

# University of Tennessee Health Science Center

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## Awarding of Degrees and Attendance at Commencement

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Approval date: September 20, 2011 by the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs  
Next Scheduled review: September, 2014

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### POLICY STATEMENT

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Degrees are awarded at the commencement (May or December) or official degree conferral date (August) following completion of requirements, and diplomas are issued after degrees are conferred. Attendance at commencement is mandatory. Permission to graduate *in absentia* requires approval by the Dean. Degrees are conferred by the President of the University of Tennessee or designee. Under special circumstances diplomas may be provided out of sequence with the approval of the President.

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### POLICY RATIONALE, EXPLANATION AND OPTIONS:

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#### I. ATTENDANCE AT COMMENCEMENT AND GRADUATION *IN ABSENTIA*

Attendance at graduation is mandatory for students completing degrees. Those students unable to attend graduation must file a written request with their respective dean to receive a degree *in absentia*. Permission for receiving a degree *in absentia* must be granted by the Dean. To facilitate the processing of requests for graduation *in absentia*, students should send their requests, along with a justification for their request, to the Dean's office at least two weeks prior to graduation. If approved, the Dean will inform the Registrar and the student. The student must then make arrangements with the Registrar for pick-up or delivery of his/her diploma.

#### II. PARTICIPATION IN MAY COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Some colleges have defined 'walk' policies that allow students to participate in graduation prior to completion of their degree requirements. In such cases, students are included in the commencement program (with acknowledgement of earned awards and honors) and allowed to participate in the commencement processional, graduation banquet, etc. Student diplomas are withheld, however, until all degree requirements are completed. If these requirements are completed within 20 calendar days following commencement, students will receive diplomas bearing the same date as their commencement event. If requirements remain uncompleted after this period, students must register and pay for a minimum of three credits for the following term. Tuition and fees for this term may be waived on the recommendation of the college. Should

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requirements remain by the 21st of August, students must enroll as full time students and pay for all tuition and fees. Normally, tuition waivers are not available in such instances. Once the dean of the college certifies that all degree requirements have been completed, students will receive their diplomas. The date on the diploma will reflect the next degree conferral date (December, May or August) following certification of their degree completion.

Arrangements will be made with the student for delivery or pickup of the diploma.

## III. CONFERRING OF DEGREES

Degrees are conferred by the President of The University of Tennessee or his designee. Normally, the degree is awarded at the scheduled Commencement following the completion of requirements.

All diplomas are issued with the name of "The University of Tennessee" and are signed by the President, the Governor (as head of the University Board of Trustees) and the Chancellor. Diplomas are ordered and issued by the Registrar.

Degree conferral in August also occurs with the approval of the President of the University of Tennessee. However, there is no formal commencement ceremony for August graduates. Those completing degrees in August must make arrangements with the Registrar's office for pickup or delivery of their diplomas. If they did not participate in the May commencement, August graduates can participate in the December graduation ceremony. Students selecting this option must inform the Registrar of their intent to participate in the December graduation event no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>.

## IV. AWARDING OF DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS AT TIMES OTHER THAN COMMENCEMENT

On rare occasions it is necessary for students to receive their diplomas at times other than scheduled Commencements (May or December) or other official conferral date (August):

The student desires to accept an internship or residency position between the time degree requirements are completed and the next regularly scheduled Commencement. (Diploma is required)

The student desires to take state or national board examinations that are scheduled before the date of Commencement. (Diploma is required)

The request for issuance of a diploma at times other than Commencement or other official conferral date must be initiated by the student through the Academic Affairs Office of the college in which the student is enrolled. The following is required:

A formal written request addressed to the dean of the college.

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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 that 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 of completion of requirements or transcript would not be accepted.

If the Dean determines that the request is valid, the Dean will ask the Chancellor to request that the President of the University authorize the awarding of the degree on the date that the requirements for the degree are completed. Upon notification of approval from the President for the awarding of the degree, the Dean will notify the Registrar that the degree is to be conferred and the date to be entered on the diploma.

Copies of all correspondence and certifications must be sent to the Registrar for inclusion in the student's permanent file.

The Registrar will order the diploma and then make the necessary arrangements with the student regarding delivery or pick-up of the diploma.

## V. DISTRIBUTION OF DIPLOMAS

Diplomas will be issued at Commencement ceremonies after the degrees have been conferred. For those completing degrees in August, diplomas will be available in the Registrar's office after September 1 of that academic year.

Diplomas will not be released prior to the May Commencement program. Graduating students who cannot attend the commencement ceremony, and who have been granted approval to graduate *in absentia*, should contact the Registrar to make arrangements regarding delivery of the diploma.

Diplomas will not be released to anyone (spouse, friend or family member) other than the graduated student without written authorization that grants specific permission from the student. The Registrar may release diplomas to a designated college official on written request from the Dean.

Students may participate in only one commencement for the awarding of a degree.