



City of Boston  
Acting Mayor Kim Janey  
Licensing Board

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Executive Secretary:  
Lesley Delaney Hawkins

**THE LICENSING BOARD FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON'S ADVISORY  
REGARDING IN-PERSON COMMENCEMENT AND GRADUATION APPLICABLE TO  
LICENSEES AND INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Issued: April 30, 2021

On March 22, 2021, Governor Charles Baker issued sector specific guidance (the "Commonwealth's Guidance") applicable to in-person commencements and graduations being held in the coming weeks. The Licensing Board for the City of Boston (the "Board") in consultation with the Mayor's Office of Health and Human Services, the Boston Public Health Commission, the Inspectional Services Department, and other stakeholders issues this advisory (the "Advisory") outlining the **additional protocols applicable to commencement and graduation by institutes of higher education. It is important to note that this Advisory contains mandatory requirements in addition to the Commonwealth's Guidance.** Please note, the Commonwealth's Guidance and this Advisory apply to any business issued a License by this Board that seeks to host a commencement or graduation including, but not limited to, indoor and outdoor performance venues, indoor and outdoor events venues, and restaurants.

1. Each Licensee must carefully review and abide by the [Commonwealth's Guidance](#) as this Advisory details only the additional mandatory protocols applicable in Boston.
2. **As of April 30, 2021, this Advisory and all applicable guidance are revised to allow a minimum distance of three (3) feet between students attending a commencement or graduation as detailed herein. This is a change from the prior minimum distance between students of six (6) feet. This change is limited to students only and excludes staff, faculty, and guests which must abide by social distancing as otherwise described in this Advisory and the applicable guidance.**
3. The Board and the City of Boston reserve the right to revise this Advisory at any time based on incoming public health metrics.
4. **A written COVID-19 safety and operations plan for each commencement or graduation event must be submitted to and approved by the City. The Board will facilitate the interdepartmental review of the plan which can be submitted to [licensingboard@boston.gov](mailto:licensingboard@boston.gov).**
5. The COVID-19 safety and operations plan must include:
  - a. Date, time, and location of the event;
  - b. Duration of the event;
  - c. Proposed capacity including students, faculty, and guests;
  - d. Site plan showing entrances, exits, means of egress, bathrooms, stage, seating areas, and areas of travel (e.g.: aisles);
  - e. Logistical overview including whether students will be walking to the stage to obtain the diploma;
  - f. If there are multiple seatings, cleaning and sanitization protocols between seatings;
  - g. Testing and contact tracing protocols;
  - h. Registration and ticketing procedures;
  - i. Plan for managing lines and queueing; and
  - j. Disbursement plan for attendees following the event.
6. The use of outdoor venues is strongly encouraged although indoor venues may be utilized pursuant to the Commonwealth's Guidance and the Advisory.

7. Commencements or graduations held indoors must adhere to the [indoor performance venue guidelines](#).
8. **Commencements or graduations held outdoors (excluding venues with a capacity of greater than five thousand (5,000)) are limited to fifty percent (50%) of the total capacity or a maximum of five hundred (500) attendees. This is different from the Commonwealth's Guidance.**
9. **Commencements or graduations held in venues with a capacity of greater than five thousand (5,000) are limited to twelve percent (12%) of total capacity.**
10. **The maximum capacity for any park in the City of Boston is one hundred (100). No exceptions will be made to this capacity limit. This is different from the Commonwealth's Guidance.**
11. **The maximum duration of any commencement or graduation event is two (2) hours with a maximum duration of ninety (90) minutes for the program. This is different from the Commonwealth's Guidance.**
12. **Guests are strongly discouraged.** Should the institution seek to permit guests it must do so in compliance with the Commonwealth's Guidance and the Advisory.
13. Masks must be worn at all times and social distancing must be enforced.
14. Background music is permissible. **Live entertainment is strongly discouraged.** If an institution wishes to request live entertainment it must submit a plan to and receive approval from the Board.
15. **There shall be no food or beverage service and receptions are prohibited before or after the commencement or graduation.**
16. Testing within seventy two (72) hours, if not closer to the event, is strongly encouraged.
17. The formation of lines or queueing of attendees must be properly managed and socially distanced.
18. The gathering of attendees is prohibited and must be properly managed including, but not limited to, photographs.
19. Pre-registration of guests is strongly encouraged.
20. Signage regarding social distancing and mask requirement should be posted throughout the venue.
21. The use of any tent must be approved by the Inspectional Services Department and the Fire Department. Guidance on tents can be found [here](#). Any tent with more than two sides erected shall be considered an indoor event space must adhere to applicable indoor event guidance.

The Advisory is issued in response to the ongoing public health crisis related to the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and will be strictly enforced by the Board and the Boston Police Department. Failure to adhere to any of the foregoing will result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, the suspension of any license issued by the Board.

**Claims of ignorance of the law, the Guidance, or the Advisory are not a defense.**

Please refer to [boston.gov/coronavirus](http://boston.gov/coronavirus) for more information on COVID-19. Any questions should be directed to the Board's Executive Secretary, Lesley Delaney Hawkins, Esq., who can be reached at (617) 635-4170 or [licensingboard@boston.gov](mailto:licensingboard@boston.gov).

For the Board,

***Lesley Delaney Hawkins***

Lesley Delaney Hawkins, Esq.  
Executive Secretary