



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 1.4151
DIVISION: Academic Affairs
TITLE: Awarding Posthumous Degrees
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I. Purpose and Scope

Western Kentucky University (WKU) recognizes the significance of acknowledging distinguished student achievement at all times, including following the death of a student who has made considerable progress toward the completion of a degree.

The university may confer posthumous degrees in recognition of incomplete earned work that represents substantial progress toward degree completion. In extraordinary instances, such as when the student's death occurred during or as a result of participation in a University sponsored activity, or in the case where chronic illness prevented current enrollment, some flexibility with regard to progress toward degree (II.1) may be exercised.

II. Policy

1. At the time of death, the student should have completed the majority of the degree requirements and be currently enrolled.
 - a. An undergraduate student may be considered for a posthumous degree if, at the time of death, they were in good academic standing and had completed a substantial portion – generally 75% - of the program requirements for the degree sought.
 - b. A graduate student may be considered for a posthumous graduate degree if, at the time of death, they were in good academic standing, had earned candidacy, and had completed a substantial portion – generally 75% - of the credit hour requirements for the degree sought.

III. Procedure

A. Approval Process

1. The student's department initiates the request for the award of a posthumous degree and forwards it to the dean of the college. Given the sensitive nature of such requests, the student's family should not be involved until the award of the degree is approved (see III.A.4).
2. If the dean supports the request, they should then forward a written request to the Provost. In the case of a graduate student, the written request should be routed to the Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education, and then to the Provost. Any information about the student's activities or achievements while attending WKU should be included in the request.
3. The Provost will review the request and forward it, along with a recommendation, to the President, who will render final disposition and also, if appropriate, determine whether the WKU Board of Regents should be informed of the award.
4. Upon approval from the President, the student's family will be contacted by the dean (or designee) and, if desired, the University Registrar will print a diploma.
5. In the event it is determined that a student did not meet the requirements for award of a posthumous degree, a posthumous certificate recognizing the student's progress toward the attainment of a degree, may nevertheless be awarded. The certificate will be signed by the Provost and President.

B. Recognition

1. Upon final approval by the President, the Office of the Provost will notify the student's dean.
2. The dean (or designee) will contact the student's next of kin to determine whether they wish to come to campus for commencement activities. If not, the college will make arrangements for delivery or presentation of the diploma to the family. Families who choose to attend commencement activities will be provided reserved seating. During the ceremony a diploma will be presented to a family member.
3. Names of all recipients of posthumous degrees will be listed, along with degree, major, and an appropriate annotation, in the commencement program.

IV. Related Policies

V. Reason for Revision(s)

The undergraduate guidelines have not been revised since the credit hour requirements were lowered for degree completion in Fall 2009. The revised policy also includes procedures related to associate and doctoral degrees.

November 2015

Reviewed as part of the fifth-year review in accordance with Policy 0.000V.

March 2022

Non-substantive changes as a result of the fifth-year review in accordance with Policy 0.000V.