

2022 May Commencement Frequently Asked Questions

Commencement is a special time for our graduates, their families, friends, and the University of Tampa community. In order for your Commencement Day to be perfect please review the following frequently asked questions below:

What COVID-19 safety precautions am I and my guests required to follow?

All graduates, families and guests are **required** to always follow the university's Spartan Shield Health Safety plan when at commencement. The Spartan Shield Health Safety plan **requires all** families, guests, and graduates to always wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, when inside the commencement venue.

What is the difference between graduation and commencement?

Graduation is the completion of all degree requirements in order to be awarded your degree and receive your printed diploma. Commencement is the symbolic ceremony at which your graduation is publicly acknowledged and celebrated. Participation in the commencement ceremony does not equate to graduating.

Where and when is commencement?

The May Commencement ceremonies will be held on Saturday, May 7, 2022 in the Expo Hall, Florida State Fairgrounds. There will be two ceremonies, with the ceremony for graduates from the Sykes College of Business and the College of Arts and Letters beginning at 9:30 a.m., and the ceremony for graduates of the College of Social Sciences, Mathematics and Education and the College of Natural and Health Sciences beginning at 2 p.m.

I graduate in August 2022. Can I attend this ceremony?

August graduation candidates are eligible to attend the May or December Commencement ceremonies. The names of the August graduates will appear in the December Commencement program.

What time do I need to arrive to commencement?

Graduates should plan to arrive to check-in for the ceremony between 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. or 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. respectively. **Graduates are required to check-in for the ceremony wearing your cap, gown and hoods no later than 9:15 a.m. for the 9:30 a.m. ceremony and 1:45 p.m. for the 2 p.m. ceremony on Commencement Day** (please try on your cap and gown as soon as you pick it up to make sure it fits before arriving to the fairgrounds).

It will take about 20 minutes to pick up your "reader name" card, receive brief instructions and line up for pre-seating. Throughout the check-in process, it is imperative that you follow the instructions of the faculty marshals, staff and UT Diplomats who are organizing the event. Be patient and understanding.

What is pre-seating?

Graduating candidates will be seated prior to the start of the processional. Candidates will be seated by faculty marshals after they have completed the check-in process and have received their reader card. If candidates would like to sit with a particular group of people, **all individuals must be present at the same time in order to sit together**. Once candidates have been seated, they must remain in their seats for the duration of the ceremony.

When does pre-seating end?

At 9:15 a.m. and 1:45 p.m., we will hold seating graduates in order to ensure the processional begins on time. Graduates who arrive after these times will be seated following the singing of the National Anthem.

How long will the ceremony last?

At precisely 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., the Commencement music will begin to play and the processional will begin. The ceremony should last about 2 hours.

Do my family members and guests need tickets to attend?

No. However, due to limited seating, it is highly recommended that family members and guests arrive early to the ceremony.

What time should my family and guests arrive? Is there assigned seating?

It is important that your families and friends be seated **PRIOR TO THE PROCESSION. NO ONE CAN BE SEATED DURING THE PROCESSION.** Please let your guests know this in advance. Seats cannot be reserved and are available on a first-come basis.

Any guests needing accessible seating should arrive as early as possible – approximately one hour prior to the start time of the commencement. An area has been reserved for guests needing special seating. **Special needs seating is limited. Please be aware that to accommodate all individuals needing accessible seating, a maximum of one additional guest will be allowed entrance into the accessible seating area.**

What do I need to wear to commencement?

Graduating candidates are **REQUIRED** to wear the traditional cap, gown, and hood (if applicable). There will be no exceptions. Students can pick up their caps and gowns from the University Bookstore starting Monday, April 25, 2022.

How will I be recognized?

Graduates will be recognized individually. The students will stand by row and be led up the aisle by the faculty marshals. They will proceed to the left side of the stage (from the audience vantage point) and hand the card they were given to the reader for their name to be announced. Students will then walk across the stage and receive their diploma cover, as a

photographer takes their pictures. Students will then continue off the platform to the right for two more professional photos, and return to their seats.

How will I know that the ceremony is over?

Once the degrees have been conferred, the recessional will begin with the President's Platform Party leaving the stage followed by the faculty. Graduates will stand in place until they receive instructions from their faculty marshals.

What is the etiquette expected at the ceremony?

All graduating students are required to remain seated throughout the duration of the ceremony. Please tell your family and friends that **ALL GUESTS MUST REMAIN IN THEIR SEATS UNTIL THE PLATFORM PARTY, FACULTY, AND GRADUATES HAVE LEFT THE AREA.** Students and their families/friends should designate a meeting place outside the Expo Hall.

What items may I and my family and guests bring to the ceremony?

For the safety and security of all graduates and guests, please see below for permitted and prohibited items. Please note, security has the right to inspect any item at any time on the basis of safety. All graduates and guests will pass through security gates and a bag check upon entrance to the Expo Hall at the Florida State Fairgrounds. Prohibited items must immediately be returned to the owner's vehicle or disposed of before entering the commencement venue. Failure to do so will result in being denied admittance to the ceremony. In addition, smoking and vaping inside the venue is strictly prohibited.

Should individuals, including graduating students, display disruptive behavior or be found in possession of any of these items, they may be immediately removed from the venue and denied access from participating in the ceremony. The Florida State Fairgrounds is an alcohol, tobacco and drug free venue.

Permitted Items:

- Purses and small bags with personal belongings
- Necessary medications
- Umbrellas
- Cameras and video recorders
- Strollers*
- Service animals

Prohibited Items:

- Weapons
- Beverages of any kind – including alcoholic beverages
- Glass containers
- Backpacks
- Tobacco products of any kind
- Noisemakers

- Laser pointers
- Non-service animals
- Balloons
- Banners
- Signage

*Please note: While strollers are permitted into the commencement venue, guests must leave the strollers at the designated stroller check location. The University of Tampa is not responsible for strollers or any items left at the stroller check location.

What are the driving directions to the Expo Hall, Florida State Fairgrounds?

The Florida State Fairgrounds is located at 4800 U.S. Highway 301 North in Tampa.

From the University, travel on I-275 North toward 1-4/Orlando and merge onto I-4 East via Exit 45B. Take Exit #7 (U.S. Hwy. 301 South) and stay in the right lane heading south for ¼ mile. Turn right into the Fairgrounds entrance.

Do NOT go past the light at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Do NOT take exit 5 to Florida State Fairgrounds.

Proceed to exit 7 for the easiest entrance to Fairgrounds.

*Please note, there is no fee for parking.

**Please take proper precautions for Tampa traffic.

Where should my family and guests park?

Parking attendants will guide you and your family members and guests to the appropriate parking lots when you arrive to the Florida State Fairgrounds.

What if I, or one of my guests, need special accommodations?

Graduates who need special physical accommodations for the ceremony should indicate that when they apply for commencement or can email commencement@ut.edu with their needs and contact information so that commencement staff can make the necessary arrangements. The staff asks that you make us aware of these needs as early as possible.

What if I have additional questions regarding the ceremony?

Please contact Orientation and Family Engagement at commencement@ut.edu or 813.257.1999. Our office is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. We are happy to help!