
As adopted by the Faculty Senate at its meeting on 7 December 2009

POLICY ON THE AWARDING OF POSTHUMOUS DEGREES

Purpose of the Policy

Current policy delegates to the college dean of the deceased student the authority to recommend a posthumous degree. No restrictions are placed on that authority. In order to clarify the central role of the faculty in establishing requirements for graduation and titles of conferred degrees, the Faculty Senate identifies the following posthumous degrees and the conditions for conferral.

By state statute the faculty have primary responsibility for the academic and educational activities of the institution, as codified in *Faculty Policies and Procedures*. Among these responsibilities, the faculty have the authority for establishing the requirements for graduation and the title of the degree to be conferred upon completion of any course of study.

Sadly, students sometimes die prior to completing requirements for their degrees. In all cases, the University of Wisconsin-Madison faculty wish to extend sympathy and compassion to the student's family.

Schools and colleges may be interested in conferring posthumously a degree to a student who is near completion of her/his 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:

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.

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 he/she 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 his/her dissertation/thesis; and the student's committee determines his/her scholarship to be substantial work and worthy of the degree.

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 her/his 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.