

# ONLINE AND COHORT STUDENTS

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Commencement is a new and exciting experience for many students. Below are answers to questions asked by previous graduate candidates that may help you prepare for your day. If you have a question that is not addressed below, contact [commencement@gcu.edu](mailto:commencement@gcu.edu).

### Commencement Ceremony Details

**Q:** What time do I need to arrive?

**A:** We ask that you arrive one to two hours prior to the start of the ceremony to allow time for checking in and finding your seat for the ceremony. If you arrive early enough, you are welcome to do a final touch up on your regalia attire (cap and gown), meet and greet with fellow classmates and have pictures taken by our professional photography vendor. Please reference your registration confirmation email for further check-in time details.

**Q:** What do I do once I arrive to the campus?

**A:** As the graduate, you will need to enter through your designated entrance and proceed to check-in. Once checked in make your way to the GCU Arena bowl floor to be seated. Guests may enter GCU Arena when doors open. There will be commencement staff available to assist and answer any questions you may have. At any point, you can find anyone with a staff name badge for assistance.

**Q:** Will there be a rehearsal for the ceremony?

**A:** There is no rehearsal for the ceremony - just come and enjoy the day! There will be commencement staff available to direct you and answer any questions you may have.

**Q:** How should I dress?

**A:** Business casual is preferred. Wear comfortable shoes; high heels are not advised.

**Q:** How long will the ceremony last?

**A:** Approximately two hours.

**Q:** Where do I park when I arrive?

**A:** There will be designated parking areas for graduates and guests. More details will be available closer to the commencement ceremony date on our website at [gcu.edu/Commencement](https://gcu.edu/Commencement). Graduate candidates registered for the ceremony will also be sent an email closer to the ceremony date with detailed parking instructions. For GCU's campus map, [click here](#).

**Q:** How much time should I allow to arrive at the campus?

**A:** Travel time varies based on your location in the Valley. Remember to allow time to park on campus and to enter GCU Arena. The following are estimated commute times to the campus, not including parking time:

- Coming from East Valley (Mesa, Gilbert, Chandler) - 45 minutes to an hour.
- Coming from NE Valley (Scottsdale) - 30 to 45 minutes.
- Coming from West Valley - 20 minutes.

It's recommended to check traffic and construction information at <https://www.az511.gov/> or by calling 888-411-ROAD (7623). You can also follow [@ArizonaDOT](#) on Twitter for ADOT traffic information. Please allow time for parking and entrance into the GCU Arena. Please note, campus will be in session with ground student classes Monday - Friday. Traffic to and on campus may be exceptionally busy. Please plan accordingly.

**Q:** Are cameras and/or video cameras allowed?

**A:** Yes, as long as you do not block views of others.

**Q:** Will I be standing for a while at any point during the ceremony?

**A:** You will be standing during the check-in process, but that should be no more than 5-10 minutes at a time. There will be plenty of seating for you to sit and rest if needed.

**Q:** What should I do if I need assistance during the commencement ceremony?

**A:** Contact Student Disability Services. All requests for assistance must be made at least 14 days prior to the event.

Student Disability Services | 602-639-6342 | [disabilityoffice@gcu.edu](mailto:disabilityoffice@gcu.edu)

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**Q:** What if a friend or family member needs assistance during the commencement ceremony?

**A:** Contact Student Disability Services, and submit all requests at least 14 days prior to the event.

**Q:** What do I need to bring to my commencement ceremony?

**A:** Remember to bring all pieces of your regalia (cap and gown). Please note that GCU is not responsible for any items brought to the ceremony. Storage for personal belongings is not available.

**Q:** Do I need to arrive wearing my regalia?

**A:** Yes, please arrive wearing your regalia. Commencement staff will be available to assist with any regalia details if needed.

**Q:** What if I did not purchase regalia or forgot it at home?

**A:** Regalia is required to participate in the commencement ceremony. Representatives from GCU's preferred vendor will be on site the day of the ceremony with items available for purchase.

#### Commencement Seating and Guest Tickets

**Q:** Could there be future changes to the commencement ceremony due to COVID-19?

**A:** Yes. Please understand we are closely monitoring COVID-19 conditions and following the guidance and recommendations from applicable government and health agencies. As such, the university's health and safety policies for Commencement Ceremony dates, times, capacity, and public involvement may be subject to change. Graduates will be notified via email of any ceremony changes.

**Q:** Is there assigned seating for graduates?

**A:** Graduates are seated on the GCU Arena bowl floor based on degree level and college. If you would like to sit with classmates within the same degree program, you should all enter the bowl floor together.

**Q:** When will I reserve guest tickets for the commencement ceremony?

**A:** Registered graduates will receive an email three weeks after the registration deadline date with instructions on how to reserve guest tickets through the GCU Arena box office ticketing system. Please refer to your registration confirmation email for further details.

**Q:** When will I receive my reserved ceremony guest tickets?

**A:** When reserving tickets through the GCU Arena box office ticketing system, your tickets will be sent via email in either mobile or print at home format (depending on delivery method selected when reserving).

**Q:** As a graduate candidate, do I need a ticket?

**A:** No, you will not need a ticket. Tickets are for guests attending the ceremony. Guests will not be permitted into the Arena without a ticket.

**Q:** Is there an age limit for tickets?

**A:** Guests three years old and younger do not need a ticket; however, they will not be counted as a seated "ticket," as we request them to be seated on a ticketed guest's lap.

**Q:** How many guest tickets can I reserve?

**A:** Registered graduates can reserve up to six guest tickets through the Arena box office ticketing system. There will be no exceptions made as we have capacity limitations based on those who register to participate. It is the graduate's responsibility to reserve guest tickets through the Arena box office ticketing system, after completing the commencement registration process.

**Q:** What if I would like to receive more than the allotted number of guest tickets?

**A:** Each registered graduate will have the opportunity to reserve six guest tickets. No exceptions will be made. On the day of the ceremony, any released tickets from cancellations or guests not attending will be redistributed on a first-come, first-served basis. If you'd like to look into this option, unticketed guests can come and check for the released tickets, but we cannot guarantee any will be available. If the Arena reaches guest seating capacity, overflow provisions have been made. There will be a reserved area for guests without tickets to watch a live stream of the ceremony.

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**Q:** What if I do not need all the tickets I have requested after all?

**A:** Please return tickets you will not use to GCU Arena Box Office prior to your ceremony.

**Q:** When should my guests arrive?

**A:** Guest doors will open two hours prior to the start of the ceremony. We ask that all ticketed guests arrive and be seated at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony.

### Ceremony Health and Safety Guidelines

**Q:** What are the ceremony health and safety guidelines?

**A:** Graduates and guests should be prepared to verbally attest that in the three days leading up to, and the day of the ceremony, they have not experienced, nor been around someone who has experienced the following:

- A fever or a sense of having a fever
- Muscle pain that you cannot attribute to another health condition or physical activity
- Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Chills that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Loss of taste or smell that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Cough or congestion or shortness of breath

OR

- Tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 10 days leading up to the ceremony
- Had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 in the 7 days leading up to the ceremony, and you are unvaccinated

If you or any of your guests have experienced, or have been around someone experiencing any of the above leading up to the ceremony, or on the day of the ceremony, please stay home.

**Q:** What about masks?

**A:** At this time, masks are optional. However if you or your guests feel more comfortable with a mask, we encourage you to bring one with you to wear. GCU is not mandating that graduates or guests be vaccinated or wear face coverings as a condition of attending the commencement activities. Those will be individual decisions. As such, you may be in close proximity with non-vaccinated individuals, which may increase the risk of transmission of infection to you and other individuals.

**Q:** Could there be future changes to the commencement ceremony due to COVID-19?

**A:** Yes. Please understand we are closely monitoring COVID-19 conditions and following the guidance and recommendations from applicable government and health agencies. As such, the university's health and safety policies for Commencement Ceremony dates, times, capacity, and public involvement may be subject to change. Graduates will be notified via email of any ceremony changes.

### Academic and Commencement Inquiries

**Q:** Will I receive my diploma at the commencement ceremony?

**A:** No, you will receive your diploma after you have completed degree requirements and have filled out your graduation application with your student services counselor.

**Q:** Do I have to complete the graduation application to register for the commencement ceremony?

**A:** Commencement registration and the graduation application are two separate links. Completing the graduation application does not register you for the commencement ceremony. Commencement participation is not required, nor does it determine completion of a program.

**Q:** When will I receive my diploma?

**A:** Your diploma and one official transcript will be mailed to the address on file approximately 4-6 weeks after you have met all degree requirements, completed your graduation application and fulfilled all outstanding financial obligations with the university. Contact your student services counselor for further details.

**Q:** I would like a name change on my diploma.

**A:** Contact your student services counselor to make the correction.

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**Q:** Will my degree list any honor statuses?

**A:** Contact your student services counselor for further details.

**Q:** Will I be receiving an honor cord?

**A:** First-degree undergraduate students meeting necessary requirements will receive an honor cord at the ceremony. Contact your student services counselor for further details.

### Miscellaneous Questions

**Q:** Is GCU Arena air conditioned?

**A:** Yes, GCU Arena is air conditioned.

**Q:** What should I expect when entering the Arena?

**A:** Metal detectors/bag checks will be in, and a clear bag policy will be enforced. Please note, the following items are prohibited for Arena entry:

- Weapons of any kind, including but not limited to firearms, knives, pepper/OC spray, stun guns or brass knuckles
- Illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia
- Noise makers
- Alcohol
- Glass bottles
- Balloons
- Flags or banners
- Wrapped packages or gifts
- Pets (service dogs only permitted)
- Strollers, wagons and car seats

**Q:** Can I bring food into the GCU Arena?

**A:** Outside food and beverages are not allowed in the GCU Arena, unless medically necessary, with the exception of sealed bottled water. Bottled water will be available for graduates if needed.

**Q:** Can I decorate my cap?

**A:** Yes, cap decorations are permitted. Decorations must be appropriate, not offensive and not block the view of those who will be sitting around you.

**Q:** Will there be a place to buy flowers on campus for the ceremony?

**A:** GCU has partnered with Pacific2You Flowers to bring you an assortment of flower bouquets and leis that will be available for purchase at commencement. The flower booth will be located near the GCU Arena, and will accept cash and all major debit and credit cards. You can also pre-order at [www.pacific2you.com/school/gcu](http://www.pacific2you.com/school/gcu). The pre-order deadline is three weeks prior to the commencement ceremony.

**Q:** Are there any travel discounts available to students and family members?

**A:** Yes! [Click here](#) for airport parking, car rental and hotel accommodation discounts.

**Q:** What is the closest airport to GCU?

**A:** Phoenix Sky Harbor is the closest airport to campus.

**Q:** Is the ceremony streamed live?

**A:** Yes, the ceremonies will be streamed live.\* The day of the ceremony the live stream will be available at [gcu.edu/Commencement](http://gcu.edu/Commencement). After the ceremony, the video will be viewable on GCU's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/GCU](http://youtube.com/GCU) \*This is a live streaming of the ceremony where degrees are presented to graduates in attendance.

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**Q:** Can I meet with my instructors?

**A:** Faculty members are invited to participate in commencement ceremonies. Contact your instructor directly to find out if they will be attending, and visit them in the regalia changing area.

**Q:** Can I meet with any of my GCU counselors or graduation team?

**A:** Commencement is a busy time at GCU. We recommend that you arrange a date and time outside of your ceremony to meet with your GCU graduation team. Commencement staff will not be able to deliver communication or gifts on your behalf. Please contact your counselor directly to coordinate, if you'd like.

**Q:** Will I be able to shop for GCU gear?

**A:** Yes, the Lope Shop (located in Building 24) will be open the week of commencement.