

doctor honoris causa

HONORARY DOCTORATE or doctor honoris causa

The rank of honorary doctorate or doctor honoris causa is an honorific title granted by an exceptional procedure. Originally a university would confer the dignity of doctor honoris causa in order to distinguish a learned person whose knowledge and wisdom were considered exemplary, but also, in return, to pride itself for having recognized and "recruited" among its faculty such an outstanding person. Formerly universities have given some more picturesque titles than doctor honoris causa, like doctor or professor angelicus, eximius, mirabilis, subtilis, illuminatus... The conferring of an honorary doctorate or doctor honoris causa still follows, sometimes, an old protocol (formerly in Latin).

Nowadays the attribution of an honorary title such as doctor honoris causa can mean :

- recognizing and distinguishing an outstanding person who contributed notably to his or her field of expertise, higher education or a specific institution
- simultaneously honoring the recipient and the institution
- rewarding or encouraging past or future donations

Most regulations insist on the moral qualities of the honorary doctorate recipient, like probity. Another significant criterion for the nomination of a doctor honoris causa is the recognition by his peers. Doctors honoris causa can be seen in all the fields of knowledge, such as arts and letters, exact sciences, social or human sciences, philosophy etc.

Honorary distinctions can be of varied levels, the most appreciated one being, of course, that of honorary doctor (doctor honoris causa), although the one of outstanding professor (professor emeritus) is not looked down upon by teachers whose own university would not dare to grant them an honorary doctorate, at least as long as they are active.

In agreement with the rules of the Université Multiculturelle Internationale, an honorary master's degree (magister honoris causa) or an honorary doctorate (doctor honoris causa) are granted according to two essential criteria :

- the personal merit of the nominee
- the recognition by his peers