

Honorary degrees – how to write a nomination

Who deserves an honorary degree?

An honorary degree is the highest accolade that the University can bestow on an individual. The award recognises and celebrates outstanding achievement and distinction in areas which are in accord with the mission of the University and which reflect its ambitions and values.

They should be reserved for nominees:

1. who demonstrate **personal** distinction or achievements in the following areas:
 - outstanding contribution to the work and development of the University
 - outstanding social, economic or cultural contribution within UK, particularly Scotland, and within the UAE and Malaysia
 - outstanding work, public service or contribution to society more generally in areas of particular relevance to the University's values and mission
 - outstanding achievement by an alumnus/alumna of the University
2. who have, or potentially have, a connection with the University
3. where a clear engagement plan is in place that has strong links to the University's strategic themes.

How do I write a nomination?

The most important thing is to provide hard evidence of what the nominee has done and how they have made things better for others.

Give examples of how they have demonstrated outstanding quality and personal contribution in the relevant areas and describe as vividly and precisely as possible the **difference** their contribution has made, what the effect has been and why it has been important.

Give details to support these claims. Show how your candidate has:

- earned the respect of their peers and become a role model in their field
- produced, perhaps against the odds, sustained achievement which has required moral courage, vision, the ability to make tough choices or determined application and hard work.

What shouldn't I do?

The Honorary Degrees Working Group judge nominees' merits on the information provided to them by the nomination. Only those nominations that provide objective evidence of the achievements and characteristics enumerated above are likely to be successful.

It is not enough simply to provide:

- an extended CV
- a list of educational achievements
- a list of appointments, awards or posts
- a job description summarising the nominee's role.

Such nominations are normally unsuccessful, often with the Group observing that the nominee is 'doing no more than their job' or 'doing nothing that stands out'.

Instead, your nomination should describe what is special about your nominee's achievements and show memorably and persuasively how and where they have made a difference.

Endorsement

You should ensure that each nomination has the support and endorsement of the relevant head of School or professional service and that they confirm that the School or service will have an ongoing and active relationship with the nominee.

Engagement plan

In addition to the nomination, you should provide a clear ongoing engagement plan for your nominee and detail the probable benefits that the relationships will provide at local (e.g. School) and University level. Should the nomination be successful, the relevant School or professional services area will liaise with and forward the engagement plan to the Development and Alumni Office to ensure cohesion and clarity on any future engagement with nominees.

Heriot-Watt Honorary Degree awards

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Engineering (DEng)

in recognition of individuals who have made extensive and sustained contributions to the field of engineering

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (DSc)

in recognition of individuals who have made extensive and sustained contributions to the field of science

Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv)

in recognition of individuals whose achievements have had an impact nationally or internationally, and who are widely recognised by others working in the field

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt)

in recognition of individuals who have contributed in areas related to the humanities or to society in general

Where do I start?

If you are now ready to make a nomination, please download the form from our [honorary degrees working group webpage](#) or for further assistance, please contact Michele Stenhouse, Registry Events Manager, on 0131 451 4016.