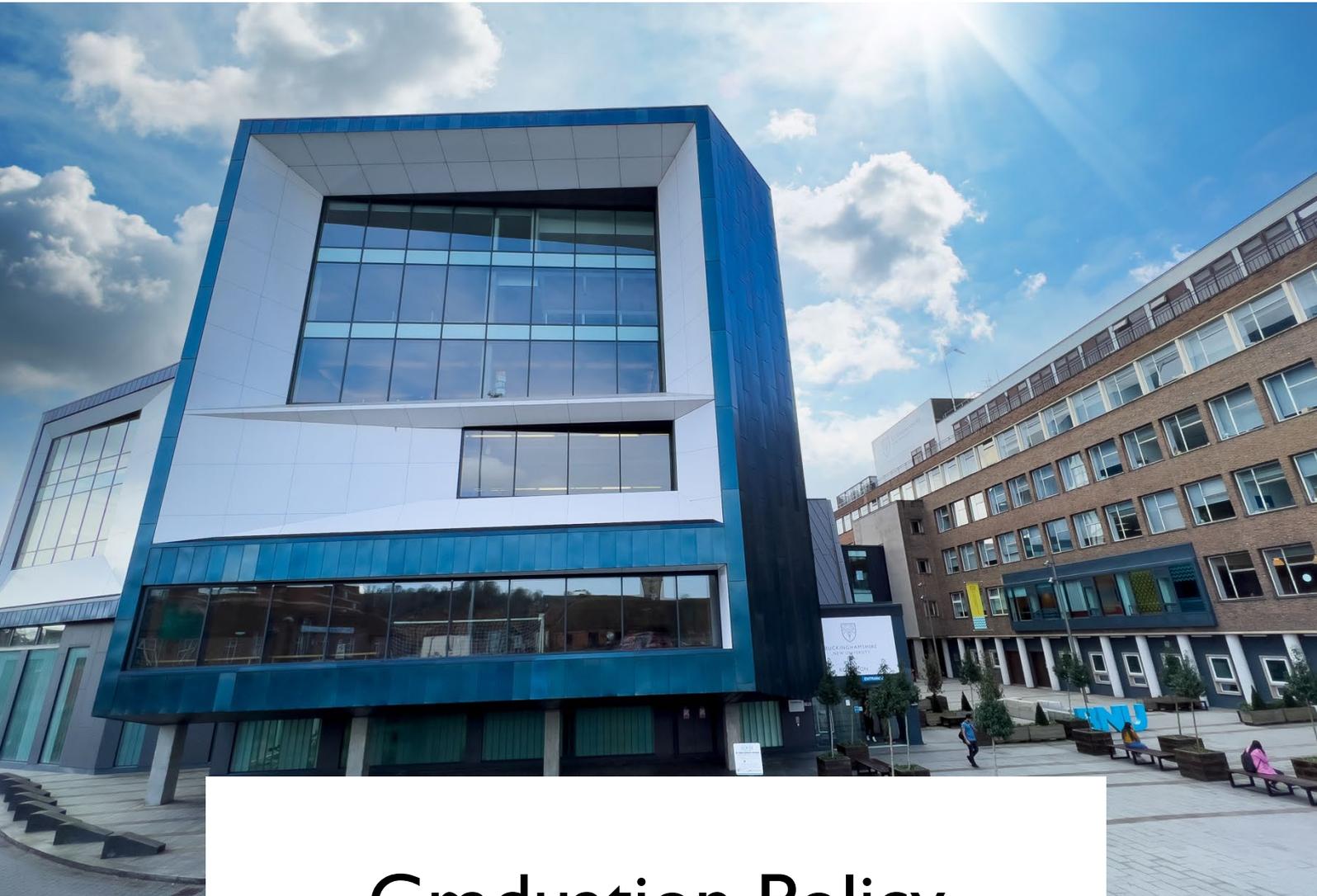




BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Graduation Policy

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Purpose

- 1 The Graduation Policy establishes clear guidelines and expectations for graduating students and the University regarding the graduation process. It ensures that all eligible students have a fair and consistent experience while outlining the procedures and requirements to participate in a graduation ceremony at Buckinghamshire New University (BNU). Attendance at a graduation ceremony is not compulsory, and students automatically become graduates of BNU once their award is conferred by the Boards of Examiners.

Applicability and Scope

- 2 This policy applies to all students, staff, partner institutions (where applicable), guests and external vendors involved in organising any part of the graduation process. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate students studying with the University or a partner institution (where applicable – some partner institutions may run their own ceremony). The policy should be read in conjunction with information published on the University's graduation webpages.
- 3 The policy covers all critical aspects of the graduation process, including eligibility criteria, financial obligations, ticketing, bookings, academic dress, and participation in the graduation ceremony. It outlines the process for deferrals, cancellations, and refunds, ensuring clarity for all parties. Additionally, it establishes behavioural expectations for staff, partner institutions (where applicable), external vendors, students, and their guests, while also considering special arrangements for those with additional needs, access requirements and young children to ensure a smooth and inclusive graduation experience.
- 4 When registering and purchasing tickets to attend a graduation ceremony held by BNU or a partner institution, graduating students must accept the full terms and conditions of this document and ensure their guests are familiar with its content.
- 5 Attendance at the relevant graduation ceremony is expected of all academic staff connected to the courses graduating at that event.

Eligibility

- 6 All students who are potentially eligible to attend a BNU graduation ceremony will be invited to book their tickets through our approved graduation ceremonies partner and ceremonial gown provider.
- 7 To be eligible to attend a BNU graduation ceremony, students must have successfully completed all academic requirements, accumulated the required academic credits for their award and have their qualification officially conferred by the University on or before the Summer Award Boards. Students who do not receive any award will no longer be eligible to attend a ceremony, and their attendance will be cancelled.

- 8 Students must ensure that any outstanding tuition fee debts owed to the University are cleared before graduation. Failure to clear these debts will mean you will not be permitted to graduate i.e. receive your award or, as a consequence, be permitted to attend your ceremony.
- 9 Where a student is in the process of any stage of an academic appeal, they may still be permitted to attend a graduation ceremony for the award that has been confirmed at the time of the ceremony.
- 10 Graduates who have studied at a partner institution will be invited to a ceremony where eligible. Partner students should check with their partner institution about the arrangements for graduation.

Tickets and Booking

- 11 Invitations will be sent to eligible graduates in advance of the ceremonies. An email will be sent via the student's BNU email address and the personal email address stored on the student's record. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their contact information is kept updated.
- 12 Not all students who are eligible to attend a graduation ceremony will choose to do so. Ticket availability is therefore limited, based on predicted attendance numbers. To avoid disappointment, graduating students are advised to book early as all tickets are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. If the venue reaches capacity before the booking deadline, no additional tickets can be made available.
- 13 Graduating student and guest tickets may be purchased via a secure online booking system. Each student is permitted one graduate ticket for themselves. Graduating students who have not booked their ticket in advance will not be allowed to participate in the ceremonies.
- 14 Graduating students may purchase guest tickets for the Swan Theatre, where the graduation ceremonies are held. In addition, they may purchase tickets for the live streaming room, which is held in a suitable venue on the University campus. The cost of the ticket includes access to the post-ceremony reception on campus.
- 15 All guests over the age of 18 months are required to purchase a guest ticket and will have their own seat. Children under 18 months do not require a ticket and may sit on the lap of an adult who has purchased a guest ticket.
- 16 Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult other than the graduating student and have purchased guest tickets. The University is unable to supervise any unaccompanied minors. If appropriate childcare arrangements have not been made, the graduating student will not be permitted to cross the stage.
- 17 Tickets must be collected during the registration period on the day of the event. Lost tickets cannot be replaced.
- 18 Carers are required to book a ticket as part of the graduating student's ticket allocation.

- 19 Graduating students who are not attending for any reason will graduate in absentia. They will not be invited to a future ceremony unless they have formally requested a deferral through the process outlined in this policy and on the University's graduation webpages.
- 20 Extra tickets for the ceremony and live stream are sold on the day and are subject to availability.

Refunds and Cancellations

- 21 Tickets purchased for BNU graduation ceremonies can be cancelled and refunded via the online booking system up until the date and time of the refund deadline, as advertised on the BNU graduation webpage.
- 22 Cancellations after the booking deadline will not be refunded except in the case of academic failure of the student due to graduate, in which case a full refund will be offered up until the deadline specified on the graduation webpage. In this case, refunds are not offered automatically, and it is the responsibility of the student to request a refund. Refunds can be requested via the online booking system up to the date and time of the refund deadline, as advertised on the BNU graduation webpage.
- 23 All tickets are non-transferable and cannot be used for any other graduation period nor transferred between graduates.
- 24 Refunds for photography and gown hire are set by the gowning and photography company and are non-transferable. Information can be found on their webpages when booking these services, or on the BNU graduation webpage.

Deferrals

- 25 Graduating students are permitted to defer their attendance on one occasion to the next ceremony; however, they must inform the Graduation Team by completing the deferral form on the BNU graduation website. Completion of the form does not confirm tickets for a future ceremony, and students will need to book for the new ceremony when bookings open. In addition, completion of the form is not an automatic request for a refund, which must be done by the graduating student separately before the advertised deadlines.
- 26 The date of the deferred ceremony will normally be within one calendar year of the ceremony that graduating students were initially invited to attend.
- 27 Graduating students who do not attend their deferred ceremony will not be granted additional opportunities to defer.

Academic Dress

- 28 Academic dress is compulsory for all BNU graduation ceremonies, and graduating students must wear the correct BNU gown, hood and hat to participate. Students must hire or purchase their BNU academic dress through the University's approved supplier when booking their ceremony tickets, as alternative providers often supply items that do not meet BNU requirements.
- 29 Graduating students who obtain academic dress from non-approved providers may be required to hire the correct items on the day, and BNU cannot accept responsibility for any additional costs incurred. Further details about BNU academic dress can be found in the University's [Scheme of Academic Dress](#) policy.
- 30 Graduating students must hire and make full payment for their BNU academic dress before the booking deadline. After the deadline, hiring of BNU academic dress and attendance at a ceremony are not guaranteed.
- 31 BNU reserves the right to refuse entry to graduating students who are not wearing the correct BNU academic dress or who are inappropriately dressed. A graduation ceremony is a formal event, and graduating students are encouraged to dress smartly for the occasion, as academic robes are designed to be worn over formal clothing. Shirts and trousers, or a smart dress, are recommended. Casual clothing, such as t-shirts, may make it difficult to wear academic robes correctly and are therefore discouraged.
- 32 Graduating students are required to wear the prescribed BNU academic dress without any additions, alterations, or items worn over any part of their BNU academic dress, which includes the gown, hood and hat. Failure to comply with the BNU academic dress code will result in the graduate being unable to cross the stage.
- 33 Military uniform and national dress can be worn by graduating students, so long as the BNU academic dress can be worn with it.
- 34 Graduating students are permitted to wear religious headdresses, such as turbans, hijabs, or kippot, as part of their attire for the ceremony. Where a religious headdress is worn, graduating students are not required to wear the academic hat. The gown and hood must still be worn correctly in accordance with BNU's academic dress requirements.

Bag Storage

- 35 There are no facilities for storing luggage, large bags, or coats at the Swan Theatre or on the University campus. Graduating students and their guests are responsible for their personal belongings at all times. For security reasons, large bags and luggage are not permitted inside the Swan Theatre.

Filming and Photography

- 36 BNU graduation ceremonies are professionally filmed, live-streamed and broadcast. Professional photographers will be present to capture the day. The University has the right to use any footage or photographs for social media campaigns, advertising, and the promotion of future graduation ceremonies.
- 37 By registering and purchasing graduate and guest tickets, permission is given for the recording, broadcasting and use of footage or photographs taken during the event for all in attendance. BNU retain the rights to all footage and images.
- 38 Any graduating student with safeguarding concerns who wishes to avoid being included in official media should contact the Graduation Team in advance, so that appropriate arrangements can be considered.

Printing of Names

- 39 Graduating students who successfully complete their course may have their name, programme title, and any prize(s) awarded printed in the graduation programme. Award classifications are not included.
- 40 By registering to attend a graduation ceremony, graduating students permit this information to be included. Those who do not wish their details to appear must confirm this during the booking process. Graduating students who are not attending must notify the Graduation Team by emailing graduation@bnu.ac.uk. Once a name has been removed from the programme, it cannot be reinstated later.
- 41 Trans and non-binary students who wish their affirmed name to be used in the graduation programme and during the ceremony should ensure their student record reflects this before the publication deadline. The Graduation Team can provide guidance and support with this process.

Babies and Young Children

- 42 BNU welcomes guests of all ages to graduation ceremonies. Children over 18 months of age must have their own guest ticket, while those under 18 months may sit on the lap of an accompanying adult. Please bear in mind that guests may be seated for more than 90 minutes in total. It is also expected that guests remain seated throughout the ceremony to minimise disruption to others.
- 43 All children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult guest, over the age of 18 at all times, as graduating students are seated separately during the ceremony and cannot take responsibility for them. The University does not accept any responsibility for unaccompanied minors.

Accessibility Requirements

- 44 BNU is committed to ensuring that all graduates and guests can fully participate in graduation ceremonies. Adjustments such as wheelchair user access, accessible toilets, and the provision of a BSL signer or live captions are in place. Where needed, arrangements can also be made to support graduating students with mental health conditions, such as social anxiety, to help them feel more comfortable during the ceremony.
- 45 Graduating students are responsible for informing the Graduation Team of any accessibility requirements, including wheelchair access, accessible seating and sound or sight facilities, for themselves or their guests when they register to attend a ceremony.
- 46 Requests must be made at the time of booking, and the University will make every effort to accommodate them within the limitations of the venues and external vendors. Any requests received after the booking deadline cannot be guaranteed and will depend on the availability within the ceremony venue.

Latecomers

- 47 BNU will endeavour to enable latecomers to attend a ceremony, but this is not guaranteed. Graduating students should make every effort to plan their journey and allow plenty of additional time for unforeseen delays.
- 48 It is the responsibility of the graduating student and their guests to arrive on time for the ceremony, in line with the timings advertised on the graduation webpages. The University cannot be held accountable for any consequences of late arrival.

Behaviour and Conduct

- 49 A BNU graduation is the most important event in the academic calendar, and we want everyone to enjoy the occasion. Any disruptive behaviour by students or their guests will not be tolerated.
- 50 To maintain a comfortable environment for all attendees, guests with unsettled or crying children may be invited to step outside the venue briefly until the child has settled.
- 51 Inappropriate, offensive or obscene acts are unacceptable and prohibited. Acts that could bring the University into disrepute are likewise unacceptable and prohibited. Threatening or abusive behaviour towards staff, guests, external vendors, or other graduating students will not be tolerated.
- 52 Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour will result in immediate removal from the venue without a refund. In serious cases, the University reserves the right to take further action, including the revocation of an award.

Certificates and Transcripts

- 53 Graduating students are not required to attend a graduation ceremony to receive their degree. Certificates and transcripts will be issued once an award has been confirmed, regardless of ceremony attendance.
- 54 Certificates and transcripts for BNU students are sent to the student's registered address approximately six weeks after an award is confirmed. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their contact information is updated. Certificates and transcripts are not presented in ceremonies, nor are they available for collection on the day.
- 55 Certificates and transcripts for students registered with a partner institution will be sent directly to the partner institution approximately six weeks after an award is confirmed. The partner institution is responsible for distributing these documents.

Student Prizes

- 56 The University issues a range of internal and external student prizes, such as awards for best overall performance in a dissertation/project and best student achievements. Prizes are listed in the graduation programme and announced as the student crosses the stage.
- 57 Trophies and plaques are not presented on stage but must be collected on the day of the ceremony. Students who are not attending must ensure their contact details are up to date so their prize can be posted to them after the event.

Appendix: Equality Impact Assessment

As a university, we are committed to enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We have a legal (Equality Act 2010) and ethical obligation to ensure our policies, systems and processes are fair, inclusive and ensure every member of the BNU community can thrive.

Whilst we all have protected characteristics, we know there are certain characteristics and communities that are marginalised and underrepresented in Higher Education and the workplace. These are: different ethnicities (including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) Disabled individuals; neurodiverse individuals; pregnancy (including maternity and paternity impact); the LGBT+ community; carers; people of different faiths; people impacted by menopause and individuals from a range of backgrounds including: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers. We also know individuals have multiple intersectional experiences and different points in their lives and careers.

1. With reference to the above characteristics, in what ways does this policy enhance equality and the access of opportunity at BNU?

This policy ensures that all graduates, regardless of background or protected characteristic, have equal opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies. Clear guidelines on accessibility — including wheelchair access, accessible toilets, and BSL signers — actively reduce barriers for disabled and neurodiverse individuals. Inclusive ticketing and childcare provisions acknowledge the needs of carers, parents, and those with specific family responsibilities. By setting consistent eligibility, dress, and conduct requirements, the policy promotes fairness and ensures that no group is treated more or less favourably.

2. In what ways does the policy adversely impact individuals from marginalised and underrepresented communities?

There is a potential impact on individuals unable to afford academic dress, travel, or guest tickets, which may disproportionately affect students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or those experiencing financial hardship. Restrictions on additions to academic dress (e.g., national flags) may affect individuals wishing to express cultural or community identity. Fixed booking deadlines could disadvantage students with complex personal circumstances, such as carers, refugees, or care leavers, who may find it more difficult to commit in advance. These impacts can be mitigated by offering financial hardship support, clear expectations and requirements regarding suitable academic dress, clear communication of deadlines, and signposting to University wellbeing and inclusion services.

3. How does this proposal work towards achieving the BNU Equality Objectives as outlined in the [Equality Strategy 2023-2028](#)? Please signpost objectives and actions in the BNU Equality Strategy.

This policy contributes directly to the Equality Strategy by:

- Objective 1: Creating an inclusive and accessible environment – ensuring physical accessibility and communication adjustments (e.g., BSL, wheelchair access), alongside respect for religious expression through the allowance of religious headdresses within the BNU academic dress code.
- Objective 2: Tackling barriers to participation and progression – providing clear guidance on childcare, financial obligations, and accessibility requests, while also recognising the needs of students with mental health conditions such as social anxiety by offering supportive arrangements to reduce stress and ensure participation.
- Objective 3: Embedding EDI in all policies, practices and decision-making – demonstrating that equality considerations are built into the graduation process, with adjustments proactively in place and fairness in eligibility criteria.

By embedding inclusion into a key milestone event, the policy ensures that graduation reflects BNU's values of equity and belonging for all students and their communities.

Signed: 

Name: Sandra Walton, Head of Student, Course and School Administration

Date: 11 September 2025



High Wycombe Campus
Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP11 2JZ

Aylesbury Campus
59 Walton Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP21 7QG

Uxbridge Campus
106 Oxford Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 1NA

BNU based at
Pinewood Studios

Pinewood Studios
Pinewood Road
Iver Heath
Buckinghamshire
SL0 0NH

Missenden Abbey
London Road
Great Missenden
Buckinghamshire
HP16 0BD

Telephone: 01494 522 141

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