Frequently Asked Questions

Why is regalia required in order to participate in commencement ceremonies?
There is a rich history of why regalia is required at university commencements. See the "Academic Costume" page of this brochure for more information.

Once I’ve applied to graduate, how do I register for a Commencement Ceremony?
Registration for Commencement is part of registering to graduate. Please apply to graduate in order to register for the ceremony at pdx.edu/registration/graduation.

I have two majors. Can I walk with both?
Unfortunately, you cannot walk with both departments. You will need to choose which major you want to walk with at the ceremony. You will walk across the stage when whichever major you choose is called.

What is appropriate etiquette for the Commencement ceremony?
This is your event to honor your accomplishments. Family, friends, colleagues, faculty, and staff will be present to applaud your hard work. All participants will be expected to conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner. The use of cell phones and chewing gum is strongly discouraged. Alcohol is not permitted. No one carrying alcoholic beverages will be allowed to enter. Commencement takes place in non-smoking facilities. Helium balloons are not allowed. If guests bring a helium balloon, they will be asked to leave it outside the exterior doors. You and your guests’ understanding and cooperation are vital to the success of the day’s activities.

For more information, visit pdx.edu/commencement or email your questions to commencement@pdx.edu.

Sunday, June 14, 2015
The Moda Center at the Rose Quarter
Tickets available May 1 at the PSU Box Office

Celebrate Commencement

Style Guide 2015

2015 Graduation Fairs
Try on and purchase regalia, and pick up pre-ordered regalia
May 20 & 21
SMSU 327, 328 & 329: 10 am – 8 pm

Major list may not include all programs. If you are unsure of the college/school for your major, please email commencement@pdx.edu to verify your ceremony.
“Some will build cities, some will build lives—perhaps one of them may even build an empire. But all will be builders on the solid foundation of knowledge.”

One of the most colorful features of the academic procession is the appearance of graduates, faculty, members of the Board of Trustees, and guests of the University in full academic costume. The design of the gown, the color of the tassel on the cap, and the pattern, length, and colors of the hood all have long histories and special significance. American universities, unlike those of England and Europe, have adopted a standard code of academic costume.

According to the code, the bachelor’s gown worn by Portland State University graduating seniors has straight sleeves and is worn closed. Gold, silver, and green cords are worn by honors graduates. The master’s gown has long, pointed sleeves with the forearm being seen through a slit at the elbow of the sleeves. The doctor’s gown is faced with velvet and has bell-shaped sleeves. Each sleeve carries three bars of velvet. The tassel on the cap indicates by color the college or school conferring the degree. In addition to the cap and gown, candidates for advanced degrees wear the academic hood, the traditional garment signifying high scholarly attainment. The doctoral hood carries the colors of the college or school conferring the degree on the outside and PSU’s colors of green and white on the inside.

One legend, which deals with the origin of the cap and gown, reveals that a venerable teacher in ancient Greece promised wealthy parents that their sons would be “appropriately dressed” when presented at a banquet honoring the completion of their academic studies. However, when the young men entered the banquet hall dressed in simple sackcloth robes and carrying mortar boards, the mark of common workmen, a startled cry arose from the audience. “Let me explain,” said the teacher as he raised his hands for silence. “Your sons are said the teacher, to build. Some will build cities, some will build lives—perhaps one of them may even build an empire. But all will be builders on the solid foundation of knowledge.”

You may pre-order your regalia for pickup at the Graduation Fairs, or pay for shipping to your home. Visit pdx.edu/commencement for details.

Bachelor’s Regalia
Candidates earning a bachelor’s degree or candidates earning a graduate certificate without holding a master’s degree wear bachelor’s regalia. This includes: A a cap, B a tassel representing their academic discipline, and C a bachelor’s gown. Additional elements are D a Latin Honor cord, E stole of gratitude, or other regalia the graduate has earned.

Master’s Regalia
Candidates earning a master’s degree, including graduates who have earned a graduate certificate and hold a master’s degree, wear the master’s regalia. This includes: A a cap, B a tassel representing their academic discipline, C a master’s gown with elongated sleeves, and D a master’s hood. Master’s candidates may wear a stole of gratitude and additional regalia they have earned.

Doctoral Regalia
Candidates earning a doctoral degree wear the following regalia: A a cap, B a gold tassel, C a doctoral gown, and D a doctoral hood (see details below).

You may find tassels, stoles of gratitude, and other graduation items at the Spirit Store on the first floor of the Smith Memorial Student Union.

Honor Cords
PSU awards Latin honors for undergraduate students only. Students must have at least 72 PSU credits, 60 of which must be taken for differentiated grades (not Pass/No Pass). Latin honors for the purpose of the commencement ceremony are based on your 2015 winter term GPA.

Tassel Color
Tassel color indicates the graduate’s school, college, or specific degree. The tassel is worn to the right until the conferal of degrees when graduates move the tassel to the left side, over the heart.

Regalia will also be available for purchase on the day of the ceremony, plus an additional charge.

Academic Costume

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