

STUDENT POLICY

SA108 – Awarding of Degrees

No./Title: SA108 – AWARDING OF DEGREES	Resp. Office: STUDENT AFFAIRS Approval Body: CASA	Effective Date: 09/11/2011
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Related Policies:	Academic Calendar	

POLICY

Degrees are conferred by a member of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, by the President of The University of Tennessee or by the president's designee. Degrees are conferred on specified dates three times during the year (May, August, December). Students must be enrolled in, or completing, at least one credit hour during the term of graduation.

POLICY EXPLANATIONS AND PROCEDURES

I. Attendance at Commencement and Graduation in Absentia

Attendance at Commencement is expected for each student completing a degree. If the student is unable to attend, the student must notify the respective dean or designee at least two weeks prior to graduation of a desire to graduate *in absentia*. Once notified, the Dean or designee will inform the Registrar. The student must then make arrangements with the Registrar for pick-up or delivery of the diploma. Diplomas will not be released to anyone other than the graduate without written authorization that grants specific permission from the student. The Registrar may release diplomas to a designated college official upon written request from the Dean or designee.

Diplomas will not be released to any graduate who has not met all institutional and program obligations, including official holds on the student account.

II. Conferring of Degrees and Issuing of Diplomas

The degree is conferred following the completion of requirements on one of three designated degree conferral dates throughout the year:

- May conferral date: on or around the last Friday in May (dates vary by college);
- August conferral date: the first Friday in August; and,

- December conferral date: typically the second Friday in December.¹

Official diplomas are issued with the name of "The University of Tennessee" and are signed by the President, the Chancellor and the Secretary to the Board of Trustees. Diplomas are issued by the Registrar.

III. Participation in Commencement

Any student who anticipates completion of program requirements at the end of a specific term must complete the “**Intent to Graduate**” process with the Registrar. No student will be allowed to participate in Commencement or receive a diploma until all degree requirements have been met and all final course grades have been entered by an appropriate college official. Degree plans for each graduating student must be approved by the Academic Dean or college designee and be on file with the Registrar. Once final grades are published for graduating students, the Registrar must certify that all degree requirements have been met to clear the students for graduation.

Students are only allowed to participate in one Commencement for each earned degree. Those who did not participate in the May Commencement and who wish to participate in December Commencement must inform the Dean and Registrar in writing no later than **November 1** to ensure inclusion in the Commencement program. Those who planned, but were unable, to participate in the December Commencement and who wish to participate in the following May Commencement must inform the Dean and the Registrar no later than **April 15** to ensure inclusion in the Commencement program.

IV. Degree Conferral Requirements

GRADES

Grades for students graduating at the conclusion of the term must be posted in Banner (thus officially submitted to the Registrar) a minimum of five (5) business days prior to the official degree conferral date for the term.

MAY DEGREE CONFERRAL

If degree requirements are *completed* and certified by the Registrar five (5) business days prior to the date of the official college Commencement, students will be allowed to participate in Commencement and receive diplomas bearing the same date as their Commencement (i.e., the May degree conferral date).

¹ A full week being defined as a week with five business days (thus Mon - Friday all in the month of Dec).

If requirements are not completed by the May degree conferral date, students receive an “I” (incomplete) grade for each course that is not completed by the official end of spring term (per the official academic calendar for the program²). No fees are charged for students to finish incomplete coursework, and students have one term to complete incomplete coursework or the “I” grade automatically converts to a “F.” Students who do not meet the requirements for the May degree conferral date are eligible to apply for an August degree conferral. However, in order to meet degree requirements, students who plan to graduate in August must finish the incomplete coursework at least five (5) business days before the August degree conferral date. Please see the August Degree Conferral portion of this policy for more information. Students must be enrolled in at least one credit hour for the term in which the degree is conferred.

If a student must complete additional coursework for his/her degree program (such as a rotation/clinical experience) after the official last day of the spring term, the student must enroll during their program’s next official term, assuming the required coursework is available. Upon a recommendation by the college, tuition and fees for this term may be waived subject to approval by the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations. In such an instance, the August degree conferral date applies (assuming the required coursework is available and all degree requirements are completed and certified by the Registrar by the appropriate deadline).

AUGUST DEGREE CONFERRAL

If degree requirements are completed and certified by the Registrar five (5) business days prior to the official August degree conferral date, students will receive diplomas bearing the same date.

As there is no formal commencement event in August, students with an August degree conferral date must arrange for pickup or delivery of their diplomas through the Registrar.³ Fees may be charged for mailing and/or special handling. If degree requirements are not completed five (5) business days prior to the August conferral date, students receive an “I” (incomplete) grade for all courses that have not been completed. No fees are charged for students to finish incomplete coursework, and students have one term to finish incomplete coursework or the “I” grade automatically converts to an “F.” Students who do not meet the August degree requirements become eligible to apply for December degree conferral. However, in order to meet degree requirements, students who plan to graduate in December must finish the incomplete coursework at least five (5) business days before the December degree conferral date. Please see the December Degree Conferral portion of this policy for more information.

² *The academic calendars for all programs are posted on the Registrar’s website at http://www.uthsc.edu/registrar/academic_calendar.php.*

³ *Ordering, processing and delivery of diplomas may take up to 4 weeks.*

Students must also be enrolled for at least one credit hour in the term in which the degree is conferred.⁴ If a student must complete additional coursework for his/her degree program (such as a rotation/clinical experience) after the official last day of the spring term, the student must enroll during their program's next official term, assuming the required coursework is available. Upon a recommendation by the college, tuition and fees for this term may be waived subject to approval by the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations. In such an instance, the December degree conferral date applies (assuming the required coursework is available and all degree requirements are completed and certified by the Registrar by the appropriate deadline).

DECEMBER DEGREE CONFERRAL

If degree requirements are completed and certified by the Registrar five (5) business days prior to the date of the official Commencement, students will be allowed to participate in the December Commencement and receive diplomas bearing the same date as their Commencement (i.e., the December degree conferral date).

If requirements are not completed by the December degree conferral date students will receive an "I" (incomplete) grade for each course that has not yet been completed. No fees are charged for students to finish incomplete coursework, and students have one term to finish incomplete coursework or the "I" grade automatically converts to an "F." Students who do not meet the requirements for the December degree conferral date are eligible to apply for a May degree conferral. However, in order to meet degree requirements, students who plan to graduate in May must finish the incomplete coursework at least five (5) business days before the May degree conferral date. Please see the May Degree Conferral portion of this policy for more information. Students must also be enrolled for at least one credit hour in the term in which the degree is conferred.

If the student must complete additional coursework for his/her degree program (such as a rotation/clinical experience) after the official last day of the fall term, the student must enroll during the spring term, assuming the required coursework is available during this term. Tuition and fees for this term may be waived on the recommendation of the college (prior to registration, students should be advised to contact their financial aid counselor regarding any implications for student loans and repayments in the event they are registered for only one

⁴ Students should check program start dates for the fall term and work with college academic deans and department heads to determine course registration needs. Students should also check the Registrar's website at <http://www.uthsc.edu/registrar/> and late registration fees on the Bursar's website at <https://www.uthsc.edu/finance/bursar/index.php> to ensure that they meet registration deadlines for their programs. Please note that for Academic Calendar 2 students, the summer term ends July 31st and fall term starts August 1st. Registration deadlines and tuition and fee payments correspond with the beginning of the program term.

credit hour). In such an instance, the May degree conferral date applies (assuming the required coursework is available during the spring term and all degree requirements are completed and certified by the Registrar five (5) business days prior to Commencement).

V. Awarding of Degrees and Diplomas at Times other than Official Degree Conferral Dates

On rare occasions, it is necessary for students to receive their diplomas at times other than the three official degree conferral periods, such as for the following reasons:

- The student desires to accept an internship or residency position between the time degree requirements are completed and the next regularly scheduled degree conferral date and an official diploma is required.
- The student desires to take state or national board examinations that are scheduled before the next regularly scheduled conferral date and an official diploma is required.

The request for issuance of a diploma at times other than one of the three official degree conferral dates must be initiated by the student through the college academic affairs office in which the student is enrolled. The following is required:

- A formal written request addressed to the dean of the college or his/her designee.
- Specific rationale and documentation. Appropriate documentation would include correspondence from the intern or residency program indicating that the student will be accepted into the program *only if* the degree has been awarded *and* they cannot accept either a letter from the dean certifying that requirements have been met or a transcript issued by the Registrar. The same would apply to applicants for state or national board examinations, i.e., statement indicating that completion of requirements or transcript would not be accepted.

If the Dean determines that the request is valid, the Dean will submit the request to the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs. The Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs will confer with the Registrar to ensure all degree requirements have been met. The Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs will confer with the Chancellor to request that the President of the University of Tennessee authorize the awarding of the degree on the date that the requirements for the degree are completed and certified by the Registrar. Upon notification of approval from the President for the awarding of the degree,

the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs will notify the Dean of the approval and the Registrar that the degree is to be conferred.

Once copies of all correspondence and certifications are received by the Registrar for inclusion in the student's permanent file, the diploma will be ordered. The student must work with the Registrar to arrange for delivery or pickup of the diploma. Fees may be charged for mailing and/or special handling.

VI. Presentation of Diplomas to Graduates

Diplomas are passed from the Dean or the designee to the graduate. In unique circumstances and with prior authorization, diplomas may be passed from the Dean (or designee) to an intermediary person who hands the diploma to the graduate. Such persons (e.g., a parent or immediate family member of the graduate) must come from one of the following groups:

- Board of Trustees members
- University-Wide Administration
- UTHSC Faculty, Staff and Administration

The person wishing to make the intermediary presentation should make such a request to the Dean who in turn will advise the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs.

Upon the recommendation of the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs (or designee), the Chancellor may grant special permission for trustees, faculty or senior leadership persons to participate in presentation of diplomas to their family member.

VII. Academic Regalia Guidelines

The UTHSC will provide academic regalia for those who are required or expected to attend Commencement. Expenses for the Trustees, President, Commencement Speaker, Faculty Senate President, and others as deemed appropriate will be incurred at the institutional level. Expenses for UTHSC faculty or staff required or expected to attend may be charged to the respective departmental account. Student fees cover the rental costs for regalia for one Commencement.

Students, faculty and staff must be dressed in proper academic regalia in order to participate in commencement.

VIII. Awarding Posthumous Degrees⁵

⁵ This section replaces the Awarding of Posthumous Degrees policy approved by CASA on June 5, 2012.

The award of posthumous degrees generally is limited to those deceased who have completed all academic requirements established by the faculty of a particular college; however, those who are deceased and who had completed substantial parts of their curricula will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests for awarding a posthumous degree are initiated by the Dean of the student's college by completion of the Request Form for Award of Posthumous Degree and forwarded through the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs for Chancellor approval. The Chancellor will request approval of the President of the University of Tennessee.

APPROVAL HISTORY:

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Approved: September 15, 2015, Chancellor