



CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

Title: University Policy on Posthumous Degrees, Degrees in Memoriam, and Certificates of Academic Achievement

Approved by: President

Date approved: April 29, 2026

Effective date: April 29, 2026

Responsible Official: Provost

Responsible University Office: Office of the Provost

Revision History: None

Related legislation and University policies: None

Review Period: 5 Years

Date of Last Review: April 29, 2026

Relates to: Students

I. Summary of this Policy

This policy delineates the requirements for the issuance of a posthumous degree, degree In Memoriam and certificate of academic achievement for all degree seeking students.

II. Purpose(s) of this Policy

CWRU seeks to recognize the academic accomplishments of all degree-seeking active students at the time of their death, celebrating these achievements for the benefit of their families and the broader university community. These actions are balanced with the need to maintain academic and institutional integrity, ensuring that posthumous degrees are awarded through a consistent, transparent, and equitable process.

III. Definitions

Conferral date: The official date a degree is awarded, as listed on the academic calendar.

Posthumous Degree: Awarded when a student has completed all degree requirements prior to their passing.

Degree In Memoriam: A recognition awarded to a student who has completed at least

75% of degree requirements, as further defined in Section VI.

Certificate of Academic Achievement: A document presented to recognize a student's academic progress.

IV. General Eligibility Criteria

1. The following eligibility requirements apply to all posthumous awards described in this policy, unless otherwise specified. At the time of death, students must:
 - a. Have completed at least two full-time academic semesters at CWRU
 - b. Be active in a program or on an approved leave of absence
2. For students enrolled in dual degree programs, the eligibility and degree requirements are applied to each program independently.
3. A request for a posthumous degree, Degree In Memoriam, or Certificate of Academic Achievement must be initiated by the student's family or their designated representative and directed to one of the following: an academic advisor, faculty member, or dean; the chair of the department or program in which the student was enrolled; the Vice President for Student Affairs or Dean of Students.
4. CWRU will make timely efforts to inform the student's family about the posthumous degree policy.
5. Final Semester Credit Hours: Credit hours from the final semester may be included if the course instructors determine the student would have passed the class. If so, the faculty member should submit a grade of Pass (P) or Satisfactory (S); otherwise, a grade of No Pass (NP) or Unsatisfactory (U) should be submitted. The School of Medicine may apply equivalent grading designations consistent with their established grading policies.

V. Direct Certification of a Posthumous Degree

1. If a student has completed all coursework and degree requirements, but passed away prior to the degree conferral date, the degree will be awarded as earned and there will be no special notation on the transcript or diploma.
2. Final semester credit hours may be considered in accordance with Section IV(5).

VI. Degree In Memoriam Requirements

Undergraduate Students

In addition to meeting the general eligibility criteria:

- At the time of death, the student must have earned at least 90 credit hours toward their degree program.
- Final semester credit hours may be considered in accordance with Section IV(5).

Graduate and Professional Students

- For degrees requiring primarily coursework and not requiring a thesis or dissertation or other creative/practicum activity, at least 75% of the total hours required for the degree must be completed.
- For graduate degrees requiring a thesis, dissertation or other creative/practicum activity, at least 75% of the required coursework must be completed and the student's advisory committee must determine that the remaining thesis, dissertation, creative endeavor or practicum work is substantial and worthy of the degree.
- Final semester credit hours may be considered in accordance with Section IV(e).

The notation "Degree In Memoriam" will appear on the student's official transcript and on all degree and enrollment verifications issued by the University. The diploma itself will also carry the notation.

VII. Alternate Degree Certification

If a student passes away before completing all the requirements for their enrolled degree program, and after consultation with and consent of the family, the University will determine whether an alternate degree based on the student's completed work is appropriate. For example, a doctoral committee may determine that the student's work meets the conditions for awarding a master's degree - either without a posthumous notation or as a Degree In Memoriam - in accordance with this policy.

VIII. Certificate of Academic Achievement Requirements

If a student does not meet the conditions for a Degree In Memoriam, a Certificate of Academic Achievement may be awarded to honor the student's academic progress. The student must meet the general eligibility criteria above. Additionally:

- Final semester credit hours may be considered in accordance with Section IV(e)
- Requests for a Certificate of Academic Achievement are subject to the same submission timeline and contact procedures described in Section IV.

IX. Awarding of the Degree and Commencement/Diploma Ceremony

- A posthumous degree will be conferred at the next scheduled conferral date and will be printed in the commencement program, with the note that the degree was presented posthumously, unless the family requests otherwise.
- At the next scheduled diploma ceremony, the diploma or Certificate of Academic Achievement will be presented to a member of the student's family or their representative if desired. Families who choose to attend the diploma ceremony will work with the respective schools to coordinate reserved seating, tickets, parking, etc.
- If the family cannot attend or does not wish to attend, the diploma or certificate will be mailed or released to the person legally authorized to manage the student's affairs.

X. Limitations and Exceptions

- **Outstanding Matters**

The University reserves the right to withhold or defer a posthumous degree in cases where outstanding disciplinary, judicial, financial, or compliance matters remain unresolved at the time of the student's death. Such cases will be reviewed individually by the Provost's Office in consultation with the relevant university offices.

- **Appeals and Extraordinary Circumstances**

The Provost or President, in consultation with the Dean of the respective school, reserves the right to waive and make exceptions to the requirements stated in this policy under extraordinary circumstances.

XI. Non-Academic Questions

Families with questions outside the scope of this policy, including matters related to the student's finances, housing or other student life issues, are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office (216-368-1527), which will coordinate with relevant university offices to provide guidance.

XII. Reporting Requirements

1. Direct Certification and awarded alternate degree certifications will be counted in official reporting statistics.
2. Degrees In Memoriam and Certificates of Academic Achievement will not be counted in official degree completion reporting statistics, as these awards recognize academic progress rather than fulfillment of all degree requirements.