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Coats of Many Colours: A Brief Review of Academic Dress in Israel

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Abstract

The inherent complexity of combining a Jewish state with dress rooted in ecclesiastical tradition, as well as incorporating medieval traditions in a nation trying to rebuild on the basis of a pioneering ethos, has led to an inconsistent use of academic dress in Israel. While many factors have contributed to that fact, the lack of literature on the matter limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions grounded on empirical evidence. Thus, this review will attempt to present the academic dress in Israel, along with the rise in its popularity as the landscape of Israeli higher education institutions changed.

During the 1936 doctoral graduation ceremony celebrating a single graduate, the president of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Professor Judah Leon Magnes, gave a speech and mentioned the issue of academic dress: ' ... all the extravagances ... the caps and gowns ... all the splendour—we chose not to embrace them'.[1] The sentiment expressed in this brief remark has echoed through the history of academic dress in Israel.

The establishment of the State of Israel stems from both religious and political elements. The notion of the return to Jerusalem in a Jewish land was a pillar in Jewish identity since the exile following the Judaean revolts against the Romans. The land of Israel (known as Palestine, meaning Land of the Philistines, the Latin name given to Judaea by the Romans) had been part of the Ottoman Empire since 1516, with a relatively small Jewish population. A rise of anti-Semitism in the 1880s in Europe led to a wave of Jewish emigration and the formation of agricultural colonies. The potential significance of a Jewish state as a solution for anti-Semitism was championed by the Zionist movement, though not much advancement was achieved during the time of the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, in which it declared its commitment to facilitate the establishment of a 'Jewish homeland' in Palestine. The United Kingdom received the support

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1 Anat Korol-Gordon, 'KAN Curious: Why Do Students Wear Gowns?', transcript of video (original in Hebrew), 2019, online at <tinyurl.com/2u48rynu>; the video is at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kVmtmmshFA> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

of the League of Nations for the Declaration, and Palestine was placed under British Mandate in 1920. The idea of a Jewish state was opposed by the local Arab leaders, which led to the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 and the formation of local Jewish defence forces. The British government encouraged Jewish immigration into Mandatory Palestine in the 1920s, but as global events caused an influx of immigrants, a change in policy ensued. When the British government suggested the partition of Mandatory Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, the notion was rejected by the Arabs, and the British government decided in 1939 to restrict Jewish immigration severely in order to retain Arab support against Nazi Germany. After the Holocaust, Zionist efforts to secure international support and promote Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine were enhanced. As a result of increasing violence between Arabs and Jews in Mandatory Palestine, the British government, newly elected, decided to end the Mandate. The issue was handed over to the United Nations. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly passed a resolution to divide Mandatory Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab. The resolution was immediately opposed by the Arabs, who attacked Jews throughout Palestine as the British forces exited. On 14 May 1948 the State of Israel declared its independence.[2]

The Israeli higher education system

At that time, two institutions of higher education were operating in Israel, and had been since the time of the British Mandate. The first were the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, which was founded in 1924, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, established in 1925. The Daniel Sieff Institute was established in 1934 and was to become the Weizmann Institute of Science.[3]

The Technion and Hebrew University were influenced by the German, British, and American models of higher education. The German influence originated with researchers and scientists who emigrated to Mandatory Palestine in the 1930s and contributed to their development. The Technion itself was established by the Ezra Company,[4] operating in Germany, and provided German equipment and designs. The Technion operated initially as a high school for the study of technical professions on the German model of the Technische Hochschule, transitioning to a technological research university. British influence was apparent on the Technion and Hebrew University during the British Mandate in Palestine. Equipment arriving from Britain was used in Palestine, and British institutions of higher education influenced teaching. The leadership of the Zionist movement was established in London at the time, and Mandate authorities kept contact with the Zionist institutions. An American influence on the research universities in Israel had existed since the 1950s. Following the Second

2 Harvey Sicherman, William L. Ochsenwald, Eliahu Elath and Russell A. Stone, 'Israel', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <www.britannica.com/place/Israel>; Peter Marshall Fraser, et al., 'Palestine', ibid., online at <www.britannica.com/place/Palestine> [both retrieved 15 April 2023].

3 'Weizmann Institute of Science – About the Institute' <www.weizmann.ac.il/pages/about-institute> [retrieved 8 Feb. 2023]

4 Ezra Company was the unofficial name of the Relief Organization of German Jews, a non-Zionist German-Jewish organization which provided philanthropic support to the Jews of Eastern Europe and Palestine, and to promote German culture among Jews outside Germany.

World War, students from Israel attended American institutions of higher education. Senior researchers arrived in Israel as part of aid delegations and some emigrated permanently. Common academic training in Israel in the 1960s included undergraduate studies in Israel, followed by graduate training in the US. Graduates would then return to Israel to fill academic positions. These spheres of influence appear to affect academic dress. There does not seem to have been any significant German or British impact in terms of academic dress on these institutions, especially since at the height of their influence, the Israeli institutions used no academic dress. While British-style gowns are used in certain institutions of higher learning in Israel today, the American influence on Israeli higher education institutions remains the most pronounced, and that has its manifestation in academic dress as well.[5]

The Technion's establishment was plagued by financial difficulties, as well as technical challenges and shortages in suitable teachers and candidates. When the first graduating class received its diplomas, Menachem Ussishkin, the president of the Jewish National Fund, said:

> … there are great world events which are great at present, but forgotten in the future, and vice versa—there are humble events at present that have great value for the future. Our modest celebration today is the latter, because its value will be great in the future. You are the first of thousands to come.[6]

The HUJI began conducting research on its establishment in April 1925. Teaching formally started in 1928 and during the British Mandate only graduate studies took place. The first master's degree was awarded in 1932 and the first doctorate conferred in 1936.[7]

The 1950s and 1960s saw the establishment of more research universities: Bar-Ilan University in 1955, Tel Aviv University in 1956, University of Haifa in 1963, Ben Gurion University of the Negev in 1969. The Open University of Israel was established in 1976. The University of Ariel was declared a university in 2012 after commencing operations as an academic college in 1982. Reichman University was formally recognized as a university in 2021 after operating as the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya since 1994.

The Council for Higher Education in Israel is a national governing body in charge of policy planning in the field of higher education. The Council was established through the Council for Higher Education Law 5718 – 1958 as the official national authority on all issues related to higher education. The Higher Education Law establishes the Council's structure, which comprises nineteen to twenty-five members. The Minister of Education is the Chairman, and other members include the Chairman of the Committee for Planning and Budgeting and the Chairman of the National Union of Israeli Students. The law requires that at least two-thirds of the members be of 'significant standing in the field of higher education' having received the recommendation of the Minister

5 Uri Kirsch, The Higher Education System in Israel – Issues, Characteristics and Unique Features (Samuel Neaman Institute for Advanced Studies 2014), pp. 9–10, online at <www.neaman.org.il/Files/Higher%20Education.pdf> [retrieved 31 Jan. 2023].

6 Ibid., p. 16.

7 Ibid., p. 17.

of Education, following a consultation with the institutions of higher education. The Higher Education Law was designed to ensure the independence of the higher education system, by separating the political establishment from the institutions of higher education. This was achieved with varying success, as the Minister of Education nominates members of the Council. Following their nomination, prospective members are brought forth to the president of the State of Israel for final appointment, for a period of five years.[8]

Budgeting for institutions of higher learning in Israel is coordinated by a sub-committee of the Council known as the Committee for Planning and Budgeting. The Committee consists of seven members (four university professors, one senior academic staff member from a college receiving funds from the government and two public representatives), who are appointed by the Minister of Education, with the Council's approval, for a period of three years.[9]

On 20 February 1995, the Israeli Parliament passed Amendment 10 to the Council of Higher Education Law, which enabled academic colleges to be open in Israel alongside the established research universities. The academic colleges include colleges which do not receive any government funds.[10]

In 2025, a total of fifty-seven institutions of higher education operate in the State of Israel, including academic colleges receiving financial support from the government, academic colleges without such support and academic colleges teaching education.[11]

Research universities and academic colleges in Israel

The higher education system in Israel was originally elitist with limited accessibility.[12] In the 1970s a lengthy process of increasing access to higher education began with the establishment of regional colleges that were extensions of the research universities, in an effort to provide opportunities for underserved communities. The number of students in higher education rose rapidly in the 1970s, with a slow growth rate in the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1992 the number of students in universities rose by fifty per cent, while the number of students in institutions of higher education which were not universities rose sevenfold.[13] The limiting factor was a policy by the Council leading colleges into providing only undergraduate education, with the understanding that they operate under the academic auspices of established universities. After 1990, thirty additional institutions of higher education received recognition by the Council. Because the colleges were not budgeted as research institutions, they invested resources in increasing student enrolment.[14] This included placing an emphasis on student experience, support services and, later on, attracting students by creating an image of prestige to the institution, including through the use of academic dress.

8 Council for Higher Education website – About <tinyurl.com/2r8saxbm> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025]; the Council for Higher Education Law 5718 – 1958, National Legislation Database, online at <tinyurl.com/yvykca3j> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Council for Higher Education website, 'Figures and data', online at <bit.ly/3Q3enTx> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

12 Kirsch, p. 24.

13 Ibid., p. 29.

14 Ibid., p. 30.

In this article, the mention of research universities in Israel refers to institutions of higher learning awarding degrees in all levels: bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in all disciplines, conducting research across the academic spectrum. Academic colleges in Israel are institutions of higher education dedicated to teaching and supplementary research which emphasizes practical training. Curricula are mainly designed to train academically qualified professionals as well as master's programmes with a vocational focus. The establishment of academic colleges in Israel provided increased access to higher education across society and increased the percentage of the academically trained in the population.[15] The academic faculties in highest demand among applicants for undergraduate education in academic colleges in Israel are social sciences, engineering sciences, business administration, law, medical fields and computer science. Law and business administration are mostly taught in academic colleges which do not receive government budgets, while most programmes in social sciences, computer science and engineering sciences are taught in academic colleges receiving government funds, and medical fields are taught in both types of institutions. The most sought-after fields in universities in Israel for undergraduate applicants are general medicine, architecture, business administration, medicine-related fields, industrial engineering, computer science, electrical engineering and law.[16]

The establishment of academic colleges led to a surge in the number of undergraduate students in Israel. That trend slowed down in the 2000s due to budgetary difficulties. Unlike the undergraduates in universities, those in academic colleges continued to rise rapidly. Graduate education in academic colleges remained low in comparison to that conducted at universities,[17] and as 28,900 people graduated in the 2022/23 academic year in Israel with master's degrees, 57.7 per cent graduated from universities, 26.2 per cent graduated from academic colleges and 16.1 per cent graduated from academic colleges teaching education.[18]

History of academic dress in Israel

A review of academic dress in the Middle East and the Maghreb demonstrated the rich visual and cultural history which was clearly apparent throughout its development and use. The scarcity of a written body of work on academic dress in the Middle East was already identified, as was the lack of standards governing academic dress, including shape and style.[19]

15 'The Higher Education System in Israel – Sixty Years of Academic Excellence, a Review of the 7th Higher Education Conference, held by the Council for Higher Education/Committee for Planning and Budgeting in 2018', CHE website <rb.gy/ic3ndc> [retrieved 18 May 2025]: the conference detailed data on the impact academic colleges had on increasing access to higher education, particularly amongst social groups with limited access to academia.

16 Council for Higher Education, 'The 2022/2023 Academic Year', press release, 18 Oct. 2022, pp. 9–10, online at <bit.ly/4gmvNp2> [retrieved 5 Feb.. 2025].

17 Council for Higher Education/Committee for Planning and Budgeting, 'The Higher Education System in Israel: A Review Document', 2014, online at <t.ly/6pfsB> [retrieved 18 May 2025].

18 Ori Naftalovich and Aviel Krentzler, 'Recipients of Academic Degrees (2022/23)', Central Bureau of Statistics, 28 Aug. 2024, online at <www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2024/272/06_24_272b.pdf> [retrieved online 5 Feb. 2025].

19 Valentina S. Grub, 'A Brief History of Academic Dress in the Middle East and the



Central Zionist Archives

Fig. 1. Opening Ceremony of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1925. On the dais, Dr Chaim Weizmann, Lord Balfour and visiting academic dignitaries wear academic dress.

The study of academic dress in Israel is not without complications, due to the lack of official regulations governing it, the lack of formal requirements for academic dress and cultural factors limiting the feasibility of using academic dress, such as incompatibility with religious headdress.[20] To gain insight on the development of academic dress in Israel, archival material covering graduation ceremonies and honorary degree award ceremonies was reviewed. Smith and Sheard note in their monumental work on academic dress that, with the exception of Bar-Ilan University, 'universities in Israel use neither academic costume nor academic insignia for their officers or their graduates'.[21]

The use of academic dress in Israel has not been consistent. At the establishment ceremony of Hebrew University in 1925, its President, Dr Chaim Weizmann, wore the academic dress of a doctor of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, and Lord Balfour wore the festal gown of a Doctor of Law of the University of Cambridge.[22] Other dignitaries from universities around the world attended in academic dress as well, wearing morning coats and top hats, signifying the importance of the event as was customary in British Mandatory Palestine.

At the graduation of the third class of the Faculty of Humanities at the University in 1934, no academic dress was used, by either students or staff.[23] When the Hebrew University awarded Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the notable writer, an honorary doctorate in 1958, no academic dress was used.[24] When Yitzhak Rabin, the Chief of Staff of the

Maghreb', *TBS*, 19 (2019), pp. 152–72 (p. 153) <doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1170>.

20 Korol-Gordon.

21 Hugh Smith and Kevin Sheard, *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World*, 2 vols (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1970), Vol. II, p. 1131.

22 Yaackov Ben-Dov, 'The Opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem', short film, 1 April 1925, The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive Collection, Israel Film Archive–Jerusalem Cinematheque, online at <jfc.org.il/en/news_journal/95151-2/> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

23 Mount Scopus Campus of the Hebrew University photo collection, online at <itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/prof-magnes-handing-the-diploma-to-levy-yossef-duvshani-during-the-3rd-graduation-8d5da5> [retrieved 18 May 2025].

24 Shmuel Yosef Agnon Archive, The Pritzker Family National Photography Collec-



Dan Hadani Collection, The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, The National Library of Israel

Fig. 2. Honorary doctorate awarded to the President of the State of Israel in 1986 by the University of Haifa.

Israel Defense Forces, received an honorary doctorate from the University in 1967, no academic dress was used.[25]

In 1954 the Technion conferred an honorary doctorate on Dr Karl Compton of MIT and no academic dress was used.[26]

When the University of Haifa established a new Chair of Zionism studies in 1975, no academic dress was used, including by the rector of the University.[27] By contrast, when it awarded an honorary doctorate in 1986 to the president of the State of Israel, Chaim Herzog, academic dress was used.[28]

Bar-Ilan academic dress in the 1970s was described in Smith and Sheard's work. Graduates wore no gowns, but a black shawl-like cape with the lining corresponding to the degree: bachelors wearing orange and masters wearing blue. The academic dress was completed by a black beret with a top section matching the lining of the cape, finished with a black cord and a large tassel. Academic staff wore American-style doctoral gowns adorned with black velvet facings and three velvet bars on the sleeves. The dress was worn with a black velvet mortarboard with a gold tassel.[29]

When Tel Aviv University awarded honorary doctorates in 1975 to Romanian playwright Eugène Ionesco and Israeli sculptor Yaacov Agam, academic dress was used

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tion, The National Library of Israel, online at <www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL990036076490205171/NLI#$FL36647950> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

25 'The Six-Day War – the Chief of Staff Rabin Receiving an Honorary Doctorate at the University in Jerusalem', Kinneret Kibbutz Archive, 1967, No. IL-KNRT-001-2532459. The original is located in the archive and is online at <<www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009692355105171/NLI#$FL73506417> [retrieved online 20 Feb. 2023]. This bibliographic record is part of the Israel Archive Network project and has been made accessible thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Kvutzat Kinneret Archive, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage and the National Library of Israel.

26 This bibliographic record is part of the Israel Archive Network project and has been made accessible thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Yehoshua Nessyahu Technion Historical Archive, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage and the National Library of Israel <www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009187007105171/NLI#$FL74315461> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

27 The opening ceremony of the Reuben Hecht Chair of Zionism at the University of Haifa, 6 November 1975, Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library. University of Haifa, online at <facebook.com/lib.haifa.ac.il/posts/10154555540367292/?locale=hi_IN> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

28 Honorary doctorate conferral ceremony at the University of Haifa, March 1986, Dan Hadani Collection, The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, The National Library of Israel (henceforth Hadani Collection), online at <www.nli.org.il/he/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009854100605171/NLI#$FL175965627> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

29 Smith and Sheard, p. 1131.

during the ceremony.[30] A graduation ceremony at the University in 1977 did not include academic dress.[31] An honorary doctorate award ceremony held at the Weizmann Institute of Science in 1980 included academic dress.[32]

Academic dress and its association with pomp, as well as with religious-ecclesiastical roots, limited its popularity in Israel, so only limited use of academic dress was apparent in institutions operating in Israel.[33]

True to the spirit of Professor Magnes in the early days of the Hebrew University, arguing against the use of academic dress, the University remained the most adamant in its objection to academic dress. Still now, there are no doctoral robes, and the degrees are conferred without robes, with academic staff not wearing academic dress either.[34] Only in 2021 did the University start using academic dress in bachelor's and master's ceremonies, and it includes only scarves (stoles). The Hebrew University is thus unique, where the lack of use in its doctoral ceremonies maintains the University's tradition, carrying out the ceremony in the same location and in the spirit of its founders.

When a private academic college, the Inter Disciplinary Center Herzliya, sought to compete with the well-established research universities for the student pool, it began operations with incorporating full academic dress for students and staff in its first graduation ceremony in 1998, along with the Ariel Academic College. In 2008 nine institutions of higher education used academic dress, and in 2012 sixteen institutions employed academic dress. In 2018 thirty institutions had academic dress. In a third of those institutions the academic dress was used for souvenir photos only, and was not used during the graduation ceremony.[35]

The dynamics of popularization of academic dress in Israel were synergistic. A possible explanation for this would be that the private academic colleges embraced the model of an American college and tried attracting students by using academic dress to enhance their image,[36] by using well-established symbols of academic tradition. That caused other colleges to follow suit, and so did the established research universities.

'Israeli style' of academic dress

The term 'Israeli style' of academic dress is taken from material written by the leading robemakers in Israel. As there is limited experience in the institutions, and no

30 Carmi Boris, 'Romanian playwright Eugène Ionescu and sculptor Yaakov Agam at the ceremony of receiving an honorary doctorate from Tel Aviv University', 16 June 1975, black and white photograph, Meitar Collection, The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, The National Library of Israel, online at <www.nli.org.il/he/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009327402205171/NLI#$FL159515236> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

31 Graduation ceremony at Tel Aviv University, March 1977, Hadani Collection, online at <www.nli.org.il/he/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009849091005171/NLI#$L175945660> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

32 Rebecca Freiwald, 'Honorary doctorate conferral ceremony at Weizmann Institute of Science,' 1980, black and white photograph, Hadani Collection, online at <www.nli.org.il/he/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL990048634460205171/NLI#$FL68297036> [retrieved 20 Feb. 2023].

33 Korol-Gordon.

34 HUJI doctoral graduation (2021) <www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=545715216860078> [retrieved 21 May 2025].

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.



Dani Machlis, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Fig. 3. Academic dress of Ben Gurion University academic staff and the President (front row, middle).

long-standing tradition, the robemakers themselves play a significant role in academic dress design. The website of one robemaker states that 'if the academic institution has a tradition of academic dress, we will create the required dress according to the vision of the team in charge. If the institution has any decisions to make regarding academic dress, our design department will provide ideas, samples and consultation'.[37]

There is no clear definition of Israeli style in terms of academic dress, but it appears that comfort of wear and cost play a role in its design, with the use of uncomplicated shapes, cuts and lightweight materials. When reviewing gowns and hoods used in Israel, it is difficult to fit them into the Groves system, as their length and sleeve shape do not adhere to standard models. During ceremonies, it is not uncommon to see gowns being worn both open and closed.

In describing elements of Israeli academic dress, a challenge arises due to design elements uncommon elsewhere. While scarves of uniform narrow width are standard throughout academic dress, some institutions in Israel include in their academic dress scarves that are very wide, which are not commonly seen in academic dress. There are some characteristics found in various academic dress in Israeli institutions which seem to differ from the American style, such as: bachelors' gowns being worn open, the shape of the sleeves, the lack of lining and the structure of the hood, and gown structure in Israel differs from the one used in the British style.

Hood shapes vary among institutions in Israel. Unfortunately, no sufficient information on hood shapes was available. Visual examination of hoods suggests that they represent various categories of complexity as defined by Groves, but accurate definitions are a subject for future study.

In echoing the term 'Israeli style' of academic dress, there is an inherent complexity, stemming from the implication that there is a distinct codified style of academic

37 Larusha website – Academic Staff, online at <www.larusha.com/academic-regalia> [retrieved 17 April 2023].

dress for Israel. It must be clarified that in the absence of formal regulation and institutional traditions, there is no codified style, but rather an evolving academic dress.

Current academic dress in Israel

In 1993, the robemaker Larusha was incorporated as a major supplier of academic dress in Israel, designing gowns for judges, lawyers and institutions for higher learning.[38] Larusha supplies academic dress to several institutions in Israel, including the Technion, Tel Aviv University, Reichman University, The College of Management Academic Studies, Lewinsky College of Education, and Kinneret College. The company website provides information on the general characteristics of academic dress at the different levels available for production:

> Bachelor's degree dress: gown in the American, Israeli, or wrap-around style , in the institutional colour; mortarboard; tassel coloured according to the academic discipline. May include a scarf with the institutional emblem.[39]
>
> Master's dress: gown in the American, Israeli or wrap-around style, in the institutional colour. Mortarboard with tassel corresponding to the academic specialty. Additional optional master's hood coloured according to their faculty affiliation.[40]
>
> Doctoral dress: American or Israeli style gown, with sleeves adorned with velvet bars and velvet mortarboard or tam. The gown is accompanied by a hood with velvet trimmings. Gold tassel on mortarboard. Hood decorated with institutional and faculty emblems or colours.[41]
>
> Academic dress for staff: doctoral dress as described, with the addition of sleeve decorations corresponding to position. Senior staff have robes with three velvet bars and a velvet bar decoration. Deans and senior officers will have their velvet bars and decoration with gold borders. A president of an institution, as well as a chairman and a director general, will have four velvet bars on their sleeves bordered in gold.[42]

Brosh, another supplier of academic dress, was incorporated in 1990 and supplies academic dress to Bar-Ilan University.[43]

Academic dress in Israel is not used in formal settings during the academic year, such as exams, etc. Therefore, there are no institutional regulations governing its design, and its basic composition is defined by the institutional department in charge of graduation ceremonies.[44]

While academic dress is not part of formal regulations, some institutions of higher learning include certain guidelines to female students taking part in programmes designed for ultra-Orthodox students.[45] Institutional regulations governing dress pre-

38 Larusha, 'Our Story', online at <www.larusha.com/ourstory> [retrieved 12 Feb. 2023].

39 Wrap-around is undefined. Larusha website – bachelor's <www.larusha.com/ba22> [retrieved 8 Feb. 2023].

40 Larusha website – master's <www.larusha.com/--cr9j> [retrieved 8 Feb. 2023].

41 Larusha website – doctoral <www.larusha.com/--cvrv> [retrieved 8 Feb. 2023].

42 Larusha website – Academic Staff <www.larusha.com/academic-regalia> [retrieved 8 Feb. 2023]. The borders take the form of narrow piping.

43 Brosh, 'About Us', online at <brosh.com> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

44 Korol-Gordon.

45 Or Kashti, 'Israeli Universities Imposing Dress Codes on Women in Ultra-Orthodox Tracks', Haaretz, 28 June 2022, online at <www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-06-28/ty-article/.highlight/israeli-universities-imposing-dress-codes-on-women-in-ultra-orthodox

dominantly preclude indecent dress or include a general instruction to appear 'appropriately dressed'.[46]

There were examples of dynamics in use of academic dress as a result of demand from students. In 2005, Bar-Ilan University decided to reduce costs of graduation ceremonies and forgo the robes, making them available only at dedicated stands for photographs. This led to outrage from students.[47] Bar-Ilan University continues using academic dress for staff and doctoral graduates, and gradually added dress for master graduates and eventually for bachelor graduates. Currently, all of the University's graduates wear academic dress. Undergraduates from Achva Academic College initiated a call to boycott the graduation ceremony unless they be given caps and gowns upon graduation, leading to photo stands with gowns being set up.[48]

The IDC, spearheading the movement of academic dress in Israel, continued to provide it to students, reasoning that it enhances the graduation ceremony, honours the students and empowers them. It is also meant to add cachet to the institution itself, following the example of other well-established universities following this practice.[49]

Tel Aviv held the position in 2015 that bachelors and masters should not wear a robe at graduation, as they are not full members of the 'order of academia', but only apprentices. A member of the University's academic staff, seeking to explain its policy on academic dress, made the distinction between doctoral robes and other academic dress, stressing that doctoral robes signify a rite of passage, symbolizing the graduate's admission into 'the elite group of academics'.[50] Despite that sentiment, robes for sub-doctoral graduates began appearing in Tel Aviv graduation ceremonies in 2018.[51]

Table 1. Academic dress used in institutions of higher education in Israel

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES	
THE TECHNION	
Bachelors	
The Technion began using academic dress in graduation ceremonies in 2016. Prior to that, students received their degrees without any formal dress code.[52]	Current bachelor's dress is a dark blue gown, mortarboard with gold tassel, and gold satin scarf with the institutional emblem.[53]

-tracks/00000181-a674-df83-a1a9-ef75c2da0000> or <tinyurl.com/yvcn3uu7> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

46 University guidelines governing studies, TAU Academic Secretariat (24 January 2023), online at <acad-sec.tau.ac.il/info/generalcampus> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

47 'Robes at Graduation: Essential or Foolish?', Walla – Studies (25 June 2015), online at <yoram.walla.co.il/item/2866728> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Korol-Gordon.

52 Technion bachelor's graduation (2012), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyDRyHMw690>; master's graduation (2012) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbwxYyqPiM8> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

53 Technion bachelor's graduation (2016), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP_FsKvtVvM> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

Postgraduates and staff

Masters' gowns are black and include a satin hood with the institutional emblem in the middle of the neckband. Doctoral robes are black with black mortarboard, which includes a gold tassel in its centre with an institutional emblem on it. The doctor's sleeves are bell-shaped and have two velvet bars, as well as a button with the institutional emblem.[54] Doctors wear a hood with lining according to their academic faculty.[55]

Prior to 2016, academic staff were in full academic robes, in the American style.[56] Academic staff wear a black robe with velvet facings, with sleeves adorned with three velvet bars. A hood with coloured lining corresponding to academic faculty is worn over the gown. The president wears a black gown with velvet facings, with white piping between the fabric and velvet sections, including the three doctoral bars (white piping is present on deans' robes as well).[57] On both facings institutional emblems are embroidered. The gown's sleeves carry three black velvet bars with white piping and buttons with the institutional emblem. A hood of the colour corresponding to academic faculty.[58] Hood lining colours are architecture: brown; sciences: yellow; engineering: orange; and medicine: green.

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

In 2021 the HUJI started using academic dress in bachelor's and master's ceremonies. This consists of black gown and mortarboard along with a satin scarf decorated with the institutional emblem, in colour corresponding to the academic faculty. Academic staff wear the same composition of academic dress, with scarves denoting academic specialty.[59] Senior staff academic dress includes a burgundy velvet hood with the institutional emblem and a white tassel on the black mortarboard.[60] There are no doctoral robes, and the degrees are conferred without robes, with academic staff not wearing academic dress either.

54 Technion master's graduation ceremony (2018), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYxnebFI0NI> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

55 Technion doctoral graduation (2021), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAfJ1WgDpk4> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

56 Technion bachelor's graduation (2012), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyDRyHMw690>; master's graduation (2012) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbwxYyqPiM8> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

57 'Go Forth and Succeed – and Do Good', The Technion, 8 September 2024, online at <www.technion.ac.il/en/blog/go-forth-and-succeed-and-do-good/> [retrieved 18 May 2025].

58 Technion doctoral graduation (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMB_dx4K_dM> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023].

59 HUJI social sciences graduations (2018) <www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=1666865353366990>; (2021) <www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=350447709823877> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

60 HUJI business school graduation (2021), online at <shorter.me/i7QYs> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

THE WEIZMANN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

Bachelors

No first degrees administered.

Postgraduates and staff

For masters, a black gown with three blue satin bars on the sleeves and a black mortarboard with gold tassel.[61] The institutional emblem in gold is embroidered on the top of the left sleeve. Doctoral robes are black with a black mortarboard with a gold tassel. The robes are adorned with three blue satin bars on their sleeves and have a blue and gold hood. The institutional emblem in gold is embroidered on the top of the left sleeve.[62] Academic dress for academic staff, including the president, is the same as those worn by doctoral graduates; the staff and president do not wear mortarboards during ceremonies, and it is unclear whether mortarboards are part of their academic dress.[63]

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

For bachelors and masters, a black robe with three satin bars on the sleeves, mortarboard with a tassel denoting graduation year, and a satin scarf in varying colour according to academic discipline with the institution's emblem.[64] Doctors wear black robes with three black satin bars on their sleeves, and receive dark green larger scarves made of satin.[65] Academic staff wear American-style robes with three dark green velvet bars and hoods made of dark green velvet.[66]

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Bachelors

A black robe with a white satin scarf carrying the institution's emblem.[67]

Postgraduates and staff

Doctors wear a black gown with three black velvet bars, and a gold tassel on the mortarboard. No white scarf is worn.[68] Senior staff have American-style robes with

61 Feinberg Graduate School – Weizmann Institute of Science Graduation Booklet (2016), p. 64, online at <tinyurl.com/mscywvj8> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

62 Feinberg Graduate School – Weizmann Institute of Science Graduation Booklet (2014), p. 42, online at <tinyurl.com/55xfwmej> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

63 Feinberg Graduate School – Weizmann Institute of Science Graduation Booklet (2018), p. 4 online at <tinyurl.com/59jcwppj> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

64 Bar Ilan University social sciences graduation ceremony (2022) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=spUip6xOX4Q>; bachelors' and masters' of engineering graduation ceremony (2022) <engineering.biu.ac.il/album/9512> [retrieved 5 and 10 Feb. 2023].

65 Bar-Ilan University doctoral graduation (2022) <tinyurl.com/378e5smw> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

66 Bar-Ilan University social sciences graduation ceremony (2022) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=spUip6xOX4Q> [retrieved 10 Feb. 2023]; Bar-Ilan University doctoral graduation (2022) <tinyurl.com/378e5smw> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

67 TAU exact sciences graduation (2022), a Google search on 5 Feb. 2025 the results of which are no longer accessible.

68 TAU doctoral graduation (2022) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvc1xJiRtrE> [re-

colour matching their academic discipline. Mortarboards are available to students, but more common in master's ceremonies, and during speeches.[69] Staff wear a black gown with dark blue velvet facings and three raised dark blue velvet bars on the sleeves. Senior academic staff, holding the rank of dean and including the president, wear the same regalia, except the velvet decorations are burgundy.[70]

UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

Bachelors

The Bachelor of Laws wears a black gown and mortarboard, with three satin bars on the sleeves.[71] Other bachelors do not wear academic dress to the graduation ceremony.

Postgraduates

Masters wear a black gown with three satin bars on their sleeves, a black mortarboard and hood corresponding to academic specialty.[72] Doctors and staff wear identical dress: a black gown and mortarboard and a dark red cape, with gold institutional emblems on both sides of the front. Their sleeves are decorated with three black satin bars.[73]

BEN GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

Graduates wear the same academic dress at all levels: black gown with two satin bands round the forearm of each sleeve, and a mortarboard, with a silver satin cape adorned with institutional emblems throughout.[74] Doctors wear academic dress during ceremonies, but bachelors and masters wear it only at photo stands as a souvenir.

Academic staff wear the same dress as doctors, with a black gown with silver satin facings edged orange and adorned with institutional emblems. The gown has inverted-T sleeve openings edged orange. The dress is completed by a black mortarboard with orange edge.[75]

The president and rector wear a black gown with silver satin facings adorned

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trieved 16 Feb. 2023].

69 TAU life sciences master's graduation (2022) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ua2aDgKfe10&t=2093s> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

70 TAU engineering graduation (2021), from a shared folder online [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025] that is no longer accessible.

71 University of Haifa law school graduation (2021) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM7S-FqkHmVo> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

72 University of Haifa Law School bachelor's and master's degrees graduation (2019) <law.haifa.ac.il/2018/07/12/grad19-2/> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

73 University of Haifa doctoral graduation (2022), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nz8Zc3YMmI> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

74 BGU engineering graduation (2019), online at <tinyurl.com/4dv5m274> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025]. BGU graduation ceremony (2019), online at <in.bgu.ac.il/Pages/grad2019.aspx> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

75 BGU graduation ceremony (2019), online at <tinyurl.com/5x258cad> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

with institutional emblems. The gown has inverted-T sleeve openings edged orange and with brown chevrons at the shoulders, along with a black mortarboard with an orange edge and orange tassel.[76]

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF ISRAEL

No academic dress in graduation ceremonies. Photo stands are available before the ceremony for graduates to pose with a black gown and mortarboard, and a long white satin scarf; for masters, the white scarf bears the emblem of the student union.[77]

ARIEL UNIVERSITY

Bachelors

A black gown with three white satin bars on the sleeves. The institutional emblem is embroidered on the right facing of the gown. A black mortarboard with white tassel .[78]

Postgraduates and staff

Masters' gowns are blue with a blue mortarboard featuring a blue and white tassel with a metal year emblem, and a white satin scarf with the institutional emblem on it.[79] Doctoral gowns are black and adorned with three black satin bars. Black mortarboard with a light blue tassel. Doctors wear a light blue satin scarf with two institutional emblems. Academic staff wear doctoral dress.[80]

REICHMAN UNIVERSITY

Bachelors

Light blue satin gowns and mortarboards, with tassels in colours according to academic faculty with a metal year pin denoting graduation year.[81]

Postgraduates and staff

Masters wear black gowns with three black satin bars and mortarboards with satin hoods corresponding in colour to their academic specialty.[82] Doctors wear

76 BGU engineering graduation (2019), online at <tinyurl.com/4dv5m274> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

77 The Open University of Israel graduation ceremony (2022), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Yr88-cBgQ> and<www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWa-5tgGI-Q> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

78 Ariel University graduation (2021), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzZYlRYStl4> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

79 Larusha Cap and Gown post, online at <www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1927399190874946&set=pcb.1927399467541585> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

80 Ariel University – School for Advanced Studies (2022), online at <www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5391377754256424&set=ecnf.100057206719894> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

81 Reichman University graduation ceremony (2021), online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FV8q4CQA9c> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

82 Ibid.

a black gown without any decorations.[83] Staff wear a black gown with three black bars in velvet or satin, and velvet decoration and a yellow and blue hood. Staff may wear the academic dress from their alma mater. The president wears a black gown with three red velvet bars on the sleeves, a hood of gold satin and a gold edge on top of the robe, and a Tudor bonnet. Academic staff wear black gowns with velvet facings and three velvet bars on the sleeves, a black mortarboard and a yellow satin scarf. The Chairman wears a black gown with red facings, three red bars on the sleeves, a purple hood and a Tudor bonnet with a gold tassel adorned with a gold ball.[84]

ACADEMIC COLLEGES

These offer mainly first degrees and so graduation ceremonies include fewer master's graduates. Some colleges do not use academic dress, some offer stands for souvenir photos with gowns and mortarboards, and some use academic dress during graduation ceremonies.

NETANYA ACADEMIC COLLEGE

Bachelors

A scarf made of blue satin with yellow lining and black mortarboard, without a gown.[85] Bachelors of Law wear academic dress identical to that worn by masters.[86]

Postgraduates and staff

Masters wear a blue gown with three yellow satin bars on the sleeves and a black mortarboard.[87] Staff wear a black gown with three satin bars on the sleeves and a black mortarboard. Senior staff gowns have black velvet facings and three velvet bars and a purple hood made of satin. The president of the College wears staff dress, but his purple decorations are piped with red satin throughout.[88]

SAPIR COLLEGE

Bachelors

Black gowns and black mortarboards.[89]

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83 'First PhD granted by Reichman University' (2023), online at <www.runi.ac.il/en/whats-up-lobby/news/first-phd-law/> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

84 Reichman University graduation ceremony photos (2021), online at <www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10158427310111050&type=3> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

85 Netanya Academic College – graduation (2019), online at <www.facebook.com/netanyacollege.ac/photos/a.10161835601510304/10161843717500304> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

86 Netanya Academic College Bachelor of Law graduation (29 June 2021), online at <tinyurl.run/RL1g8y> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

87 Ibid.

88 Netanya Academic College – graduation (2019), online at <tinyurl.com/y5naw7kj> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

89 Sapir College – graduation (2021), online at <www.sapir.ac.il/album/2300> [retrieved 16 Feb. 2023].

Postgraduates and staff

Masters wear black gowns and mortarboards with the addition of a yellow scarf.[90] Staff wear black gowns with a white satin scarf with two institutional emblems.

BEZALEL ACADEMY OF ARTS AND DESIGN

Academic dress changed in recent years. In 2017 and 2018 bachelors wore black mortarboards and satin scarves with the institutional emblem, the colour of the scarf and tassel corresponding to their academic faculty. Souvenir photos were available with black gowns adorned with three black satin bars along with other regalia.[91] In 2019 it appears no academic dress was used during the ceremony, though mortarboards were made available, and some were used at the graduates' discretion.[92] In 2021 and 2022 graduation ceremonies no academic dress was worn, with the occasional mortarboard appearing on graduates. Souvenir photos with black gowns and mortarboards with gold tassels were made available.[93]

KINNERET COLLEGE

Bachelors

A black gown and black mortarboard with turquoise tassel with a pin marking graduation year.[94]

Staff

Robes are black with three black satin bars adorning the sleeves, and white piping down the inner edge of the facings of the gown. Senior staff wear black robes with velvet facings with white piping running the length the facings, and three velvet black bars piped white on the sleeves, and a black mortarboard with large gold tassel. The president wears the dress of senior staff, with sleeves adorned by four black bars piped white.[95]

THE COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT ACADEMIC STUDIES

Bachelors

Law graduates (LLB) wear black gowns and black mortarboards with dark turquoise tassels.[96]

90 Ibid.

91 Bezalel graduation (2017), online at <tinyurl.com/4yznxw2m>; (2018), online at <tinyurl.com/yc3wxs4m> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

92 Bezalel graduations (2019), online at <tinyurl.com/376sfdcf> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

93 Bezalel graduations (2021), online at <tinyurl.com/4jdkyw5s>; (2022) <tinyurl.com/29x6aujm> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

94 Kinneret College social sciences graduation (2019), online at <rb.gy/jrh112> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

95 Ibid.

96 The College of Management Academic Studies Law School graduation (2022), online at <rb.gy/sgzqof> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

Postgraduates and staff

Masters wear black gowns with a satin scarf whose colour indicates their academic faculty, and mortarboards with tassels corresponding to their academic discipline. Staff wear black gowns with three black velvet bars on the sleeves and gold piping on the facings of the gown, a burgundy hood made of satin, and a black mortarboard with large gold tassel. The president wears the same academic dress, with the addition of gold piping on the edges of the three raised black bars on the sleeves of the black gown.[97]

HOLON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Bachelors

A vermilion gown with vermilion mortarboard and light purple tassel, along with a scarf with two institutional emblems, with the scarf's colour corresponding to the academic faculty.[98] Past bachelor's gowns were black with satin scarves indicating the faculty of the graduate.[99]

Postgraduates and staff

Masters wear a turquoise gown and turquoise mortarboard with a gold tassel, along with a light-yellow scarf with two institutional emblems. Staff dress consisted of black gown adorned with three light-yellow satin sleeve bars, a black mortarboard and a light-yellow scarf with two institutional emblems. In 2022 staff dress was changed to American standards with robes in dark blue, with black velvet facings and black velvet bars. Staff wear between three to five sleeve bars, with or without gold piping, and the president wears five velvet bars piped gold. Senior staff, including the president, have a light-blue satin cape carrying the institution emblem.[100]

Honorary doctorates (*honoris causa*)

The most elaborate academic dress in Israel is reserved for honorary doctorates, because the donning of academic dress and the presentation of the honorary diploma play a significant part in the honorary conferral. The ceremonies are high-profile events and are meant to help raise the profile of the institution presenting the award, as well as to facilitate resources and donation development. The criteria for awarding honorary doctorates are defined by the awarding institutions, and differ in their definition. The Hebrew University awards honorary doctorates to 'scholars who excelled in their academic field … and to public figures who made a significant contribution to humanity, the Jewish people or the State of Israel, or to people who contributed in a meaningful manner to the advancement of science, higher education and the Hebrew

97 Ibid.

98 Holon Institute of Technology graduation (2024) <tinyurl.com/259bw4k2> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

99 Holon Institute of Technology Electrical Engineering graduation (2021) <tinyurl.com/y2as5aw6> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

100 Holon Institute of Technology graduation (2024), online at <tinyurl.com/259bw4k2> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

University'.[101] Academic dress for honorary doctors varies among awarding institutions, with some using doctoral gowns while others use unique designs. The following is a review of some of the regalia used in honorary doctorate conferrals in Israel.

In the tradition of Hebrew University, there is no academic dress in honorary doctorate ceremonies. Staff are not in academic dress, and recipients of the award receive, along with the honorary diploma, a medal with the university emblem.[102]

Technion honorary doctorate recipients wear black gowns adorned with black velvet facings and three black velvet bars adorning their sleeves. They wear a yellow hood representing sciences in Technion academic dress.[103]

Weizmann Institute of Science honorary doctorate dress is identical to its doctoral dress, and includes a black gown with a pale yellow and blue hood.[104]

Bar-Ilan University awards honorary doctorates to those who aided in the University's development, as well as to public figures and people of science, art and the humanities 'known for their activities for the greater good'.[105] Bar-Ilan's honorary doctorate regalia includes a black gown with three velvet bars in dark green (same as senior staff robes) with a broad cape made of dark green satin, adorned with the institutional emblem (doctoral graduate cape).[106] Reichman University honorary doctorates wear black gowns with three black satin bars on their sleeves, a black mortarboard and yellow cape.[107] As described in Smith and Sheard, honorary doctorate recipients in the 1970s wore a black cape with a bordeaux red lining complemented by a black beret with a top section in bordeaux red with a black cord and a gold tassel.[108] Current honorary doctorate regalia was preceded by the same academic dress in style and form, but with the colour of the velvet cape and bars on the sleeves being grey, and prior to that—burgundy.[109]

Tel Aviv University honorary doctors wear a black gown adorned with three satin burgundy bars on their sleeves and burgundy facings, along with a black mortarboard

101 HUJI honorary doctorate regulations (2017), online at <openscholar.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/acs/files/degree_of_doctor_philosophiae_honoris_causa.pdf> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

102 American Friends of the Hebrew University Wire, 'Hebrew University Confers Honorary Doctorate Degree on Prof. Lotte Bailyn, Pioneer Work-Family Scholar', *JNS Newswire*, 23 June 2022, online at <www.jns.org/wire/hebrew-university-confers-honorary-doctorate-degree-on-prof-lotte- bailyn-pioneer-work-family-scholar/> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025], no longer accessible.

103 Doron Solomon, 'Technion Honorary Doctorates to Luminaries', myNet Haifa, 15 June 2022, online at <tinyurl.com/mr343w4e> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

104 Erez Sherwinter, 'Honorary Doctorate Awarded to the president of the State of Israel by the Weizmann Institute', *Rehovot News*, 12 November 2019, online at <t.ly/J4wgC> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

105 Bar-Ilan University – recipients of honorary degrees <www.biu.ac.il/about-biu/about/awards/honorary-doctorates> [retrieved 18 Feb. 2023].

106 'Dr Tal Zaks honored', Bar-Ilan University, 3 May 2021, online at <www.biu.ac.il/en/article/9063> [retrieved 18 Feb. 2023].

107 'Reichman University honorary doctorates ceremony', Reichman University (2022), online at <tinyurl.com/323v5sjf> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

108 Smith and Sheard, Vol. II, p. 1131.

109 'Prof. Martin Karplus Receives Honorary Doctorate', Bar-Ilan University (2014), Bar-Ilan honorary doctorate flickr album <www.flickr.com/photos/barilan/15117798155> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].



University of Haifa

Fig. 4. University of Haifa honorary doctorate recipients in 2022 show the embroidery on the back of their gowns.

and a gold tassel.[110] University of Haifa honorary doctors wear black gowns adorned with three black satin bars and a dark red velvet cape (used by doctoral graduates and staff).[111] In 2022 two honorary doctorate recipients, the architect Moshe Safdie and the conceptual artist and performer Marina Abramović, had a work of artistic embroidery added on the back of their black gowns. Abramović had visual representations of art and several sayings ('freedom is a state of mind'; 'we all smile in the same language', and a quote from Degas, 'Art is not what you see, but what you make others see'), while Safdie had a quote from Proverbs 24.3–4: 'Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.'[112]

Ben Gurion University honorary doctorate recipients wear academic dress identical to doctoral graduates, with a black gown with two orange satin bands adorning each sleeve, a BGU doctoral cape adorned with institutional emblems, and a black mortarboard with a black tassel.[113]

110 'Honorary Doctorates Awarded to Researchers and Inspirational Leaders', Tel Aviv University (16 June 2022) <www.tau.ac.il/news/honor-dr-2022> [retrieved 18 Feb. 2023].

111 'University of Haifa Honorary Doctorate Conferral', University of Haifa (November 2022), online at <bit.ly/415XUDx> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025].

112 Ibid.

113 Yali Uzan, 'These Are the Honorary Doctorate Recipients from the University', Beersheba Net (29 May 2022), online at <t.ly/maUju> [retrieved 18 May 2025].

Conclusion

This review briefly presented the variety of academic dress in Israel, a topic which is significantly under-studied. The fact that academic dress is not formally used during the academic year, is not regulated by institutional codes, and does not have a tradition of use in Israel, limits its development. There is great disparity among academic dress standards in different institutions, and there is not a widely accepted visual language which unites the various robes. The absence of institutional regulations governing the design of academic dress prevents the creation of tradition, with academic dress changing frequently. Consideration of factors such as weather conditions, cost, comfort of wear, and manufacturing difficulties may all play a part in academic dress design, as the most experienced entity involved in academic dress design and preparation in Israel appears to be the robemakers themselves, as a result of the lack of institutional tradition. The dynamic of robe design is not completely clear, but it is known that the leading maker of academic dress in Israel has produced robes for many institutions over the years, and so became a major source of expert knowledge. In addition, design elements appearing in one institution seem to appear in others.

The documented switch from traditional hoods to American collegiate-style scarves or stoles was likely related to a combination of factors, including an American influence on the institutions and senior academic staff, weather, cost and comfort of wear. Currently, when trying to characterize Israeli academic dress, both American and British influences are apparent, along with unique Israeli contributions, such as the wide capes, often decorated with institutional emblems. Empirical studies, however, were not performed to research these issues and further exploration of the matter is warranted.

In terms of the history of incorporating academic dress, Israel is an interesting test-case for exploring how the societal context influenced the popularity of certain customs, in this case, the use of academic dress. While going beyond the scope of this review, the data collected here gives a glimpse of the impact of religious, cultural, geographical, and other characteristics on academic dress. While Israel was developing a new independent identity, grounded on pioneering values, no academic dress was used. As the years passed, and staff members (especially from the United States) who were better acquainted with academic dress advanced in institutions of higher learning, academic dress began to appear, especially in ceremonies designed to echo a sense of tradition, such as the honorary doctorates. Incorporating such dress for honorary purposes, such as honorary doctorates or fellowships,[114] may have a positive impact on institutional outreach and financial fund-raising capabilities. This is a long-standing custom in Israel, and it appears that academic dress was seen as a means to enhance the dramatic effect and prestige of the ceremony and award, even in times when academic dress was not used in graduation ceremonies.

It is noteworthy that the academic colleges, designed to increase access to higher education in Israel, brought with them the renaissance in earnest of academic dress

114 Holon Institute of Technology – honorary degree ceremony (2023), online at <tinyurl.com/3umtnuyd> [retrieved 5 Feb. 2025]; Reichman University – Honorary doctorate and Honorary Fellow, online at <www.runi.ac.il/about/runifriends/honorary-awards/> [retrieved 18 Feb. 2023].

in Israel, albeit not always in true ceremonial fashion, but rather as a souvenir. In the dynamics of competition which ensued between the colleges and research universities, academic dress became a status symbol. In addition, the rapid rise of visual social media led to a desire to create unique content, and contributed to the rising popularity of souvenir photos in academic dress. But the issue appears to be more substantial than that. The fact that many institutions of higher education which do not incorporate academic dress in their graduation ceremonies still have photo stands available for souvenirs, creates an interesting situation in which the academic institutions effectively have designated academic dress, but due to technical or financial consideration do not mandate academic dress in ceremonies. By doing so they recognize the importance of academic dress, not only as a traditional element in higher education, but in the student experience and as a component of pride and institutional identity as well.

Academic dress in Israel is connected to a broader context of developments in the higher education system. Academic dress became a tool to increase prestige and station, and in the absence of long-standing tradition, saw the creation of unique and eclectic designs. Because no national regulatory body exists, no guidelines for the use of academic dress are known to have been composed. Nor have the institutions themselves made any publicly available. As such, the analysis of academic dress, in terms of rules and composition, is based on visual and archival material, mainly graduation ceremonies. This leaves significant collaborative research yet to be explored, seeking to understand the decision-making process within the different institutions, and on the wider organizational level, governing the use of academic dress. Substantial material collections of academic dress in Israel are unknown, despite their variety and significance to the development of the culture and legacy of the higher education system. In addition, the inconsistent manner in which academic dress is used, and the reasons for it, may be documented in internal minutes of faculty or institutional senate or governing authority meetings. Broad future research seeking to analyse the thought process and considerations surrounding academic dress in Israel may yet uncover interesting insight. The current available resources for research are limited, with online imagery vanishing from record, as it is built mainly on documentation of ceremonies and not established archives. It will also be noted that while the author contacted three institutions in order to receive their approval to use images of their academic dress, only two provided positive replies, with the third raising increasingly more inquisitive questions, such as whether the photo would be used in an academic study, where the paper would be published, why specifically was that photo selected and whether or not the article would be uploaded to social media.

The lack of established tradition contributes to a lack of consistency in terms of academic dress, where different faculties have different policies regarding their graduation protocols, which may change from one year to the next. As a general rule, it would seem that the notion of establishing some continuity in the use and design of academic dress has been more deeply accepted in the doctoral graduations, and partly in postgraduate ceremonies as well. As many graduate students are trained in universities across the world, the concept of academic dress is not foreign to future academics in senior positions. That fact, combined with a demand for unique elements, may have a positive effect on the advancement of academic dress in Israel.

Appendix: Timeline of the development of the higher education system in Israel

1920 British Mandate for Palestine

1924 Founding of the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology

1925 Founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

1934 Founding of the Daniel Sieff Institute (would become the Weizmann Institute of Science)

1948 Establishment of the State of Israel

1955 Founding of Bar-Ilan University

1958 Council for Higher Education Law established the Council for Higher Education in Israel

1956 Founding of Tel Aviv University

1963 Founding of the University of Haifa

1969 Founding of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev

1976 Founding of the Open University of Israel

1995 Israeli parliament passed Amendment 10 to the Council of Higher Education Law, allowing for the opening of academic colleges in Israel alongside the established research universities

2012 Founding of the University of Ariel (commencing operations as an academic college in 1982)

2021 Founding of Reichman University (operating as the Interdisciplinary Center – IDC Herzliya since 1994)