

Posthumous Degrees

Policy EM005

Responsible Administrator: Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success

Responsible Office: Office of the Registrar

Issued: January 2026

Policy Statement

The college recognizes the significance of awarding a posthumous degree as a tribute to the student's academic journey, and as a source of solace for the bereaved. FIT may confer a posthumous degree upon a student who, at the time of death, was enrolled in a degree program and had successfully completed a substantial portion of the program's requirements while remaining in good academic standing. This policy is designed to balance academic standards with compassion for the families and loved ones of deceased students, and it ensures that recognition is granted in a manner consistent with academic integrity, institutional standards, and the values of the college community.

Reason for the Policy

This policy provides a clear, consistent process for awarding posthumous degrees, ensuring that requests are evaluated fairly and in accordance with FIT's academic standards. It honors the achievements of students who have passed away while offering comfort and recognition to their families. Establishing formal guidelines aligns FIT with practices followed across SUNY institutions and reinforces the college's commitment to integrity and compassion.

Who is Responsible for this Policy

- Office of the Registrar

Who is Affected by this Policy

- Families of deceased, matriculated students who may request a Posthumous Degree

Definitions

- **Posthumous Degree** is an academic degree awarded by FIT to a matriculated student who has passed away prior to completing all program requirements but who, at the time of their passing, had demonstrated satisfactory academic progress, was in good standing, and had completed a substantial portion of the degree program.

Principles

The following establishes guidelines for awarding Posthumous Degrees to students who have passed away prior to completing their academic programs.

- **Eligibility**

To be considered for a Posthumous Degree, the following conditions must be met:

- **Enrollment Status:** The student must have been enrolled in a degree program at the time of their passing.
- **Academic Standing:** The student was in good academic standing, with no pending disciplinary sanctions. Minimum GPA requirements are:
 - **Associate and Baccalaureate Degree candidates:** 2.0 GPA, or higher
 - **Graduate/Professional Degree candidates:** 3.0 GPA, or higher
- **Progress Toward Degree Requirements:** The student must have completed a substantial portion of the degree as follows:
 - **Associate Degree:** minimum of 30 institutional credits towards the degree;
 - **Baccalaureate Degree:** minimum of 60 institutional credits towards the degree;
 - **Graduate/Professional Degree:** more than 75% of the degree requirements.
- **Verification of Death:** The college must substantiate that the student is deceased, usually by obtaining a death certificate from the family. (See Procedures.)

- **Degree Type and Notation**

- **Degree Type:** The type of degree awarded posthumously will be consistent with the degree the student was pursuing at the time of death.
- **Transcript Notation:** A notation indicating that the degree was awarded posthumously will be placed on the student's transcript.
- **Diploma Notation:** The diploma will include language indicating that the degree was awarded posthumously.
- **Latin Honors:** Latin Honors will *not* be awarded on posthumous degrees.

- **Reporting**

- **Graduation Rates:** Posthumous degrees will not be included in official graduation or completion statistics.
- **Accreditation Compliance:** The awarding of posthumous degrees complies with accreditation requirements and does not impact institutional reporting requirements.

Responsibilities

- **Office of the Registrar:**

- Serves as the primary point of contact for all Posthumous Degree requests;
- Verifies that the student meets all eligibility criteria, including enrollment status, academic standing, and progress toward degree completion;
- Obtains and documents verification of the student's death, typically through a death certificate;
- Forwards eligible requests to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for consideration;
- Updates the student's academic record and transcript to reflect the Posthumous Degree upon final approval;
- Coordinates the production and delivery of the diploma to the student's family or designated representative; and
- Maintains accurate records of Posthumous Degree requests and approvals for institutional reporting and reference.

- **Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAAs):**
 - Reviews Posthumous Degree requests forwarded by the Registrar for completeness and compliance with policy criteria;
 - Provides recommendations to the President regarding the appropriateness of awarding the degree; and
 - Ensures the process adheres to institutional academic standards and principles of fairness and consistency.
- **President (or their designee):**
 - Serves as the final authority to approve or deny the awarding of a Posthumous Degree;
 - Ensures that approved degrees align with FIT's academic standards and values; and
 - Provides official confirmation of the decision to the Registrar.

Procedures

The awarding of a Posthumous Degree is a multi-step process designed to ensure eligibility criteria are met while providing clarity and support to the student's family. The process is as follows:

1. Request Submission

- The request for a Posthumous Degree may be submitted by a member of the student's family, legal guardian, or by an FIT representative through the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will request documentation verifying their legal authority to act on behalf of the student (such as proof of appointment as executor or administrator of the estate) before processing the request. (See Contacts section below.)
- The Office of the Registrar will respectfully request documentation to verify the student's passing, typically in the form of a death certificate or other official record, to ensure the request can be processed properly.
- The Office of the Registrar will handle the request in accordance with FIT's FERPA policy. Although FERPA protections do not extend beyond a student's passing, FIT exercises its institutional authority to apply comparable safeguards for protecting student records, and will release records at its discretion.

2. Initial Evaluation

- The Registrar's Office reviews the request to confirm that the student meets all eligibility criteria outlined in this policy, including enrollment status, academic standing, and progress towards degree completion. If the student does not meet the criteria, the Registrar's Office will notify the requester of the ineligibility and provide an explanation of the decision.

3. VPAAs Consideration

- If the Registrar's Office determines the student meets the eligibility criteria, the Registrar forwards the request to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAAs) for review and consideration.

4. Presidential Approval

- Upon agreement from the VPAAs, the request is referred to the President for approval. The President has the authority to grant or deny the request based on the established criteria. The President's decision is final.

5. Notification and Degree Conferral

- Once approved, the Registrar notifies the family, or designated representative, regarding the decision, and guides the degree-conferral process.
- The Registrar's Office posts the notice of the award to the student's transcript, and places the order for the student's diploma to be sent to their representative. Both official documents will include a notation indicating the degree was awarded posthumously.

Violations

N/A

Related Policies

- [FERPA](#)

Related Documents

- N/A

Contacts

- **Office of the Registrar**
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