

NSU Commencement Dress & Conduct Guidelines Effective Spring 2021

NSU holds its graduates in high esteem and the Commencement ceremony recognizes their achievements and induction into the community of scholars. The ceremony reflects academic customs and traditions that are thousands of years old, honoring the knowledge, wisdom, and leadership of those who came before. In respect for those traditions and in accordance with the Academic Costume Code of the American Council on Education, graduating students are directed to the following dress and conduct guidelines.

Dress & Regalia

Traditional academic regalia will be worn by all graduating students and faculty participating in the commencement ceremonies.

Academic Gowns

- At NSU, master's and bachelor's candidates wear black graduation gowns designated by the university and appropriate for the degree being conferred during the ceremony. Gowns for baccalaureate degrees have a straight sleeve; master's gowns have a long, pointed sleeve with a slit for the arm, and doctoral gowns have full rounded sleeves.
- Gowns may not be altered in any way. Do not wear embroidery, flowers, pins, ribbons, or other adornments on the gown.
- Approved honor cords and stoles may be worn over the gown. Students should not alter honor cords or stoles in any way. (See section below.)
- Appropriate business or business casual attire must be worn beneath the regalia. Shorts and tennis shoes are discouraged unless needed for mobility reasons. When selecting ceremony footwear, keep in mind graduates stand for long periods of time, walk long distances, and use stairs / ramps.
- NSU's bookstores sell graduation gowns. If borrowing a gown, please make sure it is black, appropriately sized, and has the correct sleeve for the degree to be conferred.
- Military attire for ROTC students is worn under the academic gown. After crossing the stage and receiving the diploma cover, the student returns to his/her seat. While seated, the student will remove the gown revealing the uniform. When called to the stage, the student will leave the gown in the chair and proceed forward for the oath.

Caps and Tassels

- Master's and baccalaureate candidates wear caps (black mortar boards) designated by the university. Caps are purchased with the gown.
- The mortar board should be worn with the front point over the forehead below the front hairline, so the flat board is parallel to the floor. The cap is not worn on the back of the head with the board pointing upward.
- The Academic Costume Code prohibits the decoration of caps (mortar boards). However, in recognition of NSU's Native American cultural background, NSU has made an exception to allow

Native American students the option of beading the edge of the cap. No other cap decorations may be included.

- At NSU, tassels represent the color of the degree earned (i.e. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Education, Master of Science, etc.). Students purchase a tassel with their cap and gown. Native American students may also wear a small eagle feather along with a tassel.

Honor Cords and Stoles

In addition to the traditional cap and gown regalia worn at this event, students may wear approved honor cords and stoles to signify achievement through academic honors, student organizations, or association with international groups or programs. Organizations seeking approval for honor cords or organizational stoles should contact the Registrar's Office for information and forms. Requests must be submitted by October 1 for use at Fall Commencement or by March 1 for Spring Commencement. Groups will be notified of a decision within two weeks. A list of approved cords and stoles is available on the Commencement website.

The student, organization, or group is responsible for the cost of honor cords and stoles. Graduation stoles and honor cords must be in keeping with the decorum of the event and within the following guidelines:

Honor Cord: An honor cord consists of braided cords with tassels on either end. The cord signifies specific academic achievement or membership in a recognized academic honor group or society. (NSU makes an exception for veterans and service members who wear red, white and blue cords.) GPA honor cords are distributed by the bookstore from a list approved by the Registrar's office. Other academic honor cords are distributed through the individual society's recognition ceremony. Students should not alter honor cords. Students who are not entitled to wear an honor cord and do so will be reported for disciplinary action.

Stole: A stole takes the form of a cloth scarf-like garment worn over the shoulders and adorned with the organization's colors and/or insignia. Specialized stoles recognize outstanding service to the university or achievement in a co-curricular organization. Students may elect to purchase an NSU stole which is available to all Commencement participants. Stoles may not be more than four inches wide and/or 66 inches long (33 inches on each side). Students should not alter approved stoles.

All dress, regalia, and recognition (cords / stoles) guidelines will be strictly enforced on ceremony day, and the university reserves the right to request that graduates change inappropriate attire or remove decorations before they will be allowed to participate in the Commencement ceremony. Graduates choosing not to abide by the regalia policy will be asked to leave the assembly area and will not be permitted to participate in the Commencement ceremony. Improper conduct may result in disciplinary actions.

Ceremony Conduct and Protocol

Northeastern State University's Commencement ceremonies are formal and dignified events. Decorum and respect for the customs of the occasion enhance the experience for graduates and their guests. Those who choose to participate must respect the rights of others, including NSU staff, other participants, and invited guests.

- Ceremony participants must follow the directions of Commencement volunteers and staff. Please listen respectfully and carefully!
- Graduates who display signs of being under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol will be removed from the processional and will not participate in the ceremony.
- Each ceremony will last approximately 90 - 120 minutes, depending on the number of graduates scheduled for that ceremony. During the ceremony, several speakers will address graduates, and each graduate will walk across the stage to receive a diploma cover. Graduates must participate in the ceremony to receive the diploma cover.
- All hand-held electronic devices such as cell phones must be turned off during the ceremony. These devices may not be used on the commencement stage.
- When it is time for graduates to cross the stage, a student marshal will signal each row to stand and come forward. Graduates will stand for approximately 15 minutes prior to walking across the stage and returning to their chair.
- As graduates approach the stage, professional photographers will take a picture in front of a backdrop and again with the university president. Master's and doctoral students are also photographed during hooding. Graduates will be contacted after the ceremony regarding purchase from the photography company.
- After crossing the stage, graduates must return to their chair and remain seated throughout the ceremony. Circumstances permitting, the platform party, faculty, and graduates will participate in a recessional.
- Silly string, beach balls, air horns, and other related items distract from the dignity of the ceremony and are not permitted in the building or arena.
- Violations of Commencement protocol and guidelines may result in a disciplinary referral to the Office of Student Conduct and delay of degree posting until the matter is satisfactorily resolved.