**TCU Guidelines for the Awarding of Posthumous Earned and Honorary Graduate Degrees\***

**Honorary Posthumous Graduate Degrees**

When the university learns of the passing of an enrolled graduate student who has completed, at minimum, 75% of formal coursework and, if applicable, 75% completion of their planned thesis/dissertation chapters (as determined by the student’s thesis/dissertation committee), and, thus, is unable to complete remaining academic requirements, said student may be awarded an honorary posthumous degree by TCU per the following guidelines:

1. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of the College/School, and Registrar of a student’s passing by email.
2. The Registrar, will work with the appropriate department chair, associate dean for graduate studies, and dean to confirm and certify that the deceased student has completed, at minimum, 75% of formal coursework, and is in good academic standing relative to university and program requirements. If applicable, the student’s thesis/dissertation committee will meet to determine if the deceased student has completed at least 75% of their planned thesis/dissertation chapters with a majority vote needed to certify that the thesis/dissertation chapter completion requirement has been met.
3. Upon certification of the deceased student’s academic status, the College Dean will consult the Dean of Graduate Studies, Vice Chancellor & Provost for Academic Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs to determine if initiating a process for review meets an evidence-based standard for awarding an honorary degree of this type commensurate with the academic integrity and rigor of the TCU degree. Upon a determination that initiating an approval process is warranted, the Dean of Graduate Studies will notify the Dean of the appropriate college.
4. The college Dean will solicit a written recommendation from the appropriate department chair attesting to graduate program faculty support for awarding the honorary degree to the deceased student pursuant to all academic standards and qualifications.
5. The Department chair will forward the faculty’s recommendation to the Dean for endorsement.
6. The Dean will endorse the recommendation on college letterhead and electronically provide the necessary supporting materials from the department to the Dean of Graduate Studies.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies will review the materials and forward a recommendation to the Vice Chancellor & Provost for Academic Affairs.
8. Upon receiving the Provost's decision, the Dean of Graduate Studies will notify the College Dean in writing, ensuring the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and the Registrar receive courtesy copy notifications as well.
9. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs shall contact the family of the deceased student, notifying them of the university’s decision to award an honorary posthumous degree and explaining the institution’s protocols and procedures for doing so. These protocols include sending the diploma by mail, which will be accompanied with a signed letter from the Chancellor. Honorary posthumous degrees will not be acknowledged at commencement exercises or in the program. Colleges and/or departments may offer to present these awards to family representatives at receptions planned by faculty within their respective units.

**Earned Graduate Degrees Awarded Posthumously**

Unlike the awarding of honorary posthumous degrees described above, a different process governs instances when deceased graduate students have earned a TCU degree and merit receiving it posthumously.

When TCU graduate students become deceased within the last semester of graduating and, if applicable, have successfully defended their thesis or dissertation, they may be considered by the Registrar as eligible for having earned a TCU degree if the final coursework is able to be graded with what has been completed and the courses complete degree requirements. The following steps shall govern the certification and award process:

* 1. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of the College/School, and Registrar of a student’s passing by email.
  2. The Registrar, will work with the appropriate department chair, associate dean for graduate studies, and dean to confirm and certify the deceased student’s earned credit status that the deceased has completed all course work for the final semester satisfactorily in addition to meeting all grade point average and, if applicable, thesis/dissertation requirements.
  3. The Registrar will notify the Vice Chancellor and Provost of Academic Affairs, Dean of Graduate Studies, appropriate college dean, department chair, the and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs once eligibility requirements have been confirmed.
  4. Subsequently, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will notify the family of the deceased student, apprising them of the earned degree status and explaining our protocols for managing the process. These protocols include:
     + - 1. Learning if the family wishes to attend pinning ceremonies and/or commencement exercises and determining the selected venue where they wish to receive the earned degree.
         2. If the family plans on attending either or both activities, they may do so. The degree may be presented at a separate pinning ceremony or at commencement. Should the family attend commencement, they may sit in the front row to the left of the stage as guests of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. At the time of degree conferral, a family representative may (i) walk up and receive the deceased student’s diploma at the appropriate time, or (ii) remain seated as the student’s name is acknowledged publicly “*in abstentia*.” A family representative may not accept the award in regalia.
         3. If the family does not wish to attend either or both activities, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs will coordinate with the Registrar, the mailing of the degree, which will be accompanied with a letter signed by the Chancellor.

**\*The above guidelines do not extend to undergraduate students. Specific guidelines for that population will be managed by a separate process.**