Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee Terms of Reference

1. Establishment

1.1. The Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee (***Committee***) is an advisory committee established by the Adelaide University (***University***) Council.

1.2. The Committee's Terms of Reference are approved by the Council:

(a) in accordance with section 15(2)(c)(i) of the *Adelaide University Act 2023* (***AU Act***); and

(b) having regard to section 31 of the AU Act which provides guidance on the matters that ought to be included in Terms of Reference of committees established by Council.

1.3. In accordance with section 31 (2) of the AU Act, these Terms of Reference may be varied, substituted or revoked by the Council from time to time.

2. Purpose

The Committee supports Council by providing independent, rigorous and confidential advice on the conferral of special degrees and the awarding of honorary awards, ensuring that such awards uphold the University's values, reputation, academic standing, and public accountability.

3. Membership

3.1. The composition of the Committee is determined by Council. In determining the Committee's membership, Council will ensure that the Committee comprises members drawn from the following categories:

- the Chancellor, who will chair the Committee;
- one independent member of Council appointed by Council;
- the Vice Chancellor;
- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, International and External Engagement;
- the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor;
- the Deputy Vice Chancellor – Research and Innovation;
- an elected or appointed student member of Council;
- an elected staff member of Council; and

- the Chair of the Academic Board and/or other persons of appropriate seniority and standing, appointed by Council, to provide academic or independent expertise.

3.2. The Committee must collectively possess appropriate expertise and experience to support the consideration and conferral of honorary awards and special degrees, including in higher education governance, academic standing and distinction, public integrity, and reputational risk.

3.3. The Chair may invite other personnel to attend its meetings from time to time.

3.4. A Committee member ceases to be a Committee member:

- when determined by Council;
- upon ceasing to be a member of Council;
- upon ceasing to be an employee or upon holding the designated position; or
- upon resigning from the Committee.

3.5. The Council Secretary will be the Secretary of the Committee.

4. Functions

The functions of the Committee are to:

4.1. consider and assess nominations for:

- honorary degrees;
- honorary awards and fellowships; and
- other special academic distinctions approved by Council;

4.2. assess and recommend University nominations for Australia Day and King's Birthday Honours

4.3. ensure nominations are assessed against approved University criteria;

4.4. undertake due diligence, including reputational and integrity risk assessment, in relation to nominees;

4.5. ensure that recommendations are consistent with the University's values, statutory obligations, and standing as a public institution;

4.6. make recommendations to Council on whether awards should be conferred, including any conditions or limitations;

4.7. ensure appropriate separation between honorary awards and any fundraising, advancement, or commercial considerations;

4.8. promote appropriate consultation in relation to honouring awards in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.

5. Advisory Arrangements

5.1. The Committee will be supported and advised by a Special Degrees and Honorary Awards Advisory Group, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, International and External Engagement. The Advisory Group will comprise representatives drawn from the Colleges, Research portfolio, Academic portfolio, and the International and External Engagement portfolio.

5.2. The Advisory Group will, as required, receive nominations from the University community and, at the request of the Committee or Council, undertake appropriate due diligence and prepare nominations for consideration, having regard to the approved criteria.

5.3. The criteria for honorary awards and special degrees are determined by the Committee and may be amended by the Committee from time to time. All criteria must be approved by the Committee and must reflect the University's values.

5.4. Council may refer nominations directly to the Committee and/or to the Advisory Group for consideration, due diligence and preparation of recommendations, as requested by Council.

5.5. The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group will be developed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, International and External Engagement and presented to the Committee for noting.

6. Criteria for Nominations

6.1. In considering nominations for honorary awards and special degrees, the Committee must give significant and explicit weight to the nominee's contribution to society and the public good.

6.2. An honorary award is not conferred solely in recognition of professional attainment, office held, or career seniority. Rather, the Committee must be satisfied that the nominee's achievements demonstrate a sustained and exemplary contribution that has delivered meaningful benefit beyond personal or professional advancement, including to communities, institutions, industries, or society at large.

6.3. Contribution to society may be evidenced through leadership, service, innovation, advocacy, philanthropy, cultural influence, or other forms of public impact. The Committee may determine that such contribution warrants recognition even where the nominee's achievements are not primarily academic in nature.

6.4. In its deliberations, the Committee will treat contribution to society or the public good as a central and independent consideration, and not merely as an adjunct to professional distinction or eminence.

6.5. All nominations for honorary awards and special degrees must be assessed against the approved criteria.

6.6. The criteria are approved by the Committee, on the advice of the Special Degrees and Honorary Awards Advisory Group, and may be amended by the Committee from time to time.

6.7. In assessing nominations, the Committee and the Advisory Group must have regard to the approved criteria as in force at the relevant time. The criteria must reflect the University's values and uphold the University's academic standing, integrity, and reputation.

6.8. The criteria for preparing and assessing nominations are maintained as Appendix 1 to these Terms of Reference.

7. Powers

In the absence of powers being delegated to the Committee by Council in accordance with section 32 of the AU Act, the Committee is not a decision-making body, but rather an advisory committee established to provide advice and recommendations to Council.

8. Withdrawal or Revocation of Honorary Awards and Special Degrees

8.1. Council retains the authority to withdraw or revoke an honorary award or special degree previously conferred by the University.

8.2. The Committee may, on its own initiative or at the request of Council, consider whether circumstances exist that warrant the withdrawal or revocation of an honorary award or special degree and provide advice to Council accordingly.

8.3. Without limiting Council's discretion, circumstances that may warrant consideration of withdrawal or revocation include where:

8.4. material information provided in support of a nomination is later found to be false, misleading or incomplete;

8.5. the recipient's conduct, whether before or after the conferral, is demonstrably inconsistent with the University's values or brings, or is reasonably likely to bring, the University into disrepute; or

8.6. developments arise that, had they been known at the time of conferral, would have materially affected the decision to confer the award.

8.7. In considering such matters, the Committee will have regard to principles of natural justice, proportionality, reputational risk, and the public interest, and may recommend to Council:

8.8. no further action;

8.9. the issuance of a statement clarifying the University's position; or

8.10. withdrawal or revocation of the award.

8.11. Any decision to withdraw or revoke an honorary award or special degree rests solely with Council.

9. Meetings and Procedures

9.1. The Committee shall meet at least once a year and as otherwise necessary to fulfill its responsibilities.

9.2. A quorum for meetings shall be half of the membership plus one (ignoring any fraction). No business may be transacted at a Committee meeting unless a quorum is present.

9.3. If the Chair is absent, the Chair will nominate another member of the Committee to preside over the meeting. If the Chair is unavailable to nominate another member to preside over the meeting, the Committee will make such nomination.

9.4. Members of Council may attend meetings as an observer.

9.5. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed at least annual or as required.

10. Reporting requirements

10.1. Minutes of each meeting shall be recorded by the Council Secretary and provided to next regular meeting of Council.

10.2. Recommendations relating to conferral of awards will be reported confidentially to Council.

11. Document governance

Policy this procedure supports	The Adelaide University Governance Framework
Approving authority	Council
Policy owner	Chancellor
Responsible officer	Council Secretary
Effective from	**11 November 2026**
Review date	As required and no less biennially
Enquiries	Council Secretary
Replaced documents	This replaces the Committee's inaugural Terms of Reference as approved by Council on 12 May 2026

12. History of changes

Date approved	To section/clauses	Description of change
10 November 2026	Name of Committee Section 4, clause 4.2	Amendment of name from *Special Degrees and Honorary Awards Committee* to *Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee* Add new clause to expand Committee's scope to assess and recommend nominations to selected external awards.

Adelaide University

Appendix 1

Criteria for preparing and assessing nominations for Special Degrees and Honorary Awards

1. Purpose of the Criteria

These criteria are intended to guide the Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee in assessing all nominations for special degrees and honorary degrees in a manner that is:

- consistent and principled
- aligned with the values, mission and strategic ambition of Adelaide University
- consistent with contemporary practice across Australia's Group of Eight universities
- protective and enhancing of the University's reputation.

2. Threshold Principle

Honorary and special degrees represent the highest form of recognition conferred by Adelaide University.

They are awarded sparingly and only where the nominee's achievements and standing are demonstrably exceptional.

3. Special Degrees Available for Award

The following special degrees may be awarded:

3.1 Doctor of the University *(honoris causa)*

Awarded in recognition of exceptionally distinguished service to the University and/or its founding institutions and/or to society more broadly. This is a general, high prestige award that is not discipline specific and recognises individuals whose contribution is of outstanding significance at institutional, national or international level. This award is expressed as Doctor of the University *(honoris causa)*.

3.2 Honorary Doctorate by Discipline *(honoris causa)*

Awarded in recognition of exceptional eminence in a specific field of learning. This award recognises distinguished achievement, leadership or contribution within a particular discipline, typically at national or international level. By way of example, these may be conferred in fields including (but not limited to) Architecture, Economics,

Education, Engineering, Law, Letters (Humanities), Music, Nursing, Science, Veterinary Science or other disciplines. This award is expressed as Doctor of <Discipline> *(honoris causa)*.

4. Nomination Requirements

Individuals may only be considered following nomination by a third party or identification through an approved University process. Self-nominations are not accepted.

5. Eligibility and Standing of the Nominee

In considering a nomination, the Committee will assess whether the nominee:

- is a person of eminent standing and distinction or influence in their field, profession, or sphere of public life
- is widely recognised through independent evidence for sustained, outstanding achievement or contribution

6. Nature of Contribution

The Committee will consider whether the nominee has made demonstrably exceptional and sustained contributions in one or more of the following domains:

6.1. Contribution to Knowledge, Scholarship or Discovery

6.2. Distinguished and widely recognised achievement in research, scholarship, creative practice or innovation.

6.3. Work that has materially advanced knowledge, shaped disciplines or practice, or generated significant and enduring societal benefit.

6.4. Contributions that align with and advance Adelaide University's commitment to discovery, innovation and future-making research.

In assessing the nature and significance of a nominee's contribution, the Committee will not treat professional success, seniority, or attainment as determinative in and of itself. The Committee must be satisfied that the nominee's contribution has produced demonstrable benefit to society, the public good, or the University community, and reflects values and conduct consistent with the standing of a public university.

7. Contribution to Society or the Public Good

7.1. Outstanding leadership, service or influence that has delivered clear and measurable benefit to communities, industries or society at large.

7.2. Demonstrated impact at a national or international level, evidenced by independent recognition or outcomes.

7.3. Contributions that reflect ambition, integrity, accountability and respect in public or professional life.

8. Contribution to Adelaide University or its Founding Institutions

8.1. Exceptional service, advocacy, leadership or partnership that has materially advanced the University's mission, standing or strategic objectives.

8.2. Meaningful, sustained and substantive engagement with Adelaide University or its predecessor institutions.

8.3. Contributions that clearly embody trust, collegiality and respect for the University's values and academic standing.

9. Alignment with Adelaide University Values

The Committee must be satisfied that conferring the award would be affirmatively consistent with Adelaide University's core values of:

- Trust – demonstrated integrity, ethical leadership and accountability;
- Inclusivity – respect for diversity, equity and the dignity of others;
- Ambition – pursuit of excellence, leadership and transformative impact;
- Respect – conduct befitting the standing of the University and its community; and
- Discovery – commitment to learning, progress, innovation or cultural advancement.

A nomination must not give rise to a material risk of misalignment with these values, whether having regard to the nominee's past conduct, current standing or foreseeable future associations.

10. Reputational Considerations

In assessing nominations, the Committee will have regard to whether conferral of the award:

10.1. enhances, or at a minimum does not detract from, the reputation, standing and interests of Adelaide University;

10.2. would withstand reasonable public, sectoral and media scrutiny; and

10.3. does not expose the University to material reputational, ethical or governance risk.

The nominee's past conduct, public record and foreseeable future associations may be taken into account where relevant.

11. Independence and Conflict Considerations

Consistent with good governance practice:

11.1. honorary and special degrees will not ordinarily be conferred on serving Council members, senior staff, recent former staff or current employees. Any exceptional departure from this principle must be justified on its merits and explicitly recorded by the Committee; and

11.2. actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed in accordance with University governance requirements.

12. Evidence and Substantiation

Nominations must be supported by:

12.1. clear, verifiable and independent evidence of the nominee's achievements and standing;

12.2. referees of appropriate seniority, credibility and independence; and

12.3. sufficient detail to enable informed and rigorous assessment against these criteria.

The absence of robust evidence or independent corroboration may be grounds for deferral or a decision not to recommend the nomination.

Nominations may be retained or deferred for consideration for a maximum period of two years.