

COVID-19 – 2021 Graduation FAQs

- **Why has the University made the decision to postpone the summer 2021 graduation ceremonies at this stage?**

As many of our graduates will need to book travel and accommodation in order to attend, we felt we needed to make an early decision to allow as much notice as possible. Whilst we appreciate that it is planned for coronavirus restrictions to be eased as we progress through 2021, the dates provided in the UK Government's roadmap [<link>](#) are not guaranteed deadlines but instead they are earliest dates.

Feedback received from the RUSU Sabbatical Officers, as well as the recent Graduation Sentiments Survey, indicate that students would rather we make a decision to postpone now and give students certainty, rather than continue to plan for summer 2021 ceremonies and then run the risk of having to postpone at much shorter notice.

We also need to take into account the large proportion of our 2020 graduates and 2021 students, and their families, who are currently located overseas. The UK government has not indicated that international travel restrictions will be lifted by the summer.

- **Why can't the University plan to run socially distanced ceremonies in the summer of 2021?**

The majority of people who responded to our recent survey said that they would prefer to wait for a Graduation ceremony with no social distancing in place. However, there were also some who said that would prefer to attend as early as possible, even with restrictions in place.

We have therefore carefully considered the possibility of socially distanced ceremonies in great detail, looking not only at ceremonies taking place on the London Road campus but also in larger areas on the Whiteknights campus and off-campus locations. From these investigations, it is clear that a socially distanced event would severely impact the meaning of Graduation and the celebratory experience for you and your guests. The capacity restrictions that social distancing imposes on indoor venues (including very large marquees) mean that the number of days' worth of ceremonies we would need to accommodate the July 2020, December 2020 and July 2021 cohorts would increase from 10 days in normal circumstances to over 63 continuous days of socially distanced ceremonies. The unpredictability of the weather during a British summer also means we cannot plan for a fully open-air set-up.

- **Will I be able to attend a graduation ceremony and when will this be?**

Yes. We realise just how important attending a graduation ceremony is for you, so the decision has been taken to postpone the ceremonies rather than cancel them. The July 2020 and July 2021 ceremonies have been postponed to July 2022. The December 2020 ceremonies have been postponed to December 2021 (subject to government guidance).

July 2021 Finalists

If you are eligible to graduate in July 2021 you will shortly be invited to complete a graduation registration process via the RISIS Portal, and you will have two options:

1. Graduate in absence in July 2021. Your certificate will be posted to you from early August 2021. You **will not** be able to attend a future graduation ceremony.

2. Defer your ceremony attendance to July 2022. You will still formally graduate in July 2021, so that you can receive your degree certificate from early August 2021, prior to attendance at a physical ceremony in July 2022.
If you choose to defer your ceremony attendance to July 2022, you **will not** be able to defer again (i.e. to December 2022).

You can check if you are eligible to graduate [here](#).

July 2020 graduates

If you previously completed the Graduation Registration process back in April/May 2020 and selected the option to defer your ceremony attendance, you will automatically be deferred to our set of ceremonies in the summer of 2022.

All July 2020 graduates who previously requested to defer to July 2021 will automatically be deferred again to attend a ceremony in July 2022. If you want to double check your graduation ceremony status then please email us at graduation@reading.ac.uk. Please also let us know if you update your personal email address at any point. This will ensure that you do not miss receiving any details of the summer 2022 ceremonies (which we anticipate sending out from February 2022 onwards)

If you no longer wish to attend a postponed ceremony, please let us know via graduation@reading.ac.uk so we can update your record.

December 2020 graduates

If you previously completed the Graduation Registration process back in November 2020 and selected the option to defer your ceremony attendance you will automatically be deferred to our set of ceremonies in December 2021.

All December 2020 graduates who previously requested to defer to July 2021 will automatically be deferred again to attend a ceremony in December 2021. If you want to double check your graduation ceremony status then please email us at graduation@reading.ac.uk. Please also let us know if you update your personal email address at any point. This will ensure that you do not miss receiving any details of the winter 2021 ceremonies (which we anticipate sending out from September 2021 onwards)

If you no longer wish to attend a postponed ceremony please let us know via graduation@reading.ac.uk so we can update your record.

- **Why has the University postponed ceremonies for July 2020 and July 2021 graduates to July 2022, but postponed ceremonies for December 2020 graduates to December 2021**

Whilst we appreciate it may be considered by some for it to be fairer to plan graduation ceremonies for postponed cohorts chronologically, there was widespread feedback from the Graduation Sentiments Survey that students/graduates in July cohorts would rather wait longer to be able to attend a summer ceremony than wait a shorter period and have their ceremony in the winter.

By postponing the cohorts in this way, we are ensuring that those people originally due to attend a ceremony in the summer will be able to attend a ceremony in the summer, whilst those people due to attend a ceremony in the winter will also continue to do so.

- I was originally due to graduate in July 2020 but because of a resit and/or extended deadline I ended up graduating in December 2020. Can I attend still a ceremony with my original July 2020 cohort?

As you formally graduated in December 2020, if you completed the Graduation Registration process in November 2020 and selected the option to defer your ceremony attendance, our system will automatically pick you up to be invited to a physical ceremony in December 2021 with others classed as December 2020 graduates. If instead you want to attend a ceremony in July 2022 with your original cohort, you will need to email us via graduation@reading.ac.uk and tell us this. We can then manually update your graduation record so that you are invited to attend a ceremony in July 2022.

- Is the University arranging any virtual celebrations for Class of 2021 finalists?

Yes, we want to celebrate your achievements with you and recognise all your hard work! We are planning to create an interactive webpage for each School where staff, students and supporters will be able to share congratulatory messages for finalists. You will receive further information later in the summer about how to get involved.

Your School or Department may also be organising a virtual prize-giving and/or celebration event and if so, they will contact you directly.

Please note that the above are virtual *celebrations* not virtual *ceremonies* for the Class of 2021 and are intended to operate in addition to your ability to attend a postponed physical ceremony in the summer of 2022.

- When will I receive my degree certificate?

If you are graduating in July 2021 your certificate will be posted* to you from late-July onwards, whether you have chosen to graduate in absence or defer your graduation ceremony. We are exceptionally allowing you to receive your degree certificate prior to attendance at a physical graduation ceremony.

Please note, you need to complete the Graduation Registration so that we have a confirmed delivery address for you. You will receive an email from graduation@reading.ac.uk once the registration process for July 2021 finalists has been launched.

Certificates for July 2020 graduates were posted out in July/August 2020 and certificate for December 2020 graduates were posted out in January 2021. Please email us at graduation@reading.ac.uk if you have yet to receive your certificate.

*certificates will only be posted once we are assured that business as usual postal services are in operation in your country. This is in order to maintain security processes around these documents.

- **How will my degree certificate be posted?**

We will post certificates going to UK addresses via Royal Mail 48 hour service. Certificates going to overseas addresses will be posted via Royal Mail International Tracked & Signed-for or International Signed-for (depending on the destination country).

If you would like your certificate to be posted via courier you can make the payment for this here: <https://www.store.reading.ac.uk/product-catalogue/student-applicant-services/graduation-office/certificates/degree-certificate-courier-postage-payment-options>

- **Can I receive my degree certificate earlier?**

Your ability to formally graduate is dependent on the Examinations team receiving a final result for you from your School following a School/Department Exam Board, which is then in turn confirmed by a University Awarding Board. Finalist results are due to be released on Friday 9 July. We then need to produce and check each student's degree certificate, meaning we will not have them ready for posting until early August.

- **Can I receive my PhD certificate earlier?**

Although your award may have already been confirmed to you, it is University policy that degree certificates cannot be released until the point at which you graduate (July or December) regardless of whether a physical ceremony takes place. The Doctoral Research Office in the Graduate School (dro@reading.ac.uk) are able to produce confirmation of award letters prior to the release of your degree certificate if you need proof of your qualification at an earlier date.

- **Can I collect my certificate in person or nominate someone to collect it on my behalf?**

Unfortunately, we are currently not able to facilitate the collection of degree certificates from the University campus. If anything changes then the information will be updated here.

Registration FAQs

Those due to graduate in July 2021 will be sent further details regarding the graduation registration process later in April. Those due to graduate in December 2021 will receive further information in due course later in the year.

- **What happens if I do not complete the registration process?**

If you do not complete the registration process you will automatically graduate in absence in July 2021 and you will not be able to attend a future physical ceremony. We will withhold your certificate until you contact us with a confirmed delivery address. Please note we only hold onto certificates for 12 months before securely destroying them, after which you would be liable for a replacement certificate fee.

- **What happens if I complete registration but owe a tuition fee debt to the University?**

The usual policies will apply. For more information, go to http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/your-graduation-and-beyond/_get-ready-to-graduate/step-5-eligibility-to-graduate.aspx

- **What happens if I receive my results in time to graduate this July but then submit an appeal against my results?**

The usual policies will apply. For more information, go to http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/your-graduation-and-beyond/_get-ready-to-graduate/step-5-eligibility-to-graduate.aspx

- **What happens if my results are not approved in time/some individual results are not available?**

The usual policies will apply. For more information, go to http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/your-graduation-and-beyond/_get-ready-to-graduate/step-5-eligibility-to-graduate.aspx

- **Can I change my mind after registration has closed if I initially register to graduate in absence in July 2021 but then want to defer?**

You will need to tell us of your intention to switch your choice by 1st July 2021. We will not be able to defer your ceremony attendance to 2022 after this date.

- **Can I change my mind after registration has closed if I initially register to defer but then want to just graduate in absence and not attend a ceremony in July 2022?**

As you are giving up your choice to attend a ceremony in July 2022, and would have received your certificate in the post, we are happy to facilitate this particular change at any point prior to the July 2022 ceremonies.