

## Faculty Participation at Commencement

### Frequently Asked Questions

(Document most recently updated Nov. 22, 2019)

In the life of a student, earning an academic degree is a significant accomplishment. In the life of an institution, commencement serves as a public acknowledgement of this important student milestone. Attending a University commencement ceremony affords all those in the community – family, friends, faculty, and administration – an opportunity to bear witness to this achievement and to celebrate those who have earned it: the graduates. Through participation in commencement, members of the faculty attest to the vital role that they play in the intellectual and professional formation of our students, offering their support and congratulations to the very end of the educational process.

In light of recent changes regarding commencement-related procedures and expectations, faculty members have been asking a number of questions. Here are some frequently asked questions and corresponding responses.

---

---

#### **Q-1 Is attendance at commencement mandatory for all faculty members?**

A-1 Every tenure-track and tenured member of the faculty is expected to participate in his or her college / school commencement ceremony, both in December and in May. All other members of the faculty are welcome to attend.

#### **Q-2 Must I attend all seven commencement ceremonies?**

A-2 No. You need only attend the ceremony for the unit in which you hold your primary appointment.

If you would like to attend the ceremony of another school or college (e.g., because you have taught or advised students in that unit), you are welcome to do so. Please be sure to contact the appropriate dean's office well in advance to let them know of your intended attendance.

To view a list of ceremonies, visit <http://www.uta.edu/commencement> and click on "Schedule of Events."

#### **Q-3 I hold a joint appointment across two colleges. Must I attend both ceremonies?**

A-3 You may choose to attend either one or both, as indicated above.

#### **Q-4 When I arrive for the ceremony, must I appear in full academic regalia?**

A-4 Yes. As dictated by tradition, full academic costume consists of four elements: gown, hood, cap, and tassel. For each element, the style and colors should be appropriate to the wearer's highest earned academic degree. For more, visit the [American Council on Education's online Academic Costume Code](#). (For more on alternatives to non-US academic regalia, see items Q-11 and Q-12, below.)

#### **Q-5 Will the University be supplying faculty with academic regalia?**

A-5 No. Each faculty member must secure appropriate academic regalia to wear at his or her unit's commencement ceremony. Regalia may be rented or purchased at the [UT Arlington Bookstore](#), 400 Spaniolo Drive, or through any other vendor of your choosing. Academic units that own one

or more sets of academic regalia that can be borrowed by faculty should establish a plan such that “loaner regalia” can be made available to faculty members who might have need of it.

*NOTE: Tenure-track faculty in their first year of service to UT Arlington for whom obtaining appropriate academic regalia in the short-term may prove a hardship, please contact the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs ([amsol@uta.edu](mailto:amsol@uta.edu)) so that we might explore temporary options for the upcoming ceremonies.*

**Q-6 I am unable to attend commencement. May I be excused?**

A-6 Of course, provided that you notify your immediate supervisor in writing (e.g., via e-mail) as soon as you are aware of the need to be excused. Faculty may be excused from attending commencement due to a:

- Medical emergency or condition (self or family member)
- Significant family event (wedding, commencement, etc.)
- Significant professional responsibility that requires one to be away from campus on the date of commencement (e.g., delivering a presentation at a conference or participating in an important professional development program)
- Religious obligation
- Safety and travel concern (e.g., inclement weather)

Final determination of what constitutes an acceptable reason for not participating in a commencement ceremony is left to the discretion of the faculty member’s dean.

**Q-7 What if a last-minute emergency arises? What should I do?**

A-7 In such cases, it is best to send your dean an e-mail message as soon as you are able to do so.

**Q-8 Will we need to check-in upon arriving at the College Park Center?**

A-8 Yes. Please come prepared to show a photo ID and to sign-in before being granted admission to the backstage areas of the Center.

**Q-9 If I do not participate in a commencement ceremony and have not requested and received permission for my Dean to be absent, what will be the consequences?**

A-9 From an administrative point of view, faculty attendance at commencement is a form of professional service, and is thus reflected in the annual review process. In the larger picture, however, a strong faculty presence at the commencement ceremony is a clear indicator to our students and their families that we, the faculty, support our graduates right up until the very end.

**Q-10 I am unable to participate in this semester’s commencement because of a religious obligation. Will future ceremonies for my college or school always be held on the same date and/or time, effectively requiring me to seek an excused absence each time?**

A-10 Since the actual dates and times of future commencement ceremonies will change each time, it is not possible to answer this question at this time.

**Q-11 I currently serve in (or have retired from) a branch of the United States military. May I opt to wear my military dress uniform in place of traditional academic regalia?**

A-11 Yes, you may.

**Q-12 My degree is from a country/culture in which the style of academic regalia differs from that used in the United States. Would wearing such regalia be acceptable?**

A-12 Absolutely yes! We welcome a diversity of styles and fashions in academic regalia, provided that your academic costume (1) has been specifically fashioned for use in academic contexts; (2) includes a cap or hat; and (3) is an authentic expression of your home institution's standards for such dress (should such a standard exist).

Faculty members who hold degrees from such institutions are equally welcome to rent or purchase US-style academic regalia. Simply rent or purchase a traditional black robe, select a hood with an appropriate velvet edging, ask to have the inner silk of the hood to represent "The University of Texas," and include an appropriate tassel and cap.

**Q-13 My degree is from a country/culture in which there is no current practice of "commencement" nor is there any practice of wearing academic regalia. To participate in UT Arlington's commencement ceremonies, *must* I don academic regalia?**

A-13 Yes. As a matter of honoring academic tradition here in the United States, *all* faculty members participating in our University's commencement ceremonies must do so appropriately attired as defined elsewhere in this document.

**Q-14 May faculty members bring family members or friends to the Commencement Ceremonies?**

A-14 No, faculty are in regalia, process, and sit in a group. We do not have any accommodations for family or friends of the faculty. Space is dedicated to the family of students graduating.

*Should you have other questions, please contact the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs ([amsol@uta.edu](mailto:amsol@uta.edu)). We will update this FAQ document accordingly.*