

Honorary Degrees Committee – Guidance on Nominations

At their meeting of 4th May 2018, Chaired by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson, the Honorary Degrees Committee discussed and agreed the points noted below. Colleagues from across the University are encouraged to propose candidates for Honorary Degrees and should note the following guidance which summarises how the committee will consider the nominations:

General principles

- Conferring one Honorary Degree at each graduation ceremony is considered the ideal number.
- The first choice is always to confer Honorary Degrees at one of our own graduation ceremonies rather than a special ceremony at a different time of year.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will we confer out of cycle, such proposals must demonstrate a compulsive case and should be checked at an early stage with Principal's Office (Fiona Boyd).
- If degrees are conferred at special events, such as the International Book Festival, then the proceedings should be recorded, where possible, so that parts can be played at the relevant graduation ceremony.

Nominators should consider 3 key questions and seek to answer them when putting together the information on the nomination form:

1. Why am I nominating this particular person?
2. Why is it important to the University of Edinburgh?
3. Why at this specific point in time?

Indication of priorities

The committee will consider:

- Excellence in the candidates' chosen field.
- The relevance of the candidate to the graduating students and the strength of their ability to be a role model for the students.
- Connections to/with our University or, occasionally, the city itself. The committee will look for an element that makes the nomination unique to Edinburgh. If this is not evident then the other criteria, such as the extent to which the nominee will be seen as a strong role model, must be particularly evident.
- The number of Honorary Degrees already held by the individual, a high number not being desirable as there is a sense that this may negate the argument for the degree being unique to Edinburgh.

Other considerations the Committee will take into account:

- The distinction between University Benefactor status and that of awarding an Honorary Degree.
- Diversity matters.

Regarding the nomination of elderly candidates - if you are planning to nominate someone over the age of 80 I would ask you to check that the nominee had been seen in public and would be fit to participate in a ceremony before submitting a form.

We would also like to encourage you to consider submitting nominations for the category of Honorary Fellowship which is intended to honour those who have rendered appreciable

public service to a College or to the University, probably over a number of years, but not excluding those whose contribution has been particularly significant although over a shorter period. This award is seen as an appropriate way in which to honour persons who might not in the normal course of events be nominated for an Honorary degree. *(Please note that this honour is for exceptional contribution to the University and is separate to Honorary Fellowships awarded by Colleges, which are dealt with by the College Offices.)*

It is important from the beginning of the process of nomination through to the point at which a decision is reached and the successful candidates have been invited by the Principal, that a high level of confidentiality be maintained. It would be a major embarrassment if a nominee was made aware of their nomination and was then subsequently unsuccessful. Equally it would be embarrassing for the University if there was disclosure in the public domain prior to the successful nominees receiving official notification from the Principal.

If you are aware that any School or Department has a special anniversary in 2020, efforts should be made if possible to find a suitable honorary graduate. For example in 2013 the School of Chemistry celebrated its Tercentenary with various events, and a ceremony which honoured 5 eminent Chemists. In 2016 Nursing Studies recognised their 60 year anniversary with an honorary graduate who became the Chairman of the National Board for Nursing and Midwifery, and the Science Studies Unit recognised their 50 years with two honorary graduates.