



2026 TERMS OF REFERENCE



University
of Manitoba

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1. OVERVIEW

The University of Manitoba is proud of the significant, profound and extraordinary personal and professional accomplishments of its alumni. The University, in collaboration with the Alumni Association, recognizes and celebrates these accomplishments through its alumni achievement and recognition program.

For close to 80 years, the Alumni Association and University have been celebrating the impactful accomplishments of its graduates. In 1937, the Alumni Association established the Alumni Jubilee Award to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the University of Manitoba. The Jubilee Award was reintroduced in 1959 to honour a graduate who made an outstanding contribution to society. The award was formally renamed the Distinguished Alumni Award (DAA) in 1996.

In 2012, the Alumni Association and the University of Manitoba collaborated to amplify the program and acknowledge more than one graduate per year in a variety of categories. As a result, in 2014, the Alumni Association presented five distinct awards. In 2020, the Alumni Association Board of Directors removed the Service to the University award as it was considered a duplication of other university awards that honour alumni who make outstanding contributions to the institution and granted the Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee (Committee) the ability to select between one and three recipients in the Professional Achievement, Community Service and Outstanding Young Alumni categories. Only one recipient was selected in the Lifetime Achievement category. In 2022, the Alumni Association Board of Directors added the Academic Innovation Award category and returned to a one recipient per award category model for all the awards based on Canadian best practices in alumni recognition programs, Committee feedback on the inherent differences between academic and non-academic professional achievement, and the practical challenges with ensuring all recipients feel properly honoured and acknowledged when there are so many to profile at the same time.

The goal of the Distinguished Alumni Awards is to celebrate the University's exceptional graduates and share their stories broadly with the community to demonstrate how our alumni are one of the best examples of how the University of Manitoba betters our world. Recipients of these awards will have demonstrated outstanding achievements in their professional and personal lives, and will serve as an inspiration to fellow alumni, current students and the broader community.

2. AWARD CATEGORIES

The University of Manitoba invites nominations for graduates who have made significant and transformative and impactful contributions in their personal and/or professional lives through their leadership and service, and who reflect the brand and reputation of the University, in the following categories:

- Distinguished Alumni Award for Lifetime Achievement
- Distinguished Alumni Award for Professional Achievement
- Distinguished Alumni Award for Academic Innovation
- Distinguished Alumni Award for Community Service
- Distinguished Alumni Award for Outstanding Young Alumni

3. AWARD CRITERIA

To be considered for one of these prestigious awards, the individual must be a University of Manitoba graduate who has inspired fellow alumni, current students and the broader community, both close to home and around the globe, through their outstanding personal or professional achievements and significant, transformative contributions to society through their leadership and service. Recipients will be selected in the following areas:

3.1 Lifetime Achievement

This award recognizes graduates who have shown personal and professional achievements and leadership throughout their lifetime and continue to make significant and transformative contributions to their profession, their community and the University of Manitoba.

Nominees must demonstrate a lifetime of:

- outstanding contributions that made a transformative impact within their community
- exemplary achievement throughout their lifetime
- service to the University of Manitoba

3.2 Professional Achievement

This award recognizes graduates who have made exemplary contributions to their profession and have previously received recognition from within their discipline. The focus of this award is professional achievement that is non-academic in nature. (see Academic Innovation Award below)

Nominees must demonstrate:

- a standard of professional excellence throughout their career that has inspired their colleagues and peers with an emphasis on their professional achievements in the last three to five years
- exceptional leadership in their profession
- outstanding and transformative achievements recognized by the nominee's professional community

3.3 Academic Innovation

This award recognizes graduates who have made exemplary contributions within their academic career and have previously received recognition for their innovation, research excellence and mentoring in academia.

Nominees must demonstrate:

- outstanding innovation and research achievements and excellence in academia that have had a major, transformative impact on the community and society to help make for a better world, with an emphasis on their academic innovation and research achievements in the last three to five years
- excellence in academic mentoring and publishing

- exceptional leadership in their area of academic innovation and research
- at least 51% of their current or past employment (if retired / emeritus) in academia at a recognized post-secondary institution(s)

3.4 Community Service

This award recognizes graduates who have had a transformative impact on those in their community, either at the local, national or international level.

Nominees must demonstrate:

- extraordinary efforts that have made a positive impact on their community
- community service or volunteer work that has engaged and inspired others
- community service that is clearly outside of or above and beyond their professional discipline in a **voluntary, charitable and non-paid capacity**

3.5 Outstanding Young Alumni

This award recognizes graduates who are **under the age of 35 before the close of nominations** who have demonstrated significant contributions and leadership to their field of endeavour, their community and the University of Manitoba.

Nominees must demonstrate:

- inspiring achievements in their field
- contributions that have had a transformative impact in their community
- service to the University of Manitoba, both while as a student and ongoing as an alum

4. NOMINATION GUIDELINES

4.1 Eligibility requirements

Alumni who have received an honorary degree bestowed by the University of Manitoba have received the institution's highest honour and therefore are not eligible for nomination. In addition, the following alumni cannot be nominated:

- Those who currently hold political office at a local, provincial/state, national, or Indigenous government level
- Current members of the Award Pre-Selection Subcommittee
- Current members of the Alumni Association Board of Directors
- Current Members of the University of Manitoba Board of Governors
- Current Members of the University of Manitoba's senior leadership team, specifically for the Academic Innovation Award, including Deans, Associate Deans, Vice-Presidents and Vice-Provosts

4.2 Conditions of nomination

1. Nominees must be graduates of the University of Manitoba in a recognized and Senate-approved degree, diploma or certificate program.
2. Nominees must be in good standing in the community and cannot have engaged in activities that could bring any dishonour to the University of Manitoba.
3. Nominations must be submitted according to the guidelines presented in that year.
4. An individual may receive an award in more than one category during their lifetime but may be honoured in only one category each year.
5. The intention of this program is to present one award in all five of the categories each year.
6. While only individuals can be nominated, groups of individuals will be considered in any of the five categories as determined by the Award Pre-Selection Committee and Alumni Association Board of Directors.
7. Nominations can be made by University of Manitoba alumni, staff, faculty, students or a member of the public.
8. Nominations **cannot** be put forward by immediate family members of the nominee.
9. All nominations will be treated as confidential. In fact, nominators should **not** share with nominees that they have been nominated so to minimize hurt feelings or embarrassment if they are not the successful recipient for that year.
10. Nominations received after the closing date will not be accepted.
11. Alumni may not nominate themselves.
12. Submissions in **any of the five categories** for nominees who are current or past UM faculty and staff should highlight their community outreach contributions and/or leadership in their research areas that are exceptional, beyond their normal work duties, and surpass what is expected of them (depending on the award category criteria).
13. Nominations in the **Community Service category** must highlight a nominee's volunteer, charitable and non-paid community services and experiences beyond one's paid service. If a nominee's submission is unclear in the delineation between what is paid versus unpaid community service, the nomination may be disqualified.
14. All nominations must clearly demonstrate nominees' **impact** on the communities they serve and leadership in their areas of expertise, innovation and research, profession and / or community service (depending on the award category criteria).

15. For the **Outstanding Young Alumni** and **Lifetime Achievement** categories, nominees must clearly show examples of their ongoing service to the University of Manitoba as an alum (and while as a student for the Outstanding Young Alumni award). Examples could include volunteerism or leadership on a board, committee, council or in a specific role that supports the vision, mission and brand of the University such as through mentoring, presenting to or supporting students, demonstrated proud acknowledgement of their alumni status, and / or supporting the University through their philanthropic activities. Paid employment does not qualify as service to the University of Manitoba for these award categories. Contributions beyond paid service should be articulated in the submissions.
16. All nominators (and nominees through the nomination submission process) must affirm the information included in their submission is accurate and truthful. If any information presented is found to be inaccurate, whether by accident or purposefully, the University of Manitoba reserves the right to remove the submission from consideration for that year and rescind the award if discovered after the fact.
17. Posthumous nominations will not be considered.

4.3 The nominations process

1. All nominations must be submitted using the online web form on the UM alumni website.
2. All nominations and supporting documents are considered confidential.
3. A nomination form must be completed in full or the nomination will not be considered.
4. Nomination packages will include:
 - the completed nomination form (600-word count) outlining the rationale for nomination based on the award criteria
 - a minimum of two to a maximum of four, one-page letters of reference (not written by the nominee or immediate family) typed on the reference's personal or organizational letterhead
 - a CV and / or portfolio of work of **no more than 10 pages** (this is optional but highly recommended)
5. Nominations must be reviewed by Alumni Relations prior to being submitted to the Awards Pres-Selection Subcommittee and Alumni Association Board of Directors to ensure all nominees meet the conditions of nomination, including degree(s), and completeness of application.

4.4 Nomination from previous years

Unsuccessful nominations will automatically be moved forward for consideration in subsequent years unless nominees or nominators request their submission be removed, they pass away, or they no longer qualify for the award (i.e., age-out of Outstanding Young Alumni Award, are no longer in academia for the Academic Innovation Award, or dramatically change their professional trajectory / area of expertise. Nominators have the option to amend the

information in the nomination package based on the nominee's experience and qualifications, but there will be no open call to past nominators (or nominees) to update the nominees' packages. The University of Manitoba advancement prospect research team will support the updating of nomination packages on an annual basis.

5. THE AWARD PRE-SELECTION SUBCOMMITTEE AND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diverse alumni points of view will be represented in the composition of both the Award Pre-Selection Subcommittee and the Alumni Association Board of Directors emphasizing equity, diversity and inclusion.

5.1 Award Pre-Selection Committee ("Subcommittee")

The Award Pre-Selection Subcommittee is comprised of senior University and Alumni Relations leadership and is responsible for shortlisting from among the full list of nominees in that category to move forward for consideration by the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

5.2 Alumni Association Board of Directors ("Board")

The Alumni Association Board of Directors select the final recipients from the short list of candidates provided by the Pre-Selection Subcommittee ("the Subcommittee").

All directors on the Board are elected by alumni at large (the membership) at the Alumni Association Annual General Meeting with exception to the Chair of the Alumni Council, which is appointed by the Alumni Association Board of Directors. All members of the Board are UM graduates as defined in the Alumni Association Bylaws, which are voted on annually at the Alumni Association AGM by the membership.

The Executive Director, Alumni Relations, participates in the recipient selection meeting as support to the Alumni Association Board of Directors but is a non-voting member. University of Manitoba staff or leadership do not have a role in the final selection of the Distinguished Alumni Award recipients each year.

Board members can serve for up to six years in total as per the Alumni Association bylaws (not necessarily consecutively) so to maintain a healthy turnover.

5.3 The role of the Alumni Association Board of Directors ("Board")

- review nominations against the established criteria and recommend to the President of the University of Manitoba the proposed final recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Awards for that given year
- support the UM Alumni Relations unit with ticket sales and sponsorship solicitation by actively participating in outreach to their networks and leaders in the community
- provide feedback on the Celebration of Excellence gala and format, nominations process, and Distinguished Alumni Awards program

5.4 The role of the Executive Director, Alumni Relations

- The Executive Director, Alumni Relations will fulfill the administrative duties of the Alumni Association Board of Directors but will not vote in the selection process. They will confirm recipients list with the University of Manitoba President's Office and Vice-President's (External) Office before the decision is finalized. The Executive Director, Alumni Relations will provide guidance to the Alumni Association Board of Directors and identify any concerns or issues for consideration. The Vice-President (External) may participate in the Board's selection process meeting. The Executive Director, Alumni Relations will keep the Vice-President (External) apprised of the outcomes and the progress of the Distinguished Alumni Awards program.

6. THE SELECTION PROCESS

Nominations are first thoroughly vetted by Alumni Relations to "fact-check," ensure nominees meet the award criteria, suggest moving to best-fit award categories if nominees do not meet the award criteria (if necessary), and work with nominators if there are challenges or changes that need to be addressed.

Nominations will be closed on a date determined by Alumni Relations and agreed upon by the Alumni Association in accordance with the date determined for the Celebration of Excellence event (whether virtual or in-person) or other publicity and recognition opportunities.

After the nominations have closed, the Executive Director, Alumni Relations will create nomination packages to be sent to the Pre-Selection Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will review and shortlist from all the submissions for the award category. The Board will review all the shortlisted nominees for each of the five award categories. The nomination package forwarded to the Pre-Selection Subcommittee and Board will include the following:

- A chart summarizing the nominations that were received, sorted by award category
- A copy of this document, "Distinguished Alumni Awards Terms of Reference"
- Each individual candidate's nomination submission

The discussions surrounding the selection of the recipients at both the Subcommittee and Board meetings will remain confidential. Following the selection process, all materials related to this process will be returned to the Alumni Relations office.

7. THE SCORING PROCESS

7.1 Award Pre-selection Subcommittee

Members will review all submissions independently and score each nominee on each criterion on a scale of 1 to 10 in advance of the meeting and share independently with Alumni Relations, who will review and tally the results. The top three scored nominees in each award category – for a total of 15 nominees – will form the shortlist that will move forward to the Board.

7.2 Alumni Association Board of Directors

The shortlisted nominations for each category will be forwarded to the Alumni Association Board of Directors, who will review and rank their top three in each category in advance of the meeting and share independently with Alumni Relations, who will review and tally the results.

The Board will meet where rankings will be shared, and they will select award recipients in each category for that year. The Board will be asked to finalize the list of award recipients for that particular year. In the event of a tie, the recipient may be determined by the Chair. The Board will identify an alternative award recipient in each category in the event a selected recipient is unable to attend the Celebration of Excellence event nor participate in advertising and promotions of the awards program and event, or declines to accept the award.

The Board reserves the right to reassign a nominee to another award category if the Board feels the nominee is better suited for another category based on the information in the award submission.

8. NOTIFICATION

The Chair of the Alumni Association Board of Directors will be responsible for contacting the recipients and inviting them to accept their award on behalf of the Alumni Association. It is essential that selected nominees attend the Celebration of Excellence and participate in recognition opportunities as determined by the Alumni Relations office and Alumni Association. The notification process will include the following:

- Informing the recipient of their award
- The specifics of the publicity and recognition opportunities, the date, time and requirement to attend the Distinguished Alumni Awards Celebration of Excellence gala event (virtual or in-person) to receive their award (if known at the time of notification), and their main contacts from Alumni Relations and External Relations going forward

8.1 Condition of Acceptance of the Award

- The nominee understands the condition of being selected for that year is contingent upon them participating in publicity efforts surrounding the awards, which may include attending a Celebration of Excellence event (in person or virtual), a videotaped interview, a photo shoot, social media posts and advertising, and interviews for alumni publications and news media. If the potential recipient cannot commit to the above criteria, in particular if they cannot attend the Celebration of Excellence event, the nominee that was ranked in second place as an alternative will be selected as the recipient in that award category for that year, and the nominee that was selected initially will return to the total pool of candidates for future consideration.
- For recipients living outside of Winnipeg, all travel and accommodations expenses to participate at an in-person Celebration of Excellence or in other publicity efforts will be covered by the UM Alumni Relations unit.