

Phase Two Guidance
Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Colleges and Universities: Commencement Ceremonies

During Phase Two, the public, organizations, and businesses are required to adopt behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. **This guidance is intended for colleges and universities who are considering holding in-person commencement ceremonies during Spring 2021. In-person commencement ceremonies will be allowed to occur with strong safeguards and physical distancing in place.** This guidance does not apply to Pre-K-12 school settings. The following measures must be implemented in a college or university plan to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst students, faculty, staff, guests, and the community. For additional information, visit coronavirus.dc.gov.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or who was recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and needs to quarantine, must not attend or work as staff at a graduation ceremony due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Guidelines for In-Person Spring 2021 Commencement Ceremonies

- All in-person commencement ceremonies are contingent upon approval of submitted plans to the Government of the District of Columbia through the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). Plans may be submitted via their website: coronavirus.dc.gov/waiver.
- Outdoor commencement ceremonies are limited to 25% of the maximum occupancy of the space as specified in their Certificate of Occupancy, or 2,000 people, whichever number is smaller. (For example: if occupancy limit of the space is 2,500, 625 persons shall be permitted). If an outdoor space does not have a formal Certificate of Occupancy, 40 square feet per person shall be used to calculate the occupancy limit.
- Indoor graduation ceremonies are limited to 25% of the maximum occupancy of the space or 250 people, whichever number is smaller. (For example: if occupancy limit of the space is 800, 200 persons shall be permitted).
- After May 1, indoor graduation ceremonies are limited to 25% of the maximum occupancy of the space or 500 people. (For example: if occupancy limit of the space is 800, 200 persons shall be permitted)
- Virtual events continue to be encouraged. Institutions that are holding in-person graduation ceremonies should consider providing virtual (online) options for persons who do not wish to attend an in-person event. This will also promote smaller crowd size.
- Outdoor events are safer than indoor events and are encouraged, weather permitting.
- Consider holding multiple smaller graduation ceremonies, so that all graduating students can be accommodated while minimizing crowd sizes.
- Accompanying events should be minimized (e.g, receptions), and must abide by applicable Mayor's Orders and DC Health guidance for indoor and outdoor gatherings. For more information see *Guidance for Mass Gatherings* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Parades are prohibited.

Plan Requirements

The following must be addressed in the submitted plan:

- Mask wearing is mandatory.
- All persons present shall be included in the numerical attendance totals. This includes but is not limited to: graduating students, faculty, staff, workers, vendors, guests, and speakers. Live music

will not be approved.

- Adjust the size of the event as necessary to allow for guests, or groups of guests, to maintain *at least* 6 feet social distancing at the event. Groups of guests must consist of 6 or fewer individuals.
- Pre-assigned/reserved seating is recommended.
- List of attendees or seating assignment charts must be saved for 30 days and must be made available to DC Health within 24 hours upon request.
- Duration of ceremonies may not exceed 2 hours, but facilities may be open for an hour in advance and after the ceremony to prevent crowding at ingress and egress.
- All attendees must be seated and remain in their seats throughout the ceremony.
- Students may walk across the stage for their diplomas, but plans must address how social distancing of 6 feet will be maintained between students and with the audience.
- Prohibit gathering or loitering after the ceremony, including outside the venue (e.g., in parking lots).
- If there are any **speakers/performers** at the commencement the following must be maintained:
 - Only single performers/speakers will be allowed (e.g., no choirs or bands)
 - A minimum of 12 feet must be maintained from the audience if performers/speakers are masked
 - A minimum of 18 feet must be maintained from the audience if performers/speakers are unmasked
 - There should be no more than 10 people on any stage, and individuals the stage must be spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- Food and drink:
 - **No food or beverage service will be allowed during ceremonies.**
 - Guests may bring their own beverage/snacks as allowed per the venue.
 - Any beverages/snacks must be consumed while seated. Patrons may not leave their seats with beverages/snack.
 - Face masks should only be removed while a guest is actively eating/drinking.
- Colleges and universities planning outdoor ceremonies must put careful thought and planning into a back-up plan in case of inclement weather. This information must be included in the plans. Back-up venues must meet all the requirements outlined in this guidance.

Travel and Other Requirements

- Attendees must follow all DC Health requirements for travel including travel-related testing and quarantine requirements. For more information see *Guidance for Travel at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo*.
 - Institutions holding commencement ceremonies must provide support for COVID-19 testing of attendees as indicated per the DC *Guidance for Travel*.
 - Ensure that attendees coming from foreign countries are aware of the CDC's requirement to show a negative COVID-19 test before boarding a flight to the United States.
- The plan must include policies for face masks, social distancing, and other preventive measures including:
 - Ensuring guests are aware that anyone with symptoms should not attend
 - Policies for isolation and quarantine in the District of Columbia
 - Provision of supplies to support good hand hygiene practices
 - Procedures if someone becomes sick at the event
 - Procedures enforcing the mask mandate.
- The plan must include processes for registering all guests, having a system in place for guests to report if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 in the 14 days following the event, reporting cases to DC Health, and notifications to guests and students should a case occur.
- The plan must include protocols to admit inspectors from the District government to the event and to comply with requests for information relevant to these provisions.