Preamble

An honorary degree is the highest honour within the power of the University to confer, and the manner of conferral of such a degree is to reflect McGill University’s highest aspirations and ideals.

McGill honorary degrees are to be awarded to distinguished individuals, in recognition of a lifetime of scholarly, scientific or artistic achievement, or of exceptional contribution to the public good through professional or philanthropic activity. Individuals selected to receive a McGill honorary degree will have a record of contribution and accomplishment such that they will serve as an inspiration and role model to our students, graduates and our community as a whole, and which positions them to enhance the reputation of McGill University.

The primary criterion for selection of a candidate for a McGill honorary degree is the level of excellence the candidate has demonstrated in scholarship, scientific inquiry or artistic endeavour, or the exceptional nature of his or her contribution to the public good. The Committee may honour individuals whose outstanding contributions to their fields or to society may not yet have been widely recognized, as well as those who have received recognition.

Through its recommendations of outstanding individuals, the Senate Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee (the “Committee”) will endeavour to reflect the intellectual and cultural diversity of the McGill community and the broader communities in Quebec and Canada, and the international impact and reach of the University.
I. GENERAL

1. Eligibility

1.1 Nationals of any country are eligible for the award of honorary degrees at McGill University.

1.2 With the exception of section 2.3, active or newly retired members of the staff of McGill University, voting members of the Board of Governors of McGill University, and Canadian politicians currently in office will not normally be eligible for McGill honorary degrees.

1.3 Honorary degrees will not normally be awarded posthumously or in absentia.

2. Criteria

In selecting candidates for submission to Senate, the Committee shall consider the following factors:

2.1 scientific or scholarly distinction, or outstanding contribution to the creative or performing arts;

2.2 outstanding service to the community, through professional or philanthropic activities, including distinguished public service nationally, internationally or at the local or community level;

2.3 longstanding and distinguished record of service to the University, as can be reflected in the tradition of conferring an honorary degree on the Visitor, on the Chair of the Board of Governors when that person steps down from that office, and on the Principal when he or she retires or leaves the University.

2.4 relevance to a McGill anniversary or other special event may be considered by the Committee in support of a particular candidacy, but even then will not be the primary criterion for selection of candidates.

3. Honorary Degrees

The following honorary degrees may be conferred by the University:

3.1 Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa (DD): Awarded for outstanding scholarship in theology or exceptional service to a religious community;

3.2 Doctor of Laws, honoris causa (LLD): Awarded for outstanding scholarly achievement in law or for exceptional service to the University or the community-at-large;

3.3 Doctor of Letters, honoris causa (DLitt): Awarded for outstanding achievement in the humanities or social sciences, or for outstanding achievement in the arts, whether of a scholarly or creative nature;

3.4 Doctor of Music, honoris causa (DMus): Awarded for outstanding achievement in music, including scholarship, composition and performance; and

3.5 Doctor of Science, honoris causa (DSc): Awarded for outstanding achievement in the pure and applied sciences, whether of a scholarly nature or in innovation.
II. PROCEDURES

4. Nomination

4.1 Nominations to the Committee are made on a strictly confidential basis.

4.2 The Principal will issue a call to the University community in the spring of each year for nominations for honorary degrees to be awarded at Convocations:

The call will be made by the Secretary-General on behalf of the Principal directly to the Vice-Principals and Deans and the broader McGill community.

Notices soliciting candidacies will be placed in campus newspapers and on the McGill University website.

4.3 Nominations for honorary degrees shall be submitted to the Secretary-General, by the deadline date specified in the call for nominations; the Secretary-General receive nominations on behalf of the Committee.

4.4 Late or incomplete submissions will be returned to sponsors and may be resubmitted for consideration at the next appropriate cycle of work of the Committee.

4.5 Nominations must include the following information:

a) name and address of nominee;
b) career summary;
c) summary of education;
d) list of awards and recognitions; and
e) reasons for recommending award; with consideration to the suitability of the nominee as a convocation speaker.

Supporting documentation may be attached to the nomination forms (e.g., curriculum vitae, news clippings, etc).

4.6 In the early fall of each year, the Committee will review nominations received, with a view to recommending the optimal slate of candidates for honorary degrees to Senate normally at its November meeting.

4.7 In all cases, the name of a nominee will be kept in the strictest confidence until the University publicly announces the candidacy, following approval by Senate and acceptance by the nominee.

4.8 The names of nominators or sponsors shall remain confidential.

5. Selection

5.1 The Committee will apply uniformly rigorous selection standards appropriate to the type of nomination whether the nomination was received from within the University community or from a member of the public.

5.2 Candidates selected by the Committee will be brought to Senate for approval.

5.3 The Committee shall recommend the degree to be conferred as part of its submission of a candidacy to Senate.

5.4 Consistent with the prestige of a McGill honorary degree, the highest honour the University can bestow, the award of honorary degrees will normally be limited to no more
than one per convocation ceremony. When a suitable candidate is not indentified, no honorary degree will be awarded at such ceremonies.

5.5 Candidates for conferral of an honorary degree at Spring Convocation are normally endorsed by the Faculties but need not be. Nominations for the conferral of an honorary degree at Fall Convocation may be selected from among nominations received from the McGill Alumni Association or other nominations received, including the Committee's Standing List of outstanding nominations.

5.6 The Committee will endeavour to ensure over time that honorary degrees recommended and awarded reflect the University’s commitment to intellectual and social diversity.

6. **Time Limits and the Standing List**

6.1 Materials relating to nominations not selected by the Committee for submission to Senate will be destroyed by the University Secretariat in accordance with the *McGill University Records Retention Schedule*.

6.2 The Committee shall maintain a Standing List, to include nominations which the Committee wishes to consider at a later date. The Standing List shall also include those nominations, subject to 6.3, approved by Senate but for which the conferral of the degree remains pending.

6.3 Candidates approved by Senate for the conferral of an honorary degree who do not receive their degree within five years will be eliminated from the Standing List unless and until they are selected by the Committee and approved by Senate a second time, following a resubmission of the nomination to the Committee.

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**Complete Policy Title:** Guidelines for the Senate Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee

**Reviewed by:** Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee  
Last revised, Senate: May 20, 2009

**Approved by:** Senate

**Office responsible for Developing and maintaining the policy:** University Secretariat