



The City College
of New York

COMMENCEMENT GUIDEBOOK



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Commencement History

University Commencement is a centuries-old academic tradition in North America, dating back to at least the mid-17th century. The City College of New York, originally known as *The Free Academy*, held its first Commencement in 1853 with a graduating class of seventeen students. As the College enters its 179th year of academic achievement, Commencement continues to honor this legacy while celebrating the accomplishments of today's degree candidates.

Commencement represents the ceremonial culmination of years of academic dedication by students from diverse cultures, countries, and lived experiences. The College proudly recognizes degree candidates from all schools and divisions and welcomes them into the distinguished community of CCNY alumni who have made meaningful contributions locally, nationally, and globally.

The sequence of degree conferrals during Commencement Exercises follows established academic protocol and reflects historical precedence, institutional structure, and the distribution of undergraduate, graduate, and terminal degree programs. Undergraduate schools traditionally lead the procession, followed by graduate schools, with those conferring terminal degrees proceeding last.

While individual schools, divisions, and affinity groups may host celebratory ceremonies during Commencement Week, the President of The City College of New York is the sole authority empowered to confer degrees on behalf of the institution. During the College-wide Commencement Exercises, each dean formally presents their school's degree candidates to the President for conferral. Following the symbolic conferral of all degrees, the College community collectively recognizes this milestone before the formal recessional of the Platform Party, degree candidates, and guests.

Statement of Purpose

The Commencement Guidebook serves as the central planning and reference document for The City College of New York’s annual Commencement Exercises. It is intended for use by the Commencement Planning Committee as well as by academic, administrative, and operational stakeholders across the campus who contribute to the planning, coordination, and delivery of Commencement-related activities.

The guidebook provides a shared framework to support consistent, collaborative, and institutionally aligned planning. It documents governance structures, planning timelines, roles and responsibilities, and key operational considerations to ensure that Commencement planning reflects CCNY’s academic traditions, complies with CUNY policies and protocols, and upholds the College’s commitments to accessibility, safety, inclusion, and operational excellence.

This document is designed to promote clarity and continuity by establishing common language and expectations across participating offices and divisions. It also serves as a year-over-year reference, preserving institutional knowledge and best practices while allowing flexibility to respond to evolving operational, regulatory, and public safety requirements.

The guidebook further distinguishes between the College-wide Commencement Exercises—the sole official ceremony at which degrees are symbolically conferred—and school-, division-, or affinity-based celebratory events held during Commencement Week. In doing so, it reinforces the role of Commencement as a unifying academic milestone and affirms the shared responsibility of the campus community to deliver a dignified, equitable, and well-managed experience for degree candidates, their guests, faculty, staff, and invited guests.

Commencement activities are managed in a collaborative way across multiple departments including, but not limited to: Student Affairs/Student Life, Division of Humanities & the Arts, Public Safety, Facilities and Campus Planning, Academic Affairs and Registrar, Auxiliary Enterprise Corporation, with the organizational oversight residing with the SVP of the Office of Institutional Advancement, Communications & External Relations.

Commencement Dates & Locations (*Sample – Updated Annually*)

Main CCNY Commencement Exercises

Commencement Exercises are customarily scheduled for the first available Friday following Memorial Day, subject to campus availability and City permitting.

Sample:

Friday, June 2, 2023

10:00 a.m. – South Campus Lawn

In addition to the College-wide Commencement Exercises, schools, divisions, and recognized affinity groups may host celebratory events during the final ten days of the academic term. These events are intended to recognize students within specific academic or community contexts.

Important Distinction:

These events are not alternatives to Commencement and should not be referred to as “mini-commencements.” Commencement Exercises constitute the College’s sole official ceremony at which degrees are symbolically conferred and the formal transition from student to graduate is recognized.

Divisional & Affinity Ceremonies (**Sample Schedule**)

(Dates, times, and locations subject to annual confirmation)

- Lavender Ceremony – Friday, May 26, 2023, 10:00 a.m., Great Hall, Shepard Hall
- Bernard & Anne Spitzer School of Architecture – Tuesday, May 30, 2023, 11:00 a.m., Great Hall, Shepard Hall
- Center for Worker Education (CWE) – Tuesday, May 30, 2023, Aaron Davis Hall
- Division of Humanities and the Arts – Wednesday, May 31, 2023, 10:00 a.m., South Campus Lawn
- School of Education – Wednesday, May 31, 2023, 5:00 p.m., South Campus Lawn
- Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership – Thursday, June 1, 2023, 11:00 a.m., South Campus Lawn
- Division of Science – Thursday, June 1, 2023, 3:30 p.m., South Campus Lawn
- Sustainability in the Urban Environment – Friday, June 2, 2023, 1:00 p.m., NAC Ballroom
- Grove School of Engineering – Friday, June 2, 2023, 2:00 p.m., South Campus Lawn

- ROTC – Tuesday, June 6, 2023, 9:30 a.m., Great Hall, Shepard Hall
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4. Key Campus Partners & Roles
5. Governance & Meeting Structure

Commencement Leadership

Commencement planning is jointly overseen by the Office of Institutional Advancement, Communications & External Relations (OIACER) and the Division of Student Affairs.

Commencement Co-Chairs

- Senior Vice President, OIACER
- Assistant Vice President, Student Life and Leadership

Additional senior advisors and operational leads are designated annually based on functional responsibility.

Commencement Committee

The Commencement Committee is composed of representatives from key academic and administrative units. Membership is confirmed annually and includes representatives from:

- President's Office
- Office of Institutional Advancement
- Provost's Office
- Academic Divisions and Schools
- Student Affairs and Student Life
- Registrar
- Facilities
- Public Safety
- Information Technology
- Communications and Marketing
- Procurement Office and The Foundation for City College

A current roster of committee members, including names and departments, is maintained by OIACER and appended to this guidebook each year.

Meeting Structure

- **Initial Planning Meeting:** Held in October to confirm budget parameters, funding sources, committee membership, and high-level timelines.

- **Core Planning Committee:** Meets monthly, transitioning to biweekly meetings as Commencement approaches. These meetings include site walk-throughs of the Commencement footprint.
 - **Divisional Subcommittees:** Convened as needed to support school- and division-specific planning, with meeting frequency determined annually.
 - **Operations & Logistics Working Group:** Focused on facilities, public safety, IT, accessibility, and vendor coordination; meeting cadence determined by operational needs.
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6. Planning Timeline & Milestones: All high-level bids must be completed by December 1st of each year to leave time for legal approval and bid process.
7. Budget Overview

Platform Party Planning

Invited Participants

The Platform Party is composed of institutional leadership and distinguished guests, including:

- President and Cabinet
- Deans and Division Leadership
- Student Government Representatives (one Undergraduate Student Government representative and one Graduate Student Council representative)
- Valedictorian and Salutatorian
- Honorary Degree Recipients
- Master of Ceremonies
- Elected Officials
- Representatives of the CUNY Board of Trustees

Additional guests may be seated in designated areas but do not appear on the Commencement platform.

Stage Management

The Commencement Stage Manager, in coordination with the Senior Vice President for OIACER, oversees all on-stage and behind-the-scenes operations on Commencement Day.

Core Responsibilities include:

- Managing the official run of show and event timeline
- Coordinating faculty, speakers, platform participants, and technical teams
- Calling cues for music, lighting, video, and speaker transitions
- Serving as the central point of contact for real-time issue resolution
- Ensuring readiness of microphones, seating, and stage layout
- Supervising strike and post-event restoration of the Commencement footprint

Additional Considerations

- Robing logistics
- Seating charts and stage diagrams
- Travel and accommodations for honorary degree recipients
- Guest management and protocol

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9. Commencement Book Production
 10. Run of Show (Main Commencement)

Marshal Roles & Assignments (Lead Seating Marshall responsible for all communications below to Marshals and Faculty)

The 2026 CCNY Commencement Ceremony will take place on the South Campus Great Lawn on Friday, May 29, 2026 at 10:00 am. To manage the many parts of the Ceremony efficiently, Marshals are divided into several teams. The teams and their respective duties are as follows:

Student Procession: Student Procession Marshals are responsible for organizing the graduates into line by school/division on Convent Avenue and then escorting the procession to the seating area. Marshals will be expected to arrive by 7:30 am. Each school/division will need at least three marshals.

Seating: Seating Marshals will be divided into two groups:

- **Guest Seating:** The Guest Seating Marshals will be responsible for assisting the guests to find seating in the areas designated for them. Guest Seating Marshals will need to arrive by 7:30 am.
- **Student Seating:** The Student Seating Marshals will meet each school group and escort them to their seats. The Student Seating Marshal will need to report by 8:00 am.

Faculty Marshals: Faculty Marshals will organize the faculty in line and then escort the procession to their seats. Faculty Marshals should arrive by 8:45 am.

House Marshals: House Marshals perform a variety of functions for the ceremony in general.

- **Check-in Marshals** are responsible for marking the arrival of all marshals.

Accessibility Marshals: Accessibility Marshals are responsible for assisting all attendees (graduates, guests, and alumni) who have requested accommodation find their seats.

Please complete [Google form](#) to let us know if you are interested in participating as a Marshal. Please submit your response by Monday, April 6, 2026. Please note, if you are a

faculty member and would like to march and sit with the faculty during the ceremony, serving as a marshal does not preclude you from doing so.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following Frequently Asked Questions are intended for public-facing use and reflect CUNY- and CCNY-aligned commencement standards. Language is intentionally non-promissory and subject to annual update based on operational, safety, and policy considerations.

Sample Budget Information; Click on link below to view:

[2024 Main Commencement Budget Only](#)

[2024 Budget with Divisional considerations](#)

General Information (Guests & Community)

When is Commencement?

Commencement Exercises are held annually in late May or early June. The official College-wide Commencement ceremony date, time, and location are published each spring on the CCNY Commencement website.

Who may attend Commencement?

Commencement is open to degree candidates, their invited guests, faculty, staff, and invited dignitaries. Attendance is subject to ticketing, capacity, and security protocols.

How many tickets does each student receive?

Ticket allocations are determined annually based on venue capacity and safety requirements. Ticket information is communicated directly to degree candidates in advance of the ceremony.

How do guests RSVP?

Guest RSVP and ticket distribution processes are communicated through official College channels once finalized.

What time should guests arrive?

Guests are encouraged to arrive early to allow time for security screening and seating. Final arrival times are published closer to Commencement Day.

Will graduates' names be read aloud?

At the College-wide Commencement Exercises, individual graduate names will be read as each graduate enters the main Commencement seating area. Names will be read in the order they are received during the lining up process on Convent Avenue. In addition, graduate names will be listed, in alphabetical order (by last name) along the video screens throughout the ceremony.

What is the rain or severe weather policy?

Commencement is held rain or shine. In the event of severe weather or safety concerns, the College will communicate any changes or contingency plans through official channels.

What is the bag policy?

Bag size restrictions and prohibited items are announced in advance of Commencement. All attendees are subject to security screening upon entry. These are subject to change with higher profile guests and regulations.

What items are not permitted inside the Commencement footprint?

Prohibited items may include banners, signs, noisemakers, balloons, weapons, and other items deemed unsafe or disruptive. A complete list is published prior to the event.

I require accessibility accommodations. Who should I contact?

Attendees requiring accommodations (including ASL interpretation, wheelchair access, or seating assistance) should contact the Office of Student Affairs or the designated accessibility contact listed on the Commencement website.

For Graduating Students

Who is eligible to participate in Commencement?

Participation in Commencement is limited to students who have applied for graduation by the published deadline and are approved by the Registrar.

I will complete coursework in the summer. May I participate?

Students completing degree requirements in the summer term may be eligible to participate, subject to Registrar confirmation. Note that the names of those wanting to participate will not be a part of the current year's program.

Is participation in Commencement the same as degree conferral?

No. Participation in Commencement is ceremonial. Degrees are officially conferred only after all academic requirements are completed and certified.

Do I need to wear academic regalia?

Yes. Academic regalia is required for all participating graduates. Ordering instructions and deadlines are communicated in advance.

For Ushers, Marshals, Faculty, and Staff

When will assignments be communicated?

Assignments and reporting instructions are distributed no later than two weeks prior to Commencement.

Is training provided?

Mandatory briefings and/or walkthroughs are scheduled in advance for all marshals, ushers, and operational staff.

What time is check-in on Commencement Day?

Check-in times vary by role and are communicated with assignment materials.

All FAQs are subject to change based on operational needs, safety considerations, and CUNY policy.