

## THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

### Guidelines for making a nomination for the award of an Honorary Degree

Honorary degrees are awarded to people, nominated by the Open University community, who merit special recognition for their outstanding achievement and distinction in a field or activity consistent with the values and commitments of the Open University. Those receiving an honorary degree attend one of our degree ceremonies, at which the award is formally given to them, adding something exciting to what is a very special day for our graduates.

The following will help you to make your nomination.

#### 1. Who can make a nomination

- a) The University has approved two honorary degree awards: Doctor of the University (DUniv) and Master of the University (MUniv). Any member of the University can make proposals to the Honorary Degrees Committee to nominate individuals for these awards. Members of the University are defined as current staff, current students and graduates of the University.
- b) Nominations for honorary degrees of The Open University can also be made by its accredited institutions. In such cases, the nomination would be expected to have been made under the auspices of, or endorsed by, the head of the institution concerned and will arrive with the Committee via Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP).

#### 2. Criteria for awarding an honorary degree

- a) Listed below are the eight approved criteria against which nominations for both Doctor of the University and Master of the University can be considered by the Honorary Degrees Committee. The criterion selected should reflect the primary reason for the nomination.

Approved criteria:

- i. Services to the University
  - ii. Services to the educationally underprivileged
  - iii. Work in areas of special educational concern to the University
  - iv. Academic and scholarly distinction
  - v. Public Services
  - vi. Services to the Arts and Sciences
  - vii. Exceptional contribution to education and culture
  - viii. Exceptionally innovative and socially responsible business developments
- b) The work of nominees for the award of Doctor of the University would normally be expected to have gained them national or international standing and would normally have had a national or international impact that has been widely recognised as such by others working in the field. It should be noted that 'national' in the context of these guidelines should refer to the four political jurisdictions of the UK and the UK as a whole.

- c) The work of the nominees for the award of Master of the University would normally be expected to have gained them regional or local repute and would normally reflect a beneficial impact that has been recognised as such by others at a local or regional level.
- d) Ideally the nominations submitted each year will be broadly representative of the population of the UK. The Committee welcomes recommendations to address underrepresented groups in relation to gender, disability, ethnicity and providing for a wide geographical spread.

### 3. Choosing your nominee

- a) Nominations should be a good match to the chosen criteria for award.
- b) Nominations should be aligned with the University's mission, aims and ideals ([www.open.ac.uk/about/main/mission](http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/mission)). This might include being prominent in their profession or a field of work of particular interest to the University and its students.
- c) It is an explicit part of the mission of The Open University to seek the removal of barriers to achievement. Nominations are welcome for those who have made outstanding contributions in their field of activity by overcoming such barriers.
- d) Awards are not normally given for performing well in a role for which the nominee was paid; rather that they would be expected to have demonstrably gone 'above and beyond' that role in some way. The information provided by the proposer should articulate the nominee's range of activities/impacts and draw out that wider contribution for the Committee.
- e) Nominations for work of individuals with celebrity status would require evidence of a personal, ongoing and longstanding commitment to relevant work (e.g. excellence in the arts, support of a charity connected with the work of the OU or for the popularisation of a subject of interest to the OU in the media). Charitable contribution and celebrity status are not in themselves sufficient and are unlikely to be supported by the committee on this basis alone.
- f) Proposers who nominate academics who are presenters on television or radio, or use other media to popularise their discipline, should also make reference to the nominee's academic credentials and their reputation within their field.
- g) Honorary degrees are not appropriate for recognising staff who have excelled in the roles for which they were employed by the University, whether they are current or retired members of staff. The Honorary Degrees Committee may exceptionally consider a nomination for a retired member of staff who has made a distinguished contribution to society outside of their paid role within the University.
- h) Honorary awards cannot be made to individuals who are elected members of local authorities, assemblies or parliaments.
- i) The committee would not normally support nominations for current students registered on a programme of study, or very recent graduates. In exceptional cases an award might be made to such individuals who have substantial achievements not connected to their studies with the University.
- j) The University encourages donations and it is feasible that some honorary graduate nominees may have made financial donations to the University in the past or will do so in the future. However, there is never any association between gifts to the University and the award of degrees. Awards are made solely on the criteria set out by the University on the nomination form, and the 'Services to the University' criteria does not include financial contributions made to the University.
- k) Whilst not essential, the Committee would also appreciate any information you may be able to provide about the benefits that your nominee can bring to the University and its students, e.g. advocacy of the University, adult education or other practical support such as participating or speaking at University events.

- l) Within the nomination text, it would also be helpful to explain why you believe the nominee would want to be associated with the OU.
- m) Finally, it would be helpful if you could also give some consideration to your nominee's ability to enhance our student's degree ceremony experience through, for example, their presentation skills or eminence in their field.

#### **4. Completing and submitting the nomination form**

- a) Proposers should state clearly on their nomination form whether they wish their nominee to be considered for the honorary degree of Doctor or Master of the University.
- b) Where two or more nominations are made each should be submitted separately and not on the same nomination form. Where a proposal passes the initial stages of consideration the proposer may be asked to provide the Committee with further information.
- c) To enable the Honorary Degrees Committee to carry out its work, proposers are asked to provide the necessary biographical details and/or information relevant to the agreed criteria for the award of the particular degree for which the nomination is made. Please refer to Section 3 of these guidelines when completing this part of the nomination form.
- d) All nominations will be investigated in detail by the Honorary Degrees Committee and a list then prepared for consideration under the procedures agreed by the Senate.
- e) Nominations should be marked 'Strictly Confidential and Restricted' and emailed to [Honorary-Nominations@open.ac.uk](mailto:Honorary-Nominations@open.ac.uk).

#### **5. The Honorary Graduate Presenter**

- a) The Vice-Chancellor will select a member of the University to be the honorary graduate presenter at the degree ceremony. Where this is not the proposer, the proposer may be expected to meet with the honorary graduand's presenter and help provide such additional biographical or background information as might be needed for the presentation speech.
- b) The proposer will be invited to attend the ceremony at which the conferment will take place.

#### **6. Timescales**

- a) Nominations can be made at any time but there is an annual cut-off point at the end of each September. The Honorary Degree Committee cycle will then take place during the following year, concluding with the Senate meeting in June, with successful nominees being conferred in the year after that.
- b) You will get a letter advising you of the outcome of your nomination in the July following the annual September cut-off date.

**Margaret Jones, Secretary  
Honorary Degrees Committee  
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