



**GUIDE TO SUBMITTING  
REQUESTS TO AWARD  
HONORARY DEGREES**

**Office of Academic Affairs**

**Revised December 2019**

## I. Introduction

This guide will assist colleges with submissions of requests to the Central Office to award honorary degrees. The guide explains the honorary degree criteria and approval process and includes a sample board resolution and deadlines by which requests must be submitted to the Central Office.

Questions about this guide or requests for assistance during the submission process should be directed to Jason Brooks, professional communications writer of the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost: 646-664-8011. This information may also be found on-line at: <http://www2.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/academic-program-resources/honorary-degrees/>

## II. Registered Degrees

According to New York State law, any accredited institution of higher education authorized to award any earned baccalaureate or higher degree may confer any registered honorary degree. Community colleges may award any registered honorary associate degree. Below is a list of registered degrees.

### Honorary Doctorates

Doctor of Civil Law (D.C.L.)  
 Doctor of Commercial Science (D.C.S.)  
 Doctor of Divinity (D.D.)  
 Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A.)  
 Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.Litt.)  
 Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)  
 Doctor of Jewish Theology (D.J.T.)  
 Doctor of Laws (LL.D.)  
 Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.)  
 Doctor of Music (Mus.D.)  
 Doctor of Pedagogy (Pd.D.)  
 Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.)  
 Doctor of Science (Sc.D.)

### Honorary Master's Degrees

Master of Humane Letters (L.H.M.)  
 Master of Letters (Litt.M.)  
 Master of Pedagogy (Pd.M.)

### Honorary Associate Degrees

Associate of Civil Law (A.C.L.)  
 Associate of Commercial Science (A.C.S.)  
 Associate of Divinity (A.D.)  
 Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.)  
 Associate of Hebrew Letters (A.H.Litt.)  
 Associate of Humane Letters (A.H.L.)

Associate of Jewish Theology (A.J.T.)  
 Associate of Laws (LL.A.)  
 Associate of Letters (A.Litt.)  
 Associate of Music (A.Mus.)  
 Associate of Pedagogy (A.Pd.)  
 Associate of Sacred Theology (A.S.T.)

### III. CUNY Board Policy

#### With Respect to Both University and College/School Bestowed Awards

“A decision that The City University of New York confer an honorary degree on its own behalf or on behalf of one of its colleges shall rest on a consideration of the candidate's distinguished contribution to higher education in general or to the University or one of its colleges in particular or upon a consideration of the fact that the candidate has reflected signal honor upon the University or one of its colleges. A proposal to confer an honorary degree must, in all instances, be approved by the Chancellor and by the Board of Trustees.” (BT-1982-02-22,AI-007-\_A)

#### With Respect to College/School Bestowed Awards

“The nomination of a candidate for an honorary degree on behalf of one of the colleges shall be forwarded to the Chancellor with the approval of the president of the college, provided that a majority affirmative vote to recommend the degree has been cast by the appropriate faculty body. The nomination of a candidate for a University Honorary Degree shall be forwarded to the Board of Trustees by the Chancellor.” (BT-1982-02-22,AI-007-\_A)

#### With Respect to University Bestowed Awards

“The Chancellor will convene a committee of faculty from the University community, representing various colleges as well as the University Faculty Senate. The Chancellor shall consult with this committee on nominations for University Honorary Degrees. The Chancellor, however, shall be solely responsible for determining the nominees and for making the final recommendations to the Board of Trustees.” (BT-1982-02-22,AI-007-\_A)”

### IV. Criteria

Honorary degrees are intended to serve as a means by which the University can recognize the achievements of persons who have made significant contributions to the progress of the University or to its colleges and to the principles for which the institutions stand or to their academic or professional disciplines. It is anticipated that honorary degrees will be proposed only for persons who clearly merit such consideration. The Chancellor and the presidents should first consider awarding the medals of merit that have been provided for the recognition of service and achievement. In general, candidates for honorary degrees should fall in one or more of the following categories:

1. Persons of national or international reputation in an academic discipline that holds a significant place in the curriculum of the awarding college;
2. Persons who have made significant contributions in either thought or action to

American higher education or in a professional field closely related to an academic interest of the University or the awarding college;

3. Persons who have made significant contributions over a sustained period of time to the development of major programs at the University or at one of its colleges;
4. Persons who have given long and distinguished service to the University or one of its colleges, including those who have been in its employ and who have been retired or otherwise separated from the University or one of its colleges for a period of at least three years;
5. Persons who have made major contributions to furthering principles that are at the center of the University's purpose and mission.

For purposes of considering candidates for honorary degrees, elected officials representing the State or City of New York shall not be eligible for consideration during their terms of office.

## **V. Other Considerations**

- A. The selection of individuals to be recognized with an honorary degree must be done only after significant research on the individual's accomplishments and public statements has been completed. Announcements of individuals receiving honorary degrees from CUNY should be a source of pride and positive press relations for the college or school as well as for CUNY. It is the responsibility of the college or school to do serious and substantial vetting of all candidates, and for the President or Dean to attest to the satisfactory completion of that vetting on the request form.
- B. With rare exception, honorary degrees are to be awarded only at commencement ceremonies. A college or school wishing to bestow an honorary degree at an event other than a commencement ceremony must submit a written justification, addressed to the Chancellor, explaining the extenuating circumstances for requesting to do so and copied to the Office of Academic Affairs.
- C. In general, individuals should only receive one honorary degree from the City University of New York. The college or school seeking to bestow an honorary degree upon an individual who has previously been bestowed with one from another college or school within CUNY must submit a written justification, addressed to the Chancellor, requesting to do so and copied to the Office of Academic Affairs.

## **VI. Submitting Requests to Award Honorary Degrees and Approval Process**

- A. Once the appropriate campus faculty body has approved the candidate(s), and the college has vetted them, the college President or school Dean should submit the following items in Word format, to the Chancellor, with a copy to the Executive Vice Chancellor and university Provost:

A cover letter that briefly describes the honorary degree candidate(s)

A completed "Request to Award an Honorary Degree" form for each candidate

For each candidate, a 300-500 word statement that describes the candidate's merits. Please include in the statement any connection to CUNY, particularly alumni status and philanthropic activities. Please do not send Wikipedia entries, a candidate's CV, or an unusually long biography in lieu of a statement.

One draft board resolution and explanation for each candidate (For new format, see Section VIII below)

**The cover letter and accompanying materials must be submitted by March 13, 2020.**

- B. Please note that candidates must first be approved by the Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Program Planning and Research (CAPPR) and then by the full Board of Trustees. Someone from the college should expect to be present at the CAPPR meeting at which the candidate is presented.
- C. A formal vote will be taken by the members of the Board of Trustees. Approved candidates are eligible to receive an honorary degree.

#### **VII. Submission Deadlines**

The deadline for Spring 2020 Honorary Degree nominations, including all documentation, is **March 13, 2020**. Deadlines for future nominations will be provided once they are established.

We welcome submission of nominations and materials earlier than March 13, 2020 so we can proceed with the regular vetting process as soon as possible. Even if the individual has yet to be approved by governance or has yet to confirm his or her availability please forward the nominee's name as you can always withdraw it later.

#### **VIII. Sample Resolution and Explanation**

As indicated above, the college/school **must provide a draft resolution** in the new format (Times New Roman font, 12-point type) and a short explanation for each candidate upon which board members will vote.

The following is a sample resolution. Please note the new format, which has been approved for the 2020 Honorary Degree resolutions. Each individual nominated for an Honorary Degree must have a separate resolution.

#### **MACAULAY HONORS COLLEGE – RESOLUTION TO AWARD AN HONORARY DEGREE AT COMMENCEMENT**

**WHEREAS**, journalist Christopher Hayes has brought to a wide and diverse audience his sharp analytical skills, deep investigation into current political and social issues, and commitment to equality of opportunity; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Hayes, the host of MSNBC's *All in with Chris Hayes*, and editor-at-large of *The Nation*, has demonstrated a dedication to open discourse and critical analysis of public events and policies that has significantly contributed to the

principles that are at the center of the University's purpose and mission; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to his work in television journalism, Mr. Hayes has published essays, articles and reviews, and his two books, *Twilight of the Elites: America after Meritocracy* and *A Colony in a Nation* have provided important perspectives on national issues and the current political and social landscape. Mr. Hayes' special episode, "Fifty Year War: The Changing Face of Poverty in America" (co-hosted by Maria Shriver) was awarded an Emmy in the category of Outstanding News Discussion and Analysis; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Hayes' commitment to honest intellectual investigation and dedication to communicating complex ideas about important issues to a wide audience match Macaulay's and CUNY's highest ideals; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Hayes is a graduate of CUNY's Hunter High School, as well as Brown University, and has been a Bernard L. Schwartz fellow at the New America Foundation; and

**WHEREAS**, in granting this degree, Macaulay will recognize Mr. Hayes' extensive contributions to enhancing critical thinking, to political analysis, and to social commentary. The honorary degree will also recognize his commitment to public education and the importance to democracy of an informed, knowledgeable electorate; and

**WHEREAS**, With Macaulay's continuing emphasis on new media, on critical thinking across disciplines, and on preparing leaders to solve the challenges facing New York City and the world, Mr. Hayes is an ideal candidate for an honorary CUNY degree from Macaulay Honors College.

**RESOLVED**, that the Macaulay Honors College award Christopher Hayes the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, at the college's annual commencement ceremony on June 7, 2018.

**EXPLANATION:** In awarding Christopher Hayes the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, Macaulay will recognize his perceptive analysis, commitment to honest intellectual investigation, and his dedication to communicating complex ideas about important issues to a wide audience, all of which match Macaulay's and CUNY's highest ideals.