

THE HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY HONORARY DEGREE

History

Heriot-Watt University has awarded Honorary Degrees every year since being granted its Royal Charter and thereby gaining university status in 1966. The Heriot-Watt Charter decrees that the University may confer an Honorary Degree of Master or Doctor on any person whom it may deem worthy of such a distinction.

Since awarding its first honorary doctorate in 1966, the University has recognised more than 400 exceptional individuals in this way.

Heriot-Watt Honorary Degree awards

The University awards 4 different Honorary Degrees, each an Honorary Doctorate:

- Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv)
- Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt)
- Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (DSc)
- Honorary Degree of Doctor of Engineering (DEng)

Past recipients of Honorary Degrees

Individuals from many different walks of life have been awarded Honorary Degrees by Heriot-Watt University. These have included: world leaders and royal figures; eminent scientists, engineers and inventors, individuals who have made significant contributions in branches of business and industry; those who have distinguished themselves in many fields across the creative and performing arts and sport; and others, who in their individual ways, have made a significant contribution to the greater good of society, or to the life of the University.

A list of every Heriot-Watt University honorary graduate is published at: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/honorary-graduates-1966-present.pdf>

Criteria for the award of Honorary Degree

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

The following criteria are applied when considering nominations:

- outstanding personal contributions to the work and development of the University
- outstanding social, economic or cultural contribution
- 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 member of the University

The nomination process

In the autumn of each year, the University community is invited to submit nominations for the award of an Honorary Degree accompanied by a supporting case. All such nominations are considered by the Honorary Degrees Working Group. This is the committee which is empowered by the Senate – the body with supreme authority for the granting of the University's degrees – to consider nominations

and to make approaches to those individuals that the Working Group agrees should be invited to receive an Honorary Degree.

Only if and when an individual agrees to accept the invitation of an honorary award will the Senate be invited to consider and approve the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Working Group for the award of the degree.

Receiving the award

Honorary degrees must be conferred on the recipient in person at a ceremony for the conferment of degrees called by the University. Prior to the conferment, prospective recipients of an honorary degree are known as honorary graduands – becoming honorary graduates following receipt of their degree. If an honorary graduand cannot attend the degree ceremony at which the award of the Honorary Degree is proposed, the University will seek, in consultation with the honorary graduand, to identify a suitable alternative arrangement.

At the ceremony a senior member of the staff of the University will read a laudation, detailing the graduand's career and achievements and citing the basis on which the award is being made. Nearer to the date of the ceremony the graduand will be contacted so as to ensure the material being presented is accurate and appropriate.

What does it mean to be an honorary graduate of the University?

Recipients of a Heriot-Watt University Honorary Degree may if they wish adopt the title "doctor". The University Charter makes provision for the award of an Honorary Degree, "provided that the holder of such an Honorary Degree shall not be entitled to practice any profession by virtue of the fact that the degree has been conferred."

The award of an Honorary Degree by the University does not place any particular 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 any University events. Nevertheless, the University values the lifelong association it has with its honorary graduates and, just as Heriot-Watt follows the future careers and achievements of our honorary graduates with interest, we hope that, once our honorary graduates get to know us, they will maintain an interest in the development of the University and the contribution that we make to society and to the economy.

The University values highly the inspiration provided by our honorary graduates as role models for current and future generations of the University's students who will, themselves, come to be recipients of a Heriot-Watt University degree.

Is my nomination confidential?

Your nomination will be handled confidentially by the University until such time as you confirm your willingness to accept our invitation to receive the award. Some time after receipt of this confirmation, your nomination will be submitted to the Senate for formal approval. You should feel free from the point that you receive our initial letter of invitation to tell others about your nomination.