

**Doc. T93-060, as amended**  
**Passed by the BoT**  
**6/2/93**  
**Revised 6/5/96**  
**Revised 2/16/05**  
**Revised 9/17/14**

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS  
POLICY ON AWARDING HONORARY DEGREES**

**CRITERIA**

Candidates for honorary degrees shall be persons of great accomplishment and high ethical standards who exemplify the ideals of the University of Massachusetts. Factors to be considered in awarding degrees include:

1. National or international intellectual, artistic, cultural, or public service distinction in a particular field.
2. Outstanding achievement which the University wishes to acknowledge.
3. Outstanding contribution to the University and/or the Commonwealth.

**ELIGIBILITY**

1. Consistent with widespread policies generally followed by American public higher education institutions, honorary degrees will not be awarded to current members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, or staff of the University, or to current candidates or holders of federal or state elective office in Massachusetts except under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Trustees.
2. Persons holding an honorary degree from one campus of the University are not ineligible to receive a degree from another campus at a later date. However, any person receiving an honorary degree from one campus shall not be so eligible for five years from the date of the initial award. After the expiration of the five year period of ineligibility, nominations are nevertheless discouraged and will be approved only in extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Trustees.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

In accordance with standard practice at American institutions of higher learning, care should be taken to ensure strict confidentiality at all stages of the honorary degree process. In particular, there should be no communication with prospective degree recipients regarding a likely degree until after the Board of Trustees has approved the award. The need for confidentiality was acknowledged by the Legislature when, in subjecting the University to the provisions of the Open meeting law, it allowed the Trustees to consider the award of honorary degrees in executive session.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. Each campus will establish its own procedure for recommending nominees to the Chancellor. A description of the procedure should be sent to the Secretary for the record. The process should allow for participation by representative groups and individuals on campus, and confidentiality should be preserved at all times.
2. In the year preceding the Commencement at which the degrees are to be awarded, the President will solicit the names of potential candidates from the Trustees and the Chancellors. Nominations should include biographical information, the reason(s) why the honor should be bestowed, and which campus should award the degree.
3. Nominations received from sources other than the President and Trustees shall be forwarded by the Secretary to the appropriate Chancellor to be considered under campus procedure.
4. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the Chancellors and any Trustee must send their recommendations to the President six months before the event at which the degree is to be awarded. Upon receipt and review by the President the approved nominations will be prepared and mailed to the members of the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs with copies to the President and the appropriate Chancellors. The Committee shall act at a regular meeting or, in extraordinary circumstances, at a special meeting called for the purpose. Upon recommendation by the Committee, the approved nominations will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees.
5. Honorary Degrees will be considered at the Board's annual meeting. Following the annual Board meeting at which honorary degree recipients are selected, the Secretary will notify the Chancellors of those candidates who are authorized to be awarded a degree. Except as may otherwise be directed by the Board of Trustees, Chancellors will contact those among the authorized candidates as they see fit and will keep the Board, through its Secretary, informed of whether invitations to receive a degree have been offered, accepted or declined, and of other developments.
6. Except under extraordinary circumstances, no honorary degree will be awarded *in absentia* or at a place other than a campus of the University. In the event that an individual is not granted a degree in the year for which it was approved, such person shall remain authorized to receive an honorary degree from the campus in question for the next successive two years without further action by the Board of Trustees.