

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE
Lexington, Virginia

GENERAL ORDER)
NUMBER 66)

20 October 2020

COMMENCEMENT PARTICIPATION

1. **Purpose:** The following policy outlines the requirements that must be met in order for cadets to participate in Commencement and/or receive diplomas during the Commencement ceremony traditionally held on 16 May of each year. Note: This does not impact or change the “10 hour rule.” This only applies to cadets being able to sit on the floor and cross the stage during the 16 May Commencement ceremony.
2. **Awarding of Degrees:** Pursuant to VMI Regulations, in order to receive a diploma from VMI and be considered a graduate, a cadet must have a conduct record that is satisfactory to the Superintendent, be confirmed by the Academic Board, and complete all course requirements, grade point average requirements, and must have been in residence at VMI for at least three years. This general order does not change or modify any of these requirements detailed in VMI Regulations.
3. Subject to the exception noted in paragraph 6, below, in order to fully participate in VMI Commencement exercises, cadets must meet one of the following criteria:

- a) All degree requirements have been completed.

Cadets meeting all published standards as outlined for the cadet’s program year and approved by the Academic Board and VMI Board of Visitors may participate in commencement proceedings with all of the rights and privileges of a graduating first class cadet.

- b) All degree requirements have not been completed. (See Addendum and Key Points – Pages 3-5)

Cadets who have not fully completed degree requirements may submit a formal appeal to the Committee on Academic Appeals (CAA) under the guidelines published for the Committee. Appeals must be received by the CAA prior to midterm. Appeals will only be considered when **all of the following are satisfied:**

- 1) The cadet is in full-time attendance in the Corps of Cadets the semester of the commencement proceedings; and
- 2) The cadet holds a satisfactory disciplinary standing as approved by the Superintendent and Commandant; and
- 3) At the time of commencement, the cadet is within six credit hours of completing degree requirements with a 2.0 or above cumulative and major GPA and provides an approved Transfer Credit Approval form or proof of summer session preregistration as evidence of a plan for timely completion of his or her degree.

4. Cadets in this category who participate in commencement proceedings will be subject to the following limitations:
 - a) The formal degree and diploma will not be conferred until all degree requirements have been completed in accordance with all standard rules and regulations of the Institute, and the candidate has been approved by the Academic Board and VMI Board of Visitors and possesses a clean disciplinary record as determined by the Superintendent and Commandant.
 - b) Cadets will be required to process and cross the stage with their designated major area of study, with no minor(s), honors, or commissioning status noted. However, minor(s) and honors will be noted on official transcripts once requirements are satisfied.
 - c) Upon completion of program requirements, the diploma will be mailed to the cadet at the address designated with the Registrar's Office.
5. Cadets who are academic first classmen, in full-time attendance in the Corps of Cadets the semester of the commencement proceedings, and a member of the class that is graduating, who do not meet the above criteria, may be allowed to sit in the rear behind the graduating cadets. This will be dependent upon the availability of seats and after consultation with the President of the First Class. Final approval authority rests with the Superintendent.
6. Commencement Participation and Misconduct Cases: Those first class cadets who have completed exams and expect to participate in Commencement must continue to maintain expected standards of conduct and behavior. The Commandant of Cadets may recommend to the Superintendent to deny participation in Commencement to any graduating first classman who engages in misconduct that occurs during the semester or between the period the end of classes and the day of graduation (16 May). Those cadets so identified will be notified immediately by the Commandant's staff.

FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT:

James P. Inman
Colonel, US Army (Ret.)
Chief of Staff

DIST: E, Cadets
OPR: Registrar

GENERAL ORDER 66 – COMMENCEMENT PARTICIPATION ADDENDUM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I understand that cadets within 6 hours of graduation are allowed to participate in commencement?

RESPONSE: Cadets must have all degree requirements complete, have a conduct record acceptable to the Superintendent and Commandant, and be certified by the Academic Board and Board of Visitors to be eligible to participate in commencement. In accordance with General Order #66, cadets with extenuating circumstances and otherwise meet the minimum requirements as outlined in GO #66 may appeal to the Committee on Academic Appeals for an exception to the policy. Exceptions are granted based on a cadet's historical academic record, individual merit of the request and the extenuating circumstances presented.

I understand that commissioning track cadets are automatically an exception?

RESPONSE: There is no differentiation between any groups in the commencement participation consideration. Commissioning track in itself is not considered to be an extenuating circumstance.

My adviser/the Registrar's Office did not tell me that I would not be able to participate in Commencement, so I was misadvised.

RESPONSE: Cadets have been provided with access to their program evaluation throughout their cadetship, and the responsibility for completion of their program rests with the cadet. Additional reminders are being put into the graduation application process and first class communications.

I don't know where I will be working or stationed for military training once this semester is over, which is why I need to attend commencement with my class.

RESPONSE: This is not considered an extenuating circumstance since this restriction would apply to all cadets.

Applications are reviewed based on merit and exception vs future plans for employment, training or travel.

My family has purchased tickets and hotel accommodations and cannot recoup their money if I am unable to attend commencement.

RESPONSE: VMI policy indicates that cadets must be complete with program requirements in order to participate in commencement. Exceptions to this policy will be considered only through appeal to the Committee on Academic Operations and subject to review of a cadet's record and extenuating circumstances.

Key Points

VMI policy requires that all degree requirements must be completed and the degree certified through the Academic Board and Board of Visitors for a cadet to be eligible to participate in commencement.

Cadets with special **extenuating** circumstances may appeal for a waiver to the above participation requirement provided the follow criteria are met:

- Cadet demonstrates the circumstances which prevented his/her timely completion of the program requirements and demonstrates **extenuating** circumstances which warrant an exception to the participation policy.
- Cadet must have the 2.00 minimum major and cumulative GPA required for graduation.
- Cadet is within 6 credit hours of graduation.
- Cadet has a conduct record that is satisfactory to the Superintendent and Commandant which would allow participation.
- Cadet is enrolled in the remaining hours/courses required for completion.

Areas which have been considered as **extenuating**:

- Cadets on active duty deployment orders being called to serve overseas in hazardous situations.
- Cadets who had been on track throughout their cadetship and during their last semester or final completion of program requirements incurred a medical or emergency situation which restricted a cadet from timely completion (i.e. Incomplete grade or having to withdraw from a class due to medical emergency).
- Severe hardship or **extenuating** circumstances – i.e. A cadet's parent or sibling being diagnosed with a terminal illness and unable to complete requirements, or requesting consideration to participate based on catastrophic family considerations (parent or sibling).

Areas which are **NOT** considered to be **extenuating**:

- Failure of a class(es)
- Late change of major, addition of a double major or minor
- Future commitments out of the area and perceived inability to return to attend graduation in the future – military training, employment, out of state commitments are not considered to be an exception as most of these areas would involve the majority of the graduating population.
- Cadets who withdrew or failed classes during their cadetship and failed to plan appropriately to make up the credit through summer school or additional classes during the academic year.
- Summer employment or military training.
- Family planning and funding which would be lost by not being allowed to participate in commencement.
- Health of **extended** family or friends – grandparents, aunts/uncles. Catastrophic health issues of immediate family have been considered based on very **extenuating** circumstances – i.e. mother/father having been diagnosed with Stage IV cancer and given a short period to live.
- Not properly reviewing and/or reading their Program Evaluation. Cadets are ultimately responsible for their program and its completion and should know the requirements of his/her program and in consult with their academic adviser. Requirements should be understood by

the cadet that the following areas are required for successful completion to earn a degree:

- 1) Minimum earned credit required for a degree (136 – 140 hours depending upon major)
- 2) Distribution and course requirements of major
- 3) Minimum 2.00 major and cumulative GPA requirements
- 4) Deadlines for completion