

HONORARY DEGREES NOMINATION GUIDANCE & CRITERIA



In accordance with its Royal Charter the University has the power to award honorary degrees. Council and Senate agreed the strategic use of honorary degrees to support the University's objectives.

Awards should provide an opportunity for the University to give public acclaim to an individual whose achievements have some connection with Keele's activities, mission or ethos. In awarding an honorary degree, the University seeks to recognise distinction and proven achievement or to identify an individual's potential.

The awarding of an honorary degree can also strengthen links to an individual who can assist in raising the University's external profile regionally, nationally or internationally, particularly in areas where they are influential.

Nominations should fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- Distinction in a field consistent with the activities, mission and ethos of the University
- Academic or professional distinction in a field of specific interest to a School/Research area
- A significant personal contribution or connection to the University
- Distinction achieved by an alumnus of the University
- Distinction achieved by people associated with the local and the wider region.

Whilst it is expected that most Honorary Graduates will fall into one or more of these criteria, they are not exclusive. Exceptional cases will be considered in respect of outstanding individuals whose association in name with the University will be beneficial. Self-nominations will not be accepted.

The reputation and profile of Honorary Graduates should resonate with those of the University and provide an inspiring example, especially to graduating students.

Whilst a demonstrable personal connection with Keele and its region is encouraged, there will be consideration of nominations where there is the potential to build such a valuable relationship.

Consideration may be given to former/retired members of staff who demonstrate service or distinction far beyond the usual remit of their post or who have served the University in other ways, or have achieved distinction in areas unrelated to their University role.

Nominations in respect of individuals considered by the Honorary Degrees Committee in the preceding three academic years will not be eligible for consideration, except at the invitation of the Committee.

Candidates nominated for an Honorary Degree should possess only a small number of honorary degrees, if any, and the Honorary Degrees Committee would prefer that Keele should be the first UK institution to recognise the candidate in such a manner, if possible.

The University does not award Honorary Degrees to current members of the University, current lay members of the University's Council, currently serving (local or national) politicians or those who already hold a Keele

Honorary Degree.

Colleagues are encouraged to think about how awards might be used to assist building links with prominent individuals in areas where Keele has a strong academic or research profile.

WHO CAN SUBMIT A NOMINATION FOR AN HONORARY DEGREE?

Any member of staff, student or member of the University's Council can submit a nomination.

HOW TO SUBMIT A NOMINATION

Nominations are now quicker and easier to submit – six questions need to be answered using Microsoft Forms nominations, which can be accessed via the Honorary Degrees Committee [webpage](#). If you have any difficulties in completing the Form, please contact the [Governance team](#).

CONSIDERATION STAGE

The University Executive Committee will undertake a sifting review of all nominations and select up to 25 candidates to put forward for consideration by the Honorary Degrees Committee. The Honorary Degrees Committee will consider the nominations and then make its final recommendations to Senate and then Council. The Committee will have regard for the promotion of equality and diversity in the conduct of its business and the selection of candidates against the approved criteria.

Nomination Forms should be submitted via the [MS Forms link](#) by **Friday 28 August 2026** to be considered at the September 2026 meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee, however, you can submit a nomination via the form at any point in the year.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF HONORARY DEGREES

Doctorate and, more rarely, Masters level degrees can be awarded by the University. The below criteria set out which award would usually be appropriate, although final awards will be made at the discretion of the Honorary Degrees Committee.

An honorary degree at doctoral level is normally awarded to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the University, or at a national/international level or where the individual already holds a degree at Masters/Doctoral level.

- a) The award of Doctor of the University is usually appropriate where a candidate has made an outstanding contribution to the development of the University, to the field of Education, and/or to a field other than those cited below.
- b) The award of Doctor of Letters is usually appropriate where a candidate has made an outstanding contribution in the fields of Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences.
- c) The award of Doctor of Laws is usually appropriate where a candidate has made an outstanding contribution in the field of Law.
- d) The award of Doctor of Music is usually appropriate where a candidate has made an outstanding contribution in the field of Music.
- e) The award of Doctor of Science is usually appropriate where a candidate has made an outstanding contribution in the fields of Science, Mathematics, Health Sciences, or Medicine.

An honorary degree at Masters level is normally awarded to individuals who have made a major contribution to a specific area of the University or to the region.

- a) The award of Master of the University is usually appropriate where a candidate has made a major contribution to a specific area of the University, to the field of Education, or to a field other than cited below.
- b) The award of Master of Arts is usually appropriate where a candidate has made a major contribution to the field of Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences.
- c) The award of Master of Science is usually appropriate where a candidate has made a major contribution to the field of the Sciences, Mathematics, Health Sciences, or Medicine.
- d) The award of Master of Music is usually appropriate where a candidate has made a major contribution to the field of Music.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

28 August: Deadline for nominations to be considered at the September 2026 Honorary Degrees Committee meeting.

After deadline: Governance team undertake a desk-based due diligence process and prepare for committees.

September: Nominations are presented to UEC for the initial sifting stage.

September: Full nominations forms are prepared and submitted to the Honorary Degrees Committee.

29 September: Meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee to identify final selection.

October: Final nominations are presented to Senate for approval.

November: Final nominations are presented to Council for endorsement.

November onwards: The Vice-Chancellor's Office writes to the successful nominees.

July: Honorary degree ceremony for the successful candidates (or January ceremony for some candidates).

Proposals should remain strictly confidential until it is known that the intended recipient is willing to accept.

Once it has been agreed who will be awarded an Honorary Degree, the orator will be chosen and the ceremony at which they will receive their award will be determined, which will be led by availability and other logistical arrangements.

REVOCATION OF HONORARY DEGREES

The University reserves the right to withdraw an Honorary Degree in the event that an Honorary Graduate, through behaviour or actions which become known to Council subsequent to their award, brings the University into disrepute. The decision to withdraw a Degree rest ultimately with the Council, acting on the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee and after a report from the Senate.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on the award of Honorary Degrees can be found [online](#).