



	107A	1 of 3

PURPOSE

The Vermont State Colleges seek to recognize the academic achievements of students who were enrolled at a member institution at the time of their death, and to commemorate those achievements for the benefit of their family, friends, and broader community. Thus, procedures and criteria for awarding posthumous degrees are required.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies solely to the award of degrees to students enrolled in degree programs at a Vermont State Colleges member institution at the time of their death. For honorary degrees, see Policy 107: Honorary Degrees.

DEFINITIONS

A. **Nearing Completion**

An undergraduate student is “nearing completion” of their degree if they have completed 75% of the total credit hours required for their degree or 50% of the credit hours required for their major. A graduate student is “nearing completion” of their degree if they have completed 75% of the total credit hours required for their degree or if they have completed all degree requirements except for their culminating paper, project, or experience.

B. **Good Academic Standing**

A student who is in “good academic standing” is not on academic warning, probation, in jeopardy of dismissal, or suspended.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

This policy establishes consistent criteria and procedures for awarding posthumous degrees to students who are enrolled in a Vermont State Colleges member institution at the time of their death.

A. **Criteria for Awarding Honorary Degrees**

The President of a Vermont State Colleges member institution may, at their discretion, award posthumous degrees if:

- Undergraduate Degrees:

- At the time of death, the student was enrolled in courses required for the completion of the degree and nearing completion of work required for award of the degree;
- The student was in good academic standing; and
- A favorable recommendation for award of the degree is made by the student's major department and the Chief Academic Officer.
- Graduate Degrees:
 - At the time of death, the graduate student was nearing completion of the work required for the degree;
 - The student was in good academic standing; and
 - A favorable recommendation for award of the degree is made by the student's major department and the Dean of the Graduate School.

B. Procedures

Any member of the Vermont State Colleges community or a family member of the deceased may recommend a student for a posthumous degree. If the request is initiated by someone outside of the student's family, a representative from the VSCS must contact the student's family before proceeding with consideration.

The request must be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer of the institution in which the student was enrolled. The CAO will verify the death of the student and investigate the student's enrollment status and progress towards degree, in consultation with the department chair of the student's major. Once these steps are complete, the CAO will submit the request to the President.

The CAO will advise the individual who made the request of the final decision. If the final decision is favorable, and the request did not originate from the family of the deceased, the CAO will also notify the family.

C. Time of Award

A posthumous degree will typically be awarded at the next regularly scheduled commencement ceremony and presented to a member of the student's family or their representative. The commencement program will note that the degree was awarded posthumously. A posthumous degree may also be presented to the family in a private setting by an appropriate Vermont State Colleges representative.


D. Extraordinary Circumstances

Requests to award degrees to students who don't meet the above criteria may be considered in extraordinary circumstances. Exceptional service to the Vermont State Colleges, a lasting impact on the VSCS community, or exceptional achievements in other arenas of the deceased student's life may be considered to supplement progress to degree.

E. In-Memoriam Certificate

A deceased student who does not meet the criteria for a posthumous degree may be awarded an In-Memoriam Certificate acknowledging their achievements and contributions to the VSCS community. Students may be awarded an In-Memoriam Certificate if:

- At the time of death, the student was enrolled in courses required for the completion of a degree;
- The student had completed at least one full-time semester at a Vermont State Colleges institution; and
- The student was in good academic standing.

Signed by:


 Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor

Date	Version	Revision	Approved By
1/23/2023	1.0	Adopted	VSCS Board of Trustees