



1 Purpose of honorary awards

1.2 Northumbria University awards honorary degrees to people who have attained the very highest standards of scholarship or demonstrated outstanding achievement or distinction worthy of national and international recognition in their academic or professional field. Honorary awards are also awarded to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the University in support of its mission, for example, through long and meritorious service, through distinction far beyond the usual remit of their role, or through philanthropy in support of the University's strategic objectives.

1.3 Depending on the subject specialism or area of expertise, honorary degrees are awarded as follows:

Doctor of Civil Law (Hon DCL)
Doctor of Letters (Hon DLitt)
Doctor of Science (Hon DSc)
Doctor of Music (Hon DMus)
Doctor of Divinity (Hon DD)

1.4 Honorary degrees recognise outstanding achievements and distinction in areas that are in accord with the mission of the University and that reflect its ambitions and values. They can provide a further opportunity to strengthen and promote a strategic partnership with an organisation, charitable foundation or individual, recognising a mutual commitment to a vision or cause. In all cases, the award is in recognition of distinction with which the University would like to be associated or be seen to support.

1.5 The award of honorary degrees should reflect the diversity within the regional, national and international communities that the University serves and provide an example of ambition and achievement to the University's students and graduands.

1.6 A person nominated for an honorary degree may not necessarily be someone known for their strong connections with the University but would be preeminent in their field and with whom the University may want to be associated.

1.7 The award of an honorary degree does not place any obligation on the recipient; for example, there is no subsequent requirement or expectation, by virtue of honorary graduate status, that the individual concerned will perform a particular function or attend University events. Nevertheless, the University values the lifelong association it has with its honorary graduates and aims to cultivate its relationship, to engage honorary graduates in the development of the University as its ambassadors and supporters.

1.8 Honorary awards are of considerable significance to the University because they reflect how the University perceives itself, its mission and its values through association with an individual, group or organisation.

2 Scope of the *Honorary Awards Policy*

- 2.1 This Policy sets out the University's honorary degree guidelines to ensure that the honorary degrees awarded support the institution's mission and strategic objectives. Moreover, it is designed to ensure that any award does not detract from the University's values, dignity, integrity, or reputation, or confer inappropriate privileges, create a conflict of interest, or give the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- 2.2 In addition to this Policy, the University's *Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest Policy*, *Naming Policy* and *Philanthropic Gift & Donation Policy* provide additional guidance in relation to ethical and reputational risks associated with honorary awards.
- 2.3 Those proposing or receiving an honorary degree should be made aware of this Policy.

3 Guiding principles for awarding honorary degrees

- 3.1 The following questions should be considered in relation to each nominee:
- a) Is the nominee's work relevant to the life and work of the University? Or are they preeminent in a field with which the University may want to be associated?
 - b) Are the nominee's achievements sufficiently well evidenced or documented? Is the nominee generally accepted and acknowledged by their peers and/or the public as being outstanding in their academic or professional field, or to have made an exceptional contribution to the University?
 - c) Does the nominee have an existing connection to Northumbria University or any of the University's partner institutions or organisations?
 - d) Will association with the nominee cement or further strengthen an existing University partnership or help establish a new partnership?
 - e) Does the nominee's reputation extend internationally and would their association with the University build its global reputation?
 - f) Would this person serve as an example of ambition and achievement to the University's students and graduands?
 - g) Does this person have the potential to act as a champion and supporter of the University?
 - h) Why might the individual concerned want to be associated with Northumbria University?
 - i) Are there any ethical and/or reputational risk considerations that may arise from this nomination?
- 3.2 The University will not award honorary degrees, which:
- a) do not advance its mission or support the University Strategy;
 - b) restrict impartial, independent research, scholarship and teaching;
 - c) conflict with the values or reputation of Northumbria University or expose it to undue adverse publicity or reputational risk. This could include, for example, expressing views or engaging in activity (whether in or the public domain or not), which are not consistent with the University's values; or
 - d) require unacceptable expenditure or additional financial and/or administrative University resources.
- 3.3 The University will not usually, but may in exceptional circumstances, award honorary degrees:
- a) posthumously;
 - b) to serving elected UK politicians;
 - c) to serving members of the University's Board of Governors;
 - d) to current members of staff; to
 - e) to current students.

3.4 The process of awarding honorary degrees will follow and be subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Any request for information about honorary awards will be referred to the University's Records & Information Manager (Legal Services).

4 Process for proposing individuals for honorary awards

4.1 The University's Honorary Awards Committee meets bi-annually and is responsible for accepting or declining a proposal for an individual to receive an honorary degree. The Terms of Reference for the Committee is attached (Appendix A). Nominations are requested by the secretary of the committee in advance of these meetings; however, proposals can be submitted throughout the academic year.

4.2 Proposals for awarding an individual with an honorary degree may originate from any part of the University, or from representatives of Northumbria Students' Union. It is expected that University colleagues will have discussed the proposal with their Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Service Director or other relevant member of the University's Senior Management Group in advance of submitting the nomination to the Honorary Awards Committee.

4.3 All proposals should be detailed on the *Pro-forma to Propose an Honorary Degree* (attached as Appendix B) and sent to the Assistant Marketing Director & Head of Advancement, prior to any discussion taking place with the individual.

4.4 The Assistant Marketing Director & Head of Advancement will liaise with appropriate University colleagues to provide advice on the honorary awards process and any ethical and/or reputational risk considerations that may arise from proposals.

4.5 The Honorary Awards Committee will determine whether a proposal should be accepted or declined, considering the proposal in line with the *guiding principles* under sections 3.1 to 3.4 above. All nominations will be considered fairly, without discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

4.6 The secretary of the committee will liaise with the proposer, and the relevant member of the University's Senior Management Group, in relation to the outcome of each nomination. Where a proposal is accepted, the secretary will work with appropriate colleagues to progress the award, including:

- letter of invitation;
- visit programme;
- citation and orator;
- marketing and communications; and
- future engagement programme (where relevant).

4.7 All honorary award proposals will be dealt with in strict confidence, until the award is publicly announced by the University.

4.8 The Honorary Awards Committee will receive an update on the progress of awards at each committee meeting. The Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive will report to Academic Board and the Board of Governors bi-annually on awards that have been accepted.

4.9 Honorary degrees will be awarded each year at the University's congregation ceremonies in Newcastle upon Tyne or overseas at one of its partner institutions. In special circumstances, honorary degrees will be awarded at other University events.

4.10 The conferment of an honorary degree will normally occur within three years of the issue of an invitation or, if this time has elapsed, a new nomination should be submitted to the Honorary Awards Committee for re-consideration.

4.11 Each honorary graduate will be listed in the Honorary Awards Book and on the Honorary Awards Board.

4.12 All documentation relating to honorary awards will be held by the Advancement Office.

5 Withdrawal of an honorary award

5.1 The University reserves the right to withdraw an honorary award in the event of the individual, or if relevant the organisation with which the individual is associated, being involved in or associated with activities that conflict with the University's values or, which could potentially adversely affect or be prejudicial to the reputation of the University.

5.2 The Honorary Awards Committee will consider whether an honorary award should be withdrawn, making a recommendation to the University Nominations Committee for its consideration. An extraordinary meeting of the Honorary Awards Committee may be convened in this circumstance.