

University of Essex
COVID-19 Graduation Policy
October 2021

Policy Overview

1. The COVID-19 Graduation Policy (“the policy”) sets out the arrangements the University of Essex has in place to deliver our commitments to safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the University and wider community in response to COVID-19 while delivering a high quality Graduation experience for our graduates and their friends, family and supporters.
2. The University reserves the right to make changes to any arrangements set out in this policy related to Graduation in order to respond to Government guidelines, our legal obligations and to maintain the safety of our community. Such changes may include cancellation of the event. We endeavour to communicate all significant changes to those affected as soon as is practically possible.

Booking Tickets

3. Graduation is a celebration of graduates’ achievements and we welcome all guests to join us. Our commitment to protecting individuals’ safety is paramount and appropriate measures will be taken to minimise the spread of COVID-19. Given the nature and scale of the event, it is recommended that clinically vulnerable individuals consider the risks before booking and attending the Graduation event
4. Guests may only attend Graduation with a valid ticket and will not be permitted to enter without a ticket under any circumstances.
5. Attendance at events requiring tickets is not guaranteed and tickets are sold on a first come first served basis. It is recommended that travel arrangements are only booked following receipt of confirmation of a Graduation ticket purchase. Those making travel arrangements are advised to be aware of the relevant cancellation and refund policies associated with the booking (paragraph 9 of this policy).
6. In order to manage the Graduation event safely, capacity limits have been set for activities taking place indoors. Tickets are sold on the basis of these limits for all indoor venues.
7. If an eligible graduate is unable to attend their graduation ceremony due to limited capacity, COVID-19 symptoms or other COVID-19 restrictions, including travel or where guests tickets are unavailable within the published allocation, they will be invited to attend a future graduation ceremony and should contact: graduation@essex.ac.uk.

Costs and Refunds

8. Refunds are not normally made for non-attendance at Graduation.
9. In the event that any or all of the Graduation ceremonies need to be rescheduled or postponed due to an increased risk of COVID-19 or circumstances beyond the University’s control, the University is not liable for costs incurred by graduates and guests.

10. Where a graduate or guest is unable to attend due to testing positive with COVID-19 or having COVID-19 symptoms or other COVID-19 related restrictions, a full ticket refund can be requested via graduation@essex.ac.uk.
11. Where a Graduation event is cancelled, a full ticket refund is made.
12. All ticket refunds are made in line with the University's Graduation Guest Ticket Policy.
13. The University does not accept liability of any other costs incurred with external suppliers, including robing, photography and travel. It is recommended that graduates and guests check the relevant cancellation and refund policies before making any bookings.

Measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19

14. All attendees at Graduation events are strongly recommended to undertake a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) prior to arriving on the University's campus. It is recommended that the test is taken on the morning of the relevant ceremony. All graduates and guests should only arrive onto the campus following a negative test. If the test is positive, they should follow Government guidance on self-isolation and testing.
15. Subject to Government guidance at the time of the event, all graduates and guests may be required to show evidence of a negative LFT upon arrival. Requirements will be communicated ahead of the event as soon as is practically possible.
16. Due to the nature of the Graduation event, social distancing may not be possible. It is strongly recommended that face coverings are worn by all graduates and guests while attending indoors activities, specifically but not exclusively, the ceremony and reception. Coverings can be removed when eating or drinking, for photography and when processing across the stage in the ceremony. Information about requirements will be available throughout the campus.
17. Specific risk assessments related to COVID-19 will take into account the proposed levels of occupancy and ventilation in all University spaces and buildings throughout the Graduation event in order to maximise ventilation.
18. All attendees are strongly recommended to make use of our hand sanitiser stations and facilities.
19. Enhanced cleaning arrangements are in operation in all indoor areas and facilities on the campus where Graduation activities are taking place.

Policy Approval and Review

20. The policy is approved by the Academic Registrar on behalf of the Graduation Planning Group and is subject to review at least once a month by the Academic Registrar or nominee to ensure it remains fit for purpose in meeting its aims.

Chelsey Smith, Graduation & Awards Manager

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