

USM GRADUATE SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT PARTICIPATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Commencement ceremonies for graduate students are held in December and May in a special ceremony that honors master's, specialist, and doctoral students. August graduates may participate in the December ceremony.

Prospective graduates must be aware of all requirements and deadlines for degree completion. The preliminary audit will inform students of any missing requirements. After submitting the online Application for Graduation (via the Student Dashboard in SOAR) by the deadline, the applicant will receive information about commencement and instructions for ordering academic regalia. If planning to participate in the commencement ceremony, a graduate must also visit the Office of the Registrar website to [reserve a seat](#).

Earning a graduate degree is an exceptional accomplishment. Therefore, only students who have completed all requirements for graduation by the published deadlines may participate in commencement ceremonies. These requirements may include defending a thesis, capstone project, or dissertation successfully and submitting the final version of the document with all revisions to the documents specialist in the Graduate School; completing all required coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA; passing a comprehensive exam or other culminating exam or project; completing all internship/externship/practicum hours (if applicable); and completing any other requirements of the degree.

Hooding professors for doctoral and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) students are strictly limited to faculty who currently hold official appointments with The University of Southern Mississippi, including emeritus faculty. Normally, the student's major professor/committee chair or other committee member (if the major professor is unavailable) hoods doctoral or MFA graduates in commencement ceremonies. The Graduate School will not honor requests for other individuals to participate in the hooding ceremony (e.g., committee members who are not USM employees, including former employees; USM staff employees who hold non-academic appointments; or family members or friends).

At commencement, graduates will receive a USM diploma cover. Graduates will receive the official diploma in the mail approximately 4-6 weeks after graduation. To ensure the diploma is mailed to the correct address, students must verify their permanent mailing address in SOAR. If the address is incorrect, students should contact their Graduate Degree Auditor immediately. To order a duplicate diploma, the graduate should complete the duplicate diploma order form on the Office of the Registrar website.