

Guidance for Graduation Ceremonies - 2021.

In consultation with the MOE, BCCDC, and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, Regional Health Authorities are jointly providing the following graduation planning guidance:

- Graduation ceremonies are a “learning activity”. Therefore, guided by the [Provincial COVID-19 Healthy and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#).
- Ceremonies held outside rather than inside are preferred
- At this time, no persons may be present as a spectator, unless the presence of the person is necessary in order to provide care for the participant.
- Dances, dinners, or associated dry-grad events are not permitted at this time. They are events and fall under the [Gathering and Events order](#).
- Virtual and drive-thru/drive-in ceremonies are an alternative. Guidance for this type of event is included in the [Gathering and Events Order](#).

Common Question and Answers

1. What is the maximum size of a learning group that can participate?

The maximum size of a learning group is **120 students** (Stage 2). School graduation ceremonies should not exceed this number, plus the minimum number of additional staff to meet the graduation ceremony's purpose and intended outcome.

2. Can different learning groups be part of the same graduation ceremony?

Yes. Different learning groups can be part of the same ceremony. However, the **maximum number of students cannot exceed 120**. Learning groups can interact with each other if **physical distancing (2m) between** the groups can be maintained and adequate space to prevent crowding **within** the learning group. For example, two learning groups of 60 can come together for graduation or other educational purposes.

3. Are staff from different learning groups able to participate?

Yes. Staff are able to participate if they are able to maintain physical distancing (2m) from both students and staff outside their learning group. Schools should minimize the number of adults (staff and others) who interact with learning groups they are not a part of.

4. Are students and staff required to wear non-medical masks?

When indoors, K-12 staff and students gr. 4-12 are required to wear masks, except when the student is in the act of receiving their diploma (i.e. crossing the stage). There are no requirements to wear masks in outdoor settings, but the school should support and encourage students and staff to wear masks at outdoor graduation ceremonies.

5. Are parents able to participate?

Parents are unable to attend in person. Schools may organize a virtual ceremony or prefer a drive-thru event.

6. Can food be served at a graduation event?

No. Food should not be served.

7. Which guidelines apply to drive-in/drive-thru events?

The [Gatherings and Events](#) order; Part K (pg.19) provides that conditions which are required for a drive-in and drive-thru event to proceed.

8. What might a drive-thru/drive-in event look like?

Drive-thru/drive-in events are alternative way for schools to celebrate graduation. These allow for creativity while ensuring a safe event that complies with the [Gatherings and Event Order](#). Over the past year, many festivals and celebrations were organized as drive-thru/drive-in events.

The event may look like a typical drive-thru restaurant– where patrons (families) would not exit the car with the possible exception for the student. The student could exit the car and receive their diploma from the principal or teacher. The student would then get back into the car and immediately exit. The Student could also receive their diploma through the car window. Any photos would need to be taken from the car.

A drive-in event could resemble a drive-in movie. Cars would be directed to park and watch a ceremony or video. As described in the order, no gathering of patron (families, students, friends) would be permitted. Attendees would stay in their cars.

Road markings and/or parking spots and a clear single entry and exit would be required to ensure safety.

Masks would not be required to be worn while in the vehicle.

9. How many cars can participate in a drive-thru/drive-in event?

Each drive-thru/drive-in event allows **50 cars to participate at one time**. This means groupings of 50 cars could attend at different time slots throughout the day. Spacing between groupings would be important, as well as ensuring physical distancing *between staff* and *staff and students* from different learning groups. Only the graduating student would be allowed to exit the car. Patrons (i.e. family) would stay in the car at all times. The [Gathering and Events Order](#) (pg. 19) provides guidance.

10. Are there any restrictions on taking photos?

Photos with staff could be permitted given physical distancing is practiced. No handshakes, high five, etc. Drive-thru events often include in-car photo opportunities.

Equity considerations:

Students from diverse backgrounds who are more at risk of increased vulnerabilities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Special consideration should be given to ensuring an inclusive graduation ceremony. You may wish to consider:

- The location of your event and ensure that it is close to the school, if unable to host on school grounds.
- Alternative ways of participating in a drive-thru event for those who rely on public transit.
- Translation of resources so all students and parents are clear on the specific instructions and protocols of the event.
- Live streaming and recording graduation events to reach those who do not have reliable access to technology; or are unable to attend; or live in a different time zone.
- Consider pre-recording speeches by principals or valedictorian in advance and accessible online.
- How students can participate remotely.
- How to limit the environmental impact of drive-thru events.