

Graduate School Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)Topic: Graduate/Professional Posthumous DegreesDocument #: GR-SOP-Admin-04

I. INTRODUCTION

When faced with the death of a student, current policy allows for the university to award a posthumous degree if certain conditions are met. If the student was in their final semester, and (if applicable) their research objective was complete, the faculty of the college may petition for the conferral of their degree at the end of the term.

II. POLICY

Any request for a posthumous awarding of a graduate or professional degree must be initiated by the chair of the student's advisory committee, or comparable faculty member, and may be awarded by the college faculty, pending approval of the by the college Dean, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Provost, and the President. For all degrees, the student's advisory committee must certify that all requirements for the degree would have been completed by the end of the current term under normal circumstances.

III. GUIDELINES

- For degrees requiring a research product (i.e., dissertation, record of study, thesis or research paper) the research proposal must have been signed by each committee member and a significant portion of the dissertation, record of study, thesis or research paper must have been reviewed by the committee and found to be acceptable at the time of the student's death. PhD students must have been admitted to candidacy if applicable.
- For degrees not requiring a research product, the student must have been enrolled in courses that would have completed the degree requirements at the time of death.
- Exceptional cases should be referred to the Graduate School Assistant Director for Graduate Programs & Student Records to initiate further review by the Dean of the Graduate School.

IV. PROCEDURE

- The Assistant Director for Graduate Programs & Student Records will provide the requesting department with a specialized version of the Graduate and Professional Student Petition showing the appropriate signatory approval lines.
- The complete petition should be accompanied by a memorandum from the student's faculty committee which details the following: the student's academic situation and progress at the time of death, the committee's support for the degree conferral, and a certification that it is the belief of the committee members that the student would have graduated at the end of the academic term under normal circumstances.
- Once approved by the dean of the college, the petition should be delivered to the Graduate School office. The Assistant Director for Graduate Programs & Student Records will prepare the documentation for review by the Dean, and then monitor the request's progress through the approval/disapproval by the Provost and then the President.
- Once all the required forms are complete and approvals are met, the UH Graduate School's Assistant Director for Graduate Programs & Student Records will forward the posthumous degree request to the University Registrar. The Office of the University Registrar will order the degree certificate and communicate with the relevant dean's office

regarding delivery to the college for framing and/or presentation to the student's family.

- It is the college's responsibility to ensure that the degree is received from the Registrar and given to the deceased student's family.

V. DOCUMENTATION

- Graduate/Professional Student Petition (special version for Posthumous Degree)
- Policy for Awarding Posthumous Degrees to Graduate/Professional Students ([UCC 0065.08F](#))

VI. APPROVAL

Dr. Sarah Larsen

Vice Provost and Dean, University of Houston Graduate School

November 29, 2018

Approval Date