

Academic Protocol Fast Facts

Flags

When the American flag is displayed on stage, and you are standing on stage looking out toward the audience, the American flag goes on your right-hand side. The state flag belongs on your left-hand side. The school flag belongs on its left.

When the American flag is displayed on the floor at the front of the audience, if you were seated in the audience, the flag belongs on your right-hand side as you face the stage. The state flag belongs on your left; school flag on its left.

The American flag should not be presented by a person wearing academic regalia. Use a color guard.

International flags are displayed in a line in alphabetical order using the countries' English names, starting from the left side. Flags must be of the same size and displayed on poles of the same height.

Miniature flags should not be attached to academic regalia.

Gowns

Candidates wear the gown appropriate to the degree they are about to receive.

ROTC students dress according to school policy. They may wear military uniforms if commissioned before commencement, but they should wear regalia if they are commissioned after commencement. Don't cover uniforms with gowns.

If a master's degree is the terminal degree in a discipline (art, for example), faculty wear a master's gown, not a doctor's gown.

Hoods

Candidates to be hooded en masse either carry their hoods draped over their left arms in the procession or march in the procession wearing them.

Only one hood may be worn at a time. When a scholar is receiving simultaneous advanced degrees and will be called to the podium more than once for hooding, he or she should remove the first hood in preparation for receiving the second. The first hood can be left on the person's chair during the second hooding or carried draped over the left arm.

Candidates march in procession dressed for the degree they are about to receive. A person with a master's degree who is receiving a Ph.D. degree marches in a Ph.D. gown without a hood. Conversely, a person who holds a Ph.D. degree but who is receiving an additional master's degree marches wearing a master's gown, no hood.

Candidates who will receive a terminal degree and a master's degree (a Juris Doctor and a master of public administration, for example) at the same ceremony march wearing the gown of the highest degree. The master's degree hood should not be placed on the doctor's gown. Instead, drape the master's hood over the person's left arm. Follow standard hooding procedures for presenting the doctor's hood.

Trustees wear their earned hoods or hoods especially designed for them by the school.

Other platform party members wear their earned hoods.

When presidential regalia is used, the hood is in school colors designed to match the robe.

Honorary degree recipients receive the school's official doctor's hood trimmed entirely in black velvet or black velvet with the appropriate faculty color binding. Do not use Ph.D. blue.

"Non-code," self-designed hoods are not used.

No embellishments may be added to hoods.

Faculty and scholars who are graduates of foreign schools wear their earned regalia, including hoods.

Foreign students who are degree candidates wear the regalia appropriate to the degree they are about to receive.

Mortarboards and Tams

Mortarboards or tams are required for an academic costume to be correct.

Mortarboards rest flat on the head, parallel to the floor.

Men remove headwear during prayers. Signal this from the podium. Doctors may wear tams instead of mortarboards.

No embellishments may be added.

Order of Degree Conferral

Degrees can be properly presented in ascending or descending order.

Honorary degrees are presented after earned degrees.

Bachelor of Arts degrees in letters and humanities are presented first.

Bachelor of Science degrees are presented after all Bachelor of Arts degrees.

Platform Party

Make the platform party as small as possible. Assign preferred seats on the floor to VIPS who don't have speaking parts.

Trustees who don't have earned degrees wear black doctoral gowns trimmed with black velvet front facings, no velvet sleeve chevrons and the school's doctor's hood trimmed in black; they wear a mortarboard or tam with tassel, unless your school has specially designed "trustee regalia."

Members of the clergy wear their religious attire.

Active duty members of the military wear their dress uniforms.

"Non-code," self-designed regalia is not used.

Faculty who are foreign graduates wear their earned regalia.

Honorary degree candidates process in black doctor's gowns or the school's custom doctor's gowns;

they wear mortarboards or tams with tassels, no hoods.

Head marshals are permitted to wear custom regalia in a design approved by the school.

Processions

May be led by either the school's mace bearer or a marshal with a baton.

When the mace is carried as part of the platform party, it immediately precedes the president.

The president marches alone and enters last.

At commencement, candidates for degrees are not part of the academic procession. They enter the hall before the procession, marching in a double row. Candidates stand and face the center aisle as the faculty and trustees process to their places.

Rank

The academic hierarchy varies from campus to campus, but generally, this is the order of precedence for people who might be involved in a ceremony:

Chair of the governing body

Members of the governing body

President

Provost

Vice Presidents

Deans

Faculty who hold chairs or named professorships

Faculty, longest serving has priority over newer members

Emeriti faculty and administrators

The terms "president" and "chancellor," have various meanings. On some campuses, the president is the chief officer; on others, the head position is referred to as "chancellor." Many schools refer to the head of the governing body or the person in charge of a statewide system as "chancellor." In other places, that person is the "president." When working with chancellors, research exactly which type you are dealing with.

The terms "trustees," "regents," and "governors" are synonymous, but should not be used interchangeably. All indicate members of an institution's governing body.

Tassels

Tassels can be in faculty colors but should not be made of more than one color.

Black tassels are appropriate for all degrees.

Black is appropriate for new degrees for which no faculty color is provided.

Only one tassel may be worn at a time. Graduates who have more than one degree must choose which tassel to wear. Black is a good option in such cases.

Tassels rest on the right side of the mortarboard before the degree is conferred; they are moved to the left side afterward.

Ph.D.s may wear either black, link-thread tassels or shorter, gold, metallic-thread tassels.