For degrees requiring primarily coursework, at least 90 percent of academic requirements for earning the degree are already completed. This is typically in the last two semesters or year of study.

### **Memorial Degree of Achievement**

If requirements for awarding the degree posthumously are not met, the University may issue a memorial degree of achievement. This is neither recorded as an official degree nor included in the official degree count. The Dean of Students Office, in conjunction with the academic college/school of the student, issues this memorial degree of achievement to honor the memory of the deceased student's contributions to the UNC-Chapel Hill academic community.

### **Certificate of Achievement**

In circumstances when awarding a degree is not appropriate, the University can issue a certificate of achievement recognizing a former student. The Dean of Students office determines if a situation warrants issuing this recognition. This is neither recorded as an official certificate nor included in the official certificate count.

## Ohio State University

<https://news.osu.edu/ohio-state-university-trustees-approve-posthumous-degrees-and-amend-faculty-rules/>

Ohio State University trustees approve posthumous degrees and amend faculty rules

*Trustees approved two items in an off-cycle meeting*

The Ohio State University Board of Trustees today approved two items in an off-cycle meeting via Zoom. Incoming university president Kristina Johnson joined the meeting in addition to 10 trustees.

### **Faculty rules updated**

The board approved additions to the *Rules of the University Faculty* regarding Title IX procedures for faculty cases. To comply with a May 2020 Department of Education update to Title IX, it provides new procedures for the investigation, adjudication, sanctioning and appeals of sexual misconduct cases in accordance with the university's [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

### **Posthumous degrees approved**

The board approved awarding four degrees posthumously on Aug. 9, 2020 – the university's summer commencement: Hasan Khan, bachelor of science in food, agricultural and biological engineering; Samuel Riley, bachelor of science in geographic information science; Jesse Sympson, associate of arts; and Ahmed Thabt, master of science in physics.

## Pennsylvania State University

<https://aappm.psu.edu/policy/o-5-posthumous-conferral-of-degrees>

Posthumous Conferral of Degrees

### **Policy:**

On rare occasions, a student who has completed all or nearly all of the requirements for a degree meets an untimely death before the degree is conferred. In such cases, it may be appropriate for this student to be recognized for his/her work by means of conferring a degree or other recognition posthumously.

### **Procedure for Undergraduate Students:**

With the support of the academic unit and the family of the student, often in consultation with Student Affairs or the college directly, a petition is initiated by an undergraduate student's college dean/chancellor for one of the following forms of recognition:

1. Students enrolled in an integrated undergraduate/graduate (IUG) program who have met all of the requirements for their undergraduate program will be awarded their Bachelor's degree. The graduate portion of their work will follow the Procedure for Graduate Students below.
2. Undergraduate students who are in good academic standing and in the judgment of the college dean/chancellor are within a semester of completing their studies (usually 19 credits or less) may be recommended for a posthumous degree.
3. Undergraduate students who are in good academic standing and in the judgment of the college dean/chancellor have completed 50% or more of the required credits toward the degree may be recommended for a Degree in Memoriam. For students who have not yet been admitted to a major, the degree may be a Bachelor's Degree in Memoriam or Associate's Degree in Memoriam rather than a degree in a specific major.
4. Undergraduate students who are in good academic standing pursuing a Bachelor's degree who have completed all requirements for the Associate's degree, in a program that awards such a degree, will be awarded the Associate's degree.
5. Undergraduate students who are in good academic standing and do not meet one of the criteria above may be recommended for a Certificate of Recognition.

The college dean/chancellor will provide a recommendation along with a verification of the student's academic standing and degree progress. Petitions shall be forwarded to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education for review and recommendation. Petitions for a Posthumous Degree or a Degree in Memoriam shall be forwarded to the President for approval.

If approved, the President will notify the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education. The Dean for Undergraduate Education will notify the college dean/chancellor who will then inform the Registrar's Office.

**Procedure for Graduate Students:**

With the support of the academic unit and the family of the student, a petition is initiated by a graduate student's graduate program head and primary advisor for one of the following forms of recognition:

1. *Students pursuing a doctoral degree*

- a. The graduate program should be consulted to determine if awarding a master's degree based on work completed is appropriate in lieu of a Posthumous Doctoral Degree or a Doctoral Degree in Memoriam.
- b. Students pursuing a doctoral degree who are in good academic standing and have passed their Comprehensive Examination may be recommended for a Posthumous Doctoral Degree.
- c. Students pursuing a doctoral degree who are in good academic standing and have passed their Qualifying Examination may be recommended for Doctoral Degree in Memoriam.
- d. Students pursuing a doctoral degree who are in good standing but do not meet one of the criteria above may be recommended for a Certificate of Recognition.

2. *Students pursuing a master's degree*

- a. Students pursuing a master's degree who are in good standing and have completed at least 75% of required credits for the degree may be recommended for a Posthumous Master's Degree.
- b. Students pursuing a master's degree who are in good standing and have completed at least 50% of required credits for the degree may be recommended for a Master's Degree in Memoriam.
- c. Students pursuing a master's degree who are in good standing and do not meet one of the criteria above may be recommended for a Certificate of Recognition.

Petitions shall be forwarded to the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School for review and recommendation. Petitions for a Posthumous Degree or a Degree in Memoriam shall be forwarded to the President for approval.

If approved, the President will notify the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School will notify the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will obtain the appropriate diploma and forward it to the Dean of the Graduate School for presentation at commencement.

The official commencement program will include the student's name with the annotation that the degree was conferred posthumously. The student's record will be similarly annotated.

**Revisions:**

Approved: President Jordan (12-11-87)

Revised and Effective: President Spanier (7-15-96)

Revised: ACUE (3-14-02)

Revised: Editorial (6-5-06)

Approved: ACUE (5-7-15)

Revised: ACUE (5-2-24)

## Texas A&M University

<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule14/>

### Degree Requirements: Posthumous Degrees

14.18 Posthumous Bachelor's Degrees. If a candidate for a bachelor's degree, at the time of death, is enrolled in courses that would complete the degree requirements, the appropriate degree may be awarded posthumously on the recommendation of the student's academic department, on the approval of the student's college, by the Faculty Senate and by the president of the university. Exceptional cases will be referred to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate for review and recommendation to the president.

14.19 Posthumous Graduate Degrees. Any request for a posthumous degree must be initiated by the chair of the student's advisory committee and may be awarded on the recommendation of the student's academic department, on the approval of the student's college, by the Faculty Senate and by the president of the university. For all degrees, the student's advisory committee must certify that it believes that all requirements for the degree would have been completed by the anticipated graduation date under normal circumstances.

14.19.1 For degrees requiring a research product (dissertation, record of study, thesis or research paper) the research proposal, at the time of the student's death, must have been signed by each committee member and a significant portion of the dissertation, record of study, thesis or research paper must have been reviewed by the committee and found to be acceptable. Ph.D. students must have been admitted to candidacy.

14.19.2 For degrees not requiring a research product, the student must have been, at the time of death, enrolled in courses that would have completed the degree requirements. Exceptional cases will be referred to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate for review and recommendation to the president.

## University of Texas – Austin

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/navigating/policies/academic/posthumous-degree>

### Posthumous Graduate Degree

The Graduate School will, upon request from a family member or program, award a posthumous degree to a deceased student who had completed all degree requirements (including a successful dissertation defense for a Ph.D.) but had not submitted or uploaded the required forms.

If the request comes from a family member, the Graduate School will ask the program for a letter of support.

## University of Washington – Seattle

<https://registrar.washington.edu/staff-faculty/posthumous-degree/>

### Posthumous Degree

#### **Awarding Posthumous Degrees at the University of Washington (Seattle)**

The death of a University of Washington student is a loss shared by the full University. We extend our condolences to the family and friends of the student, as well as to the academic unit and all impacted UW community members.

For students who were within two quarters of meeting their graduation requirements, family members will often ask for consideration of a posthumous degree to be awarded.

#### **University Policies for a Posthumous Degree Request**

A degree may be awarded to a student who dies prior to the completion of degree requirements if the following guidelines have been met:

1. Request is made by the student's family to a UW school official;
2. The UW school official initiates the corresponding UW Posthumous Degree Request form;

3. Office of the Vice President for Student Life verifies proof of death and relationship to family;
4. Student was within two quarters of graduating;
5. The Dean of the degree-granting college approves the awarding of the degree.
6. *For graduate students, the request also requires approval from the Dean of the Graduate School.*

### **If the request is approved**

- **Transcript:** An annotation of **POSTHUMOUS DEGREE** will be entered on the official transcript.
- **Diploma:** The Office of the University Registrar will arrange for a diploma to be created and provided to the family, per their instructions. The words “**Posthumous Degree**” will not appear on the diploma.

### **Posthumous Degree Request Forms**

The UW school official initiating the Posthumous Degree request must log in with their UW NetID to access the corresponding request forms.

Posthumous Degree request form for [Graduate](#) degree programs.

Posthumous Degree request for [Professional](#) degree programs.

Posthumous Degree request for [Undergraduate](#) degree programs.

### **Posthumous Degrees for UW Campuses**

Refer to the following links, forms, and policies for UW Bothell, UW Tacoma, and the Graduate School.

- [UW Bothell Posthumous Degrees](#)
- [UW Bothell Request Form \[PDF\]](#)
- [UW Tacoma Graduation Procedures](#)
- [UW Tacoma Request Form \[PDF\]](#)
- [UW Graduate School Policy 3.9](#)

### **Posthumous Degree Request Approval Process**

- The family of the student reaches out to a UW school official to inquire about the awarding of a posthumous degree.
- The UW School official who was initially contacted gathers information from the family including student information, contact information, relationship to the

student for the letter that accompanies the diploma, and the address to which the diploma should be mailed.

- The UW School official submits the UW Posthumous Degree Request which is routed to the Office of the University Registrar, for undergraduate and professional students, or Graduate Enrollment Management Services, for graduate students, to verify the student was within two quarters of earning their intended degree. Upon verification, the request is routed to the Vice President for Student Life.
- The Office of the Vice President for Student Life works with the family to obtain proof of death and connection to the family. The Office of the Vice President for Student Life routes the UW Posthumous Degree Request to the dean of the school or college from which the student will earn a posthumous degree.
- The dean of the college or school sponsoring the awarding of the posthumous degree, indicating approval of sponsorship, routes the UW Posthumous Degree Request to the OUR, for undergraduate and professional students, or the Dean of the Graduate School, for graduate students, for approval.
- Upon all corresponding approvals, the OUR will award the degree and order a diploma. A letter will be created under the University Registrar's name to be sent with a letter of condolence to the family at the address indicated.

For questions or assistance with this process, please contact Dr. Helen B. Garrett at the [Office of the University Registrar](#).

## University of Wisconsin – Madison

<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-864>

### The Awarding of Posthumous Degree

#### **Policy Statement**

Schools and colleges may be interested in conferring posthumously a degree to a student who is near completion of their degree so as to recognize the academic achievement of that student who, in all likelihood, would have fulfilled the requirements of the degree. In all such cases, conferral of a degree must also be balanced with attention to academic and institutional integrity.

#### **Criteria**

Decisions on awarding of posthumous degrees will be made using the following criteria:

1. For award of a posthumous baccalaureate degree in memoriam:
  - The student was a senior.
  - The student was enrolled in a degree program at the time of death and was in good academic standing.
2. For award of a posthumous graduate degree in memoriam:
  - For graduate degrees not requiring a research product, the student was enrolled in courses that would have completed the degree requirements at the time of death, and they would have passed the courses with an acceptable grade.
  - For graduate degrees requiring a research product, the student had completed all course and other requirements pursuant to the degree and was near completion of their dissertation/thesis; and the student's committee determines their scholarship to be substantial work and worthy of the degree.
3. For award of a posthumous commendation in memoriam:
  - A continuously enrolled student who dies before meeting the criteria listed above may be nominated for a posthumous commendation. Such a nomination would be appropriate for a student who has made substantial progress toward a degree or has achieved particular distinction during their tenure at the university.

**Procedure:**

1. When a recommendation for the awarding of a posthumous recognition is received, the student's academic department and appropriate student services office determines whether to recommend the degree based on the above criteria.
2. The appropriate dean or director, or the dean of the Graduate School in the case of a graduate student, forwards the recommendation to the chancellor for conferral.
3. Upon approval, the Office of the Registrar will be notified and will record the awarding of the appropriate degree in memoriam in the student's transcript.
4. The registrar will send a diploma to the student's family and invite the family to send a representative to participate in the commencement ceremony on behalf of the student.

5. The student's name will be listed in the appropriate commencement ceremony program.