

HGSE Commencement FAQ Guidance

For additional guidance, please visit the [Harvard University Frequently Asked Questions for Commencement 2020](#).

My family bought tickets and/or made hotel reservations. What should they do?

Your loved ones may be able to get refunds under travel policies already in place with airlines, hotels, and other providers. In recent weeks, many airlines relaxed refund and credit policies. Contacting the airline, hotel, or other vendor directly, via their phone or website, is the most direct way to ensure that an appeal for a refund can be acted upon. ([This article from Money magazine](#) may be helpful, and other guides to requesting refunds or credit on flights are available on each airline website.) For those families who need a notice of cancellation to receive a refund from an airline, please contact the Commencement Office directly at commencement@harvard.edu to request this.

I have already rented regalia. Will I get my money back?

The COOP, Oakhall, and Balfour have guaranteed that all regalia rental orders for Commencement 2020 will be refunded. However, students who still wish to purchase regalia can still do so. We do not advise renting regalia at this time. (As of 4:00pm on 3/20/2020, refund information was not yet posted on the [COOP Commencement website](#), but we anticipate it will be available from the COOP soon.)

Is there a chance there will be an in-person Commencement if all this COVID-19 concern diminishes?

No. There will not be an in-person Commencement on the Harvard campus in May 2020. Instead, there will be a virtual ceremony, with university-wide and HGSE-specific components, on May 28, 2020. On-campus celebrations for the Class of 2020 after May 2020 will be planned and announced based on safety guidelines and subject to the advice of leading public-health professionals. The hope is that the ceremony will have all of the pomp, circumstance, and tradition that is typical of a Harvard Commencement and will include as many of the traditional campus festivities that typically precede Commencement as possible.

When will the on-campus celebration happen?

We are not yet sure what the on-campus celebrations will look like for class of 2020. But, as President Bacow and Dean Long have both affirmed, we hope that this would be one of the biggest celebrations the University has ever seen.

What will the virtual Commencement be like?

President Bacow noted that while a virtual commencement gathering will not be able to match the traditional festivities, we will convene online on Thursday, May 28, to award degrees so that everyone will graduate as expected. Each School at Harvard will also host its own special online event.

What will the schedule be?

We don't yet know the precise schedule for the virtual Commencement events, but we do know that May 28, 2020 is the planned date for the events. Stay tuned for announcements from the university and from HGSE.

How will I get my diploma?

President Bacow announced that Harvard University will send diplomas to students. To ensure timely delivery, please be sure your mailing address is up-to-date in my.harvard.

Will my program also have Commencement events?

We will announce more specific plans for HGSE celebrating Commencement together virtually on May 28, 2020 in the coming weeks. Your program cohorts and the bonds of learning and friendship you have built in your programs and concentrations are crucial parts of the HGSE experience, and we know that program directors and administrators are looking forward to working with students to create meaningful recognition experiences.

What will happen with special doctoral-program events?

We will announce more specific plans for HGSE's virtual ceremony on May 28, 2020 in the coming weeks. We know that the Ed.L.D. and Ed.D./Ph.D. events involve special traditions for graduates and their loved ones. As we work together in our community to plan virtual events, we will all keep those traditions in mind.

What about Black and Latinx graduation celebrations?

These important ceremonies are among the many University-wide events that will not take place in-person on the Harvard campus this May. For all university-wide Commencement celebrations, we expect a more general announcement about official rescheduled events. We will update you with any information we hear from the University or from event-planning teams as details become available.