



## **AOP 12.03: AWARDING OF DEGREES POSTHUMOUSLY**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Academic Operating Policy and Procedure (AOP) is to clarify policies and procedures by which Mississippi State University may confer posthumously baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees upon students who are deceased prior to but nearing formal completion of all degree requirements of the programs being pursued.

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE**

Mississippi State University may confer posthumously baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees upon students who are deceased prior to but nearing formal completion of all degree requirements of the programs being pursued. Any student who is deceased after completing degree requirements but prior to the conferment of the degree will receive the earned degree with no posthumous designation.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for the award of a Mississippi State University degree posthumously, the student must have met both of the following conditions:

1. At the time of death, the student was enrolled or recently enrolled and nearing completion of work required for award of the degree. "Nearing completion" is defined as having completed 75% or more of the course work required by the degree program. For graduate students in thesis and dissertation programs, 75% or more of the course work should have been completed and the student should have commenced the research process. Graduate students in non-thesis programs and professional students should have completed 75% or more of the required course work for the degree.
2. The student was in good academic standing and was successfully progressing toward completion of requirements for the degree to be awarded.

Recommendation for award of the degree is made by the faculty in the student's major department and approved by the department head, school director, or college dean. In the case of a graduate student, the student's Graduate Committee will make the recommendation to the graduate coordinator, department head, school director, or college dean and Dean of the Graduate School. In the case of a professional student, the Dean and Faculty of the respective college or school will make the recommendation to the Provost and Executive Vice President.

If a student does not meet the above criteria, then the Office of the Registrar may award a certificate of attendance.

Final approval for awarding of degrees posthumously shall rest with the Provost and Executive Vice President, Mississippi State University.

## **Approval Process**

The process for identifying and considering candidates for the award of degrees posthumously shall be as follows:

- The University Registrar, upon learning of the death of a Mississippi State University student, shall ascertain the relative academic standing of the student, as specified above.
- If the deceased student is determined to be eligible as a candidate for posthumous award of the degree being pursued, the University Registrar will so certify to the appropriate Academic Dean. The Registrar will indicate the appropriate semester and graduation date for awarding the degree.
- The departmental faculty, department head, and dean will determine if the student's overall record merits further consideration and recommendation that the posthumous award be granted; such information will be communicated to the Provost.
- The Provost will weigh all information relating to each case independently and will prepare a memorandum granting the Posthumous Award of the appropriate degree(s).

## **Awarding of Degrees Posthumously**

Upon approval by the Provost, the following procedure will be followed:

- The Provost will prepare a presidential notification letter to the family.
- Concurrently, the University Registrar will prepare a diploma for mailing or presentation to the family.
- The posthumous nature of the award will be indicated within the student's permanent record. The following notation will be placed on the transcript of the student – “Degree Awarded Posthumously.”

## **Family Notification**

No family notification should occur until the award of the degree is officially approved by the Provost and the President signs the letter of notification.

The letter and diploma may be mailed to the family or presented to the family in a private presentation arranged by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President. In addition to the letter from the President, the student’s department and college/school may send a letter or card to the student’s family, highlighting the student’s contributions or academic performance or the like.

## **REVIEW**

This AOP will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require an earlier review by the University Registrar with recommendations for revision presented to the Provost and Executive Vice President.

**REVIEWED:**

/s/ Peter Ryan 05/22/24  
Executive Vice Provost Date

/s/ David Shaw 07/08/2024  
Provost and Executive Vice President Date

/s/ Robert Banik 09/13/2024  
President, Robert Holland Faculty Senate Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham 09/27/2024  
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness Date

/s/ Joan Lucas 10/18/2024  
General Counsel Date

**APPROVED:**

/s/ Mark E. Keenum 10/28/2024  
President Date