

## Academical Dress in the University of Westminster

*by Philip Goff*

The University of Westminster has its origins in The Polytechnic which was opened on 6 August 1838 at 309 Regent Street<sup>1</sup>. The first Chairman was Sir George Cayley, a landowner, inventor and gentleman scientist, who established the principle of heavier-than-air flight.<sup>2</sup> A royal charter was granted on 23 August 1839 and, after an early visit made by Prince Albert, the name was changed in 1841 to The Royal Polytechnic Institution. In 1881 the Polytechnic was acquired by Quintin Hogg and, after rebuilding in 1912, was known as the Regent Street Poly. In 1970 it was renamed the Polytechnic of Central London, as one of thirty polytechnics awarding degrees of the Council for National Academic Awards. On 1 December 1992 the Polytechnic was rededicated as the University of Westminster at a service in Westminster Abbey.

The academical dress for the new university was designed by Dr David Avery in consultation with Mr William (Bill) Keen, Managing Director of Ede and Ravenscroft, who as official suppliers to the CNAA had already supplied robes to the Polytechnic. In addition to the degrees awarded by the CNAA the Polytechnic awarded its own diploma. The hood for this was also of the CNAA shape of light-blue cloth lined with silver-grey silk and tipped with claret silk, that is the lower part of the lining of the cowl was claret silk. It is interesting to note that claret and silver-grey were the livery colours of Sir George Cayley and have been thus preserved in the academical dress of the Polytechnic and the University as well as in the University's logo and corporate image.

Dr David Avery, who died in 2000<sup>3</sup> had been Lord Mayor of Westminster in 1991 and was a member of the University Court as well as a keen student of London's history.<sup>4</sup> That he was interested in and fairly knowledgeable about academical dress, and a senior member of the new University, ensured that this university, at least, would adopt an attractive and logical scheme.

The following is the account of how the system of academical dress came into being, beginning with what Dr Avery wrote on the subject in his report to the Polytechnic of Central London Court of Governors' sub-committee on university status, on 16 December 1991.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Information from *University of Westminster, 160 Years of Innovation*, published by the Development Office & University Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Two papers of 1809–10 which established this principle were published in Nicholson's journal. In 1853 a glider which he designed and built made the first manned flight carrying his coachman as pilot.

<sup>3</sup> I had heard that Dr Avery had taken a keen interest in academical dress matters relating to the University of Westminster and had read his exchanges with Bill Keen. By happy chance I invited him to Ede and Ravenscroft, Chancery Lane, in 1999, and coaxed him into telling me his story, which I noted.

<sup>4</sup> David Avery was President of the Edmonton Hundred Historical Society. He was also a world authority on Soho. A talk given in 1997 at the Soho Jazz Festival was entitled 'The Life and Times of Casanova while Living in Soho'.

<sup>5</sup> Not everything Dr Avery asserts is factually correct but he had a good understanding of British academical dress and his contribution to the thinking about this matter in the University of Westminster steered it away from some of the pits fallen into by other establishments! Most of the information in this account is taken from an exchange of letters between Dr David Avery and Mr William (Bill) Keen, Managing Director of Ede and Ravenscroft, and Dr David Avery and various officials and committees of the University. (Spellings and punctuation are as in the original.)

# 1 David Avery's initial report

## Academic Dress for the University of Westminster

### Introduction

When PCL acquires university status it will be conferring its own degrees and not those of the CNAA. Our graduates will, therefore, not be entitled to use the CNAA academic dress. Since such dress is essential, the University of Westminster must adopt its own.<sup>6</sup> This has to be distinctive so that it is not confused with that of any other academic institution; but there is the opportunity to do this within the traditional forms by a careful use of the colours that are adopted, while avoiding some of the non-conventional forms which were adopted by one or two universities in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup>

The overwhelming majority of English universities have adopted as the shapes for their black gowns, hood and doctors' robes, the basic patterns which evolved at Oxford and Cambridge in the middle-ages<sup>8</sup> and became standardised at those two places (then the only universities in England) in the seventeenth century. Though these basic patterns have many points of similarity, they also possess some marked differences. The great majority of universities in England, including London University, have adopted the basic Cambridge patterns for the shapes of their academic dress.

I suggest that the University of Westminster should follow the basic Oxford patterns (not because of any pro-Oxford or anti-Cambridge bias) because those shapes are less usual and, therefore, offer greater scope when it comes to the opportunity to introduce variety through the use of colour. This is particularly relevant if we wish to use (as I have suggested) the claret and silver-grey colours<sup>9</sup> which have become identified with PCL and are indeed, used in the hoods for the PCL diploma-holders. There is also the matter of dress for office-bearers within the new University to be considered.

In writing this paper, I have had, of necessity to assume that we should prefer a traditional form of academic dress. Clearly, the suggestions I put forward would not be relevant if we were to opt for some highly innovative form. Once we have some clear idea in our own minds of the sort of academic attire we should prefer, we should need to start discussions with a firm of academic robe-makers to sort out any design problems that we may not have envisaged.

### Academic caps

The hard academic cap, commonly known as the 'mortar-board', is fairly standard headgear. Some universities stipulate that their women graduates should wear soft hats in the 'Tudor'<sup>10</sup> style, and some that doctors wear round bonnets made of velvet. In general, however, women seem to prefer the 'mortar-board'. I suggest that we prescribe the black 'mortar-board' as our official headwear for all graduates (including doctors).

---

<sup>6</sup> It may seem extraordinary to some that even in the 1990s there was no question but to have such dress.

<sup>7</sup> This is a polite reference to East Anglia, Sussex, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Although the basic forms of Oxford and Cambridge gowns did evolve from medieval garments, the *cappa clausa* or closed cloak would have been the main item of academical dress in the Middle Ages.

<sup>9</sup> George Cayley's livery colours.

<sup>10</sup> The *Oxford soft ladies'* cap is indeed of a Tudor style, of the same family as the ecclesiastical square cap. The befeater-style round bonnet derives from Tudor lay fashion and was adopted for use by the civil faculties at Oxford, such as Medicine and Music.

### **Diploma-holders**

Holders of PCL diplomas are entitled to wear a black cotton gown with full sleeves open at the front and a yoked collar (an Oxford BA in effect); a black [*sic*] hood lined partly with claret-coloured silk [*see note at end of report*] and partly with silver-grey silk; and an academic cap. I can see no reason for this to be changed.

### **Bachelors' gowns**

In all universities these are made of black cotton,<sup>11</sup> and are normally the same shape and design for all bachelors' degrees whatever faculty is involved. I suggest that the academic gown for bachelors' degrees of the University of Westminster follow suit, and that we use the Oxford BA shape described under 'Diploma-holders' above.

### **Masters' gowns**

This is traditionally of black cord, and has long narrow sleeves reaching almost the full length of the gown, with a slit in the sleeve at the elbow through which the arm protrudes. Different universities however, have adopted a number of variations: such things as ogee-curves at the bottom of the sleeves, decoration with black lace, the addition of buttons and strings etc. In fact we have the opportunity for a fairly distinctive University of Westminster gown for Masters, if we follow a simple pattern. I suggest that we adopt the shape used at Oxford for all Masters' degrees other than MA, but without black lace. This would give a gown of black cord with long square-ended sleeves with an arm slit at the elbow and a flap collar at the back.<sup>12</sup>

### **Faculties and degrees**

As I understand it, the University of Westminster is likely to have the following Faculties which will be able to present candidates for the degrees shown in parentheses:

(a) Faculty of Business Management and Social Studies

(BA, BSc, MA, MSc, PhD, DLitt, DSc)

(b) Faculty of Engineering and Science

(BSc, BEng, MSc, MEng, PhD, DSc)

(c) Faculty of Law, Languages and Communication

(BA, LLB, MA, LLM, PhD, DLitt, LLD)

(d) Faculty of the Environment

(BA, BSc, MA, MSc, PhD, DLitt, DSc).

This, of course, is the existing arrangement at PCL. Presumably the degrees will continue to be awarded in the same way as they are now, and in conformity with regulations similar to those used now by arrangement with the CNAAB. All of them, of course, could be awarded *honoris causa*, though in reality honorary degrees are likely to be restricted to doctorates.

### **Hoods for Bachelors' and Masters' degrees**

I suggest that these should follow the Oxford shape (Dean Burgon pattern)<sup>13</sup> ie without a tippet<sup>14</sup>. Those for Masters' degrees should be a little longer (about six inches) than those for Bachelors. I suggest that they should be of the following materials and colours:

---

<sup>11</sup> In fact they are made of a variety of materials: cotton or woollen cord, rayon or polyester, and sometimes silk.

<sup>12</sup> Similar to the London Laws, Solicitors' or Virgers' gowns.

<sup>13</sup> Named after The Very Revd John William Burgon (1813-1888), Fellow of Oriel College, this refers to one of the shapes used for hoods in the University of Oxford but the precise connection remains a mystery.

<sup>14</sup> Avery uses the word *tippet* here to mean the cape of the hood which is absent in the so-called 'simple' shaped hoods. *Tippet* is a difficult word for students of academical/ecclesiastical dress since it is sometimes used to indicate the cape of the hood both in the modern 'full' shaped form, in the medieval form (as seen in the Warham Guild shape or in the Mozzetta, worn by RC dignitaries), the liripipe, or

BA of black cord lined with claret-coloured silk;  
 MA of claret cord lined with claret silk;  
 BSc of black cord lined with silver-grey silk;  
 MSc of dark silver-grey cord lined with silver-grey silk;  
 LLB of black cord lined with claret silk edged with two inches of purple silk;  
 LLM of claret cord lined with purple silk;  
 BEng of black cord lined with silver-grey silk and edged with two inches of dark blue silk;  
 MEng of dark silver-grey cord lined with dark blue silk.

The neck-band of these hoods would normally be the same colours as the cord from which the hoods are made. However, if we wished to indicate the Faculty in which graduates have studied, this could be done by making the neck-bands of hoods in a specific faculty colour. If this particular distinction were required, I suggest:

- (a) Faculty of Business, Management and Social Studies: a claret-coloured neck-band;
- (b) Faculty of Engineering and Science: a silver-grey coloured neck-band;
- (c) Faculty of Law, Languages and Communication: a purple-coloured neck-band;
- (d) Faculty of the Environment: a dark blue coloured neck-band.

### **Full dress robes for Doctors**

It is traditional for doctors' full dress robes to be made of fine woollen cloth,<sup>15</sup> with silk facings and silk linings for the sleeves. Those for the doctorates obtained as a result of outstanding contributions to knowledge contained in publications (such as DLitt, DSc, LLD) are traditionally of scarlet cloth. Those for PhDs (a degree awarded to recognise original research in a thesis) are made in a variety of coloured cloths depending on the university and normally avoiding scarlet.<sup>16</sup> Personally, it would give me great pleasure to see the PCL colours of claret and silver-grey used for our PhD robes.

Again, for this shape of our doctors' full-dress robes, I suggest we follow the Oxford pattern with its less usual shape for the sleeves, which will help make the robes more distinctive. These sleeves are normally described as long bell-shaped sleeves (reaching to the wrists) of which the lower two-thirds are made from the same coloured silk as the facings to the robe.<sup>17</sup> (This robe, too, has a yoked collar).<sup>18</sup>

Thus for the PhDs, I suggest that the robe should be of claret-coloured fine woollen cloth, the facings and the lower parts of the sleeve being of silver-grey silk.

If it were desired to indicate the faculty in which the research had been undertaken, this could be done by having on the outer edge of the facings and edging, half-an-inch wide, of silk in the faculty colour.

For Doctors of Letters, of Science and of Laws, it would be appropriate to use a robe of the traditional scarlet cloth, with the facings of the robes and the lower part of the sleeves in the same distinctive colours as those used for the linings of the relevant Masters' hoods ie:

- Doctor of Letters: claret-coloured silk;
- Doctor of Science: silver-grey coloured silk;
- Doctor of Laws: purple coloured silk.

---

even the whole hood (especially when worn squared or rolled up). The term is also sometimes used to refer to the scarf worn by Judges, the Clergy and Readers.

<sup>15</sup> Traditionally *superfine wool*, but more often today a lighter fabric known as *wool Panama*.

<sup>16</sup> Oxford and Bristol (among others) prescribe scarlet robes for the DPhil and PhD respectively. Interestingly, Avery says that he wishes Westminster to follow Oxford patterns, but does not suggest following its colours.

<sup>17</sup> The sleeves are made from the same fabric as the body of the robe but are faced in silk.

<sup>18</sup> There is no collar; he means a gathered yoke at the back.

### **Hoods for Doctors**

These are always made of the same materials and colours as the full dress robes.<sup>19</sup> Again I suggest the Oxford shape i.e. with a rounded tippet and a laripipe<sup>20</sup> about nine inches long. Thus the hoods would be for:

PhDs, claret coloured cloth lined with silver-grey silk;

DLitts, scarlet-coloured cloth lined with claret silk;

DScs, scarlet-coloured cloth lined with silver-grey silk;

LLDs, scarlet-coloured cloth lined with purple silk.

### **Undress gowns for Doctors**

The black undress gown for doctors is traditionally made of cord or silk in the same shape as that for Masters but with some additional features in the way of lace, buttons, strings etc. I suggest that for doctors of the University of Westminster, this gown should be the same design as for the Masters' gown but with a distinctive feature provided by bands of black velvet sewn on the sleeves and flap-collars in the following manner:

(a) for PhDs, a band of black velvet, one inch wide, sewn a little above the arm slits in the sleeves and another sewn across the lower edge of the collar flap;

(b) for DLitts, DScs and LLDs, two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide, and one inch apart, sewn above the arm-slits in the sleeves and on the flap-collar.

### **Honorary Fellows**

I do not know if the Honorary fellowship will continue to be conferred under the arrangements. If it is, I see no reason to change the present full dress robe for this distinction.

### **Chancellor of the University**

There will presumably be a chancellor. In that case, I suggest he should wear the traditional official-dress for this office: a black damask robe with apple-blossom embroidery.<sup>21</sup> decorated with the usual gold lace and gold wire. A black academic cap, with gold trimming and tassel, is worn with this. (It is usual, too, for a lace cravat or white bands to be worn in place of a tie).

### **Chairman of the Court<sup>22</sup>**

It would seem appropriate for the present official robe and cap to continue in use unchanged.

### **Vice Chancellor**

Cambridge and most other universities have distinctive robes for their Vice Chancellors. These are normally (though not at Cambridge) of black or dark blue silk ornamented with gold or silver lace, and a matching 'mortar-board'. Oxford and some universities do not have distinctive dress for their Vice Chancellors. There they wear the robes, hoods and bonnets/caps appropriate to their degrees. As to what should happen in this regard, I should not like to suggest, it is probably a matter best left to the Rector to decide.

### ***Dr David Avery, 16th December 1991***

*Note:* Throughout this paper, whenever the word 'silk' is used, it should be understood that 'art-silk'—nowadays used in making academic dress—may be substituted.

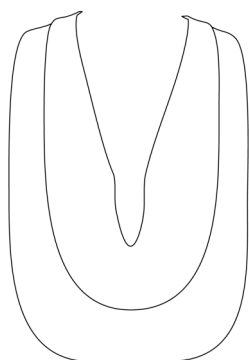
---

<sup>19</sup> This is not true, e.g. the Bristol PhD.

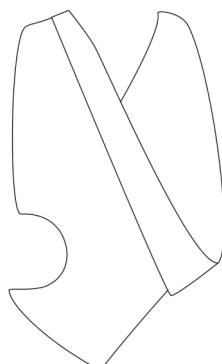
<sup>20</sup> Sometimes *liripipe* or even *liripoop*, meaning the tail of the cowl.

<sup>21</sup> Not always black. Essex and Lancaster, for example, have red Chancellors' robes. The figured damask or brocade is not usually of an apple-blossom pattern (this more usually being seen in the robes of Doctors of Music at Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Dublin and Hull, among others). A variety of damasks are in use for official robes in the universities, and some of them are also used (in other colours more particularly) for ecclesiastical vestments, e.g. Lichfield, Florence, St Aidan, Truro.

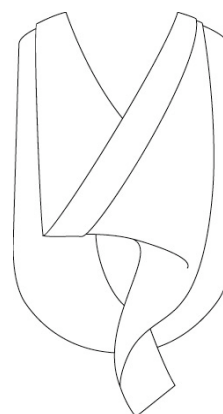
<sup>22</sup> See paragraph 34 in the revised scheme, in section 3 below.



**CNAA shape**



**Burgon shape**



**Oxford doctors' shape**

**In the Groves classification of hood shapes these are [a1], [s2] and [f5] respectively.<sup>23</sup>**

This paper was submitted to the PCL Court of Governors' sub-committee on university status with an undated note from the Rector, Professor Terence Burlin (Addendum 1), and an accompanying letter from Dr Avery (Addendum 2).

#### **Addendum 1: Comment from the Rector**

The Rector recommends to the Committee that the University does not have Faculty colours. Faculties are a mode of organisation within the institution which will change from time to time. It is better, therefore, to have distinct colours only for the different types of degree awarded.

#### **Addendum 2: Academic Dress - The University of Westminster**

A letter from Dr David Avery to the Rector

I have now had the chance to speak with Mr Keen, the Managing Director of Ede and Ravenscroft. It seems they are already becoming fairly busy with a number of polytechnics and the designs for their academic dress<sup>24</sup>. He told me that, from his company's point of view, the great difficulty is always that educational institutions are never clear in their minds about what they want. I told him that would not apply in our case, as we shall think the matter through quite thoroughly before his firm gets to the stage of making specimens! (By the way, when he asked me what name we should be using as a University, I told him. I hope that was alright. He was most impressed! He said it sounded absolutely right!)

As you requested, I raised with him a couple of specific points. He said that with regard to a Chancellor's robe, the majority of universities do use the black-and-gold robe we have discussed or blue-and-gold. He rather liked the idea that the University of Westminster might have a claret-and-gold robe for its Chancellor.<sup>25</sup> If we wanted to hire such a robe rather than buy it, then it would have to be black-and-gold as that is all they have for hire. However, it would undoubtedly be better to possess our own. It would be extremely awkward to have to

<sup>23</sup> See N. Groves, 'Towards a Standard Terminology for Describing Academic Robes', *Burgon Society Annual*, 2001, pp. 9–12 (p. 12), and *Key to the Identification of Academic Hoods of the British Isles* (London: Burgon Society, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> This is an understatement. The granting of charters to the polytechnics threw the world of robemaking into a flat spin. A huge injection of cash was needed in a very short space of time in order to fulfil the requirements of the post-1992 wave of universities, in the UK, for new academical dress. Ede and Ravenscroft had to expand its business premises very quickly so as to cope with demand.

<sup>25</sup> This robe has never been made because the University does not have a Chancellor.

fix the dates for University ceremonies to fit in with dates convenient for Ede and Ravenscroft's hire department!

With regards to Vice Chancellor's official robes: Mr Keen tells me that there is more or less an even split between UK universities and about half have black decorated with gold lace and half have black decorated with silver lace. So really it would be your choice.

He raised with me the matter of university marshals. My own feeling is that—for the moment at least—we need be in no hurry to appoint them. (Our ceremonies have always been well conducted without these functionaries). When we start collecting gold maces and silver staves, we shall have to consider the matter, I suppose. (When that time comes, an appropriate robe would be a black one with claret-silk facings).

From the point of view of Ede and Ravenscroft, and working on the assumption that our graduates will need the new academic dress for the first time in 1993, Mr Keen suggests that we should make our first formal contract by mid-February of this year. If the matter has been to committee by then, and received a signal to go ahead, I should be very happy to go and see him (if required) with a senior official of PCL, for first discussions and to explain that we want. It would then take them about a month to come up with any suggestions they may have for variations (if these are necessary) together with designs for approval.

*Dr David Avery, 6th January 1992*

## **2 The PCL sub-committee on university status considers the proposals**

The sub-committee met on 25 March 1992, after which, on 22 June, Dr Avery reported to the Rector and Registrar as follows:

Subject to the details contained in these notes, it was recommended that the new academic dress should be traditional in form, and should be based upon the basic patterns and shapes used at Oxford University, with different colours to provide the necessary distinctions.

The sub-committee expressed a desire to use, as much as possible, the claret and silver-grey colours which have become associated with PCL.

The sub-committee understands and accepts that modern synthetic materials should be used in the manufacture of the hoods, gowns and robes for the graduates of the university (as they now are for those of other higher educational institutions).

### **Head-dress**

Doctors when in full-dress robes shall wear round bonnets of claret-coloured velvet embellished with silver cords and tassels. For doctors wearing black undress-gowns, and for masters, bachelors and diploma and certificate-holders the cap to be worn, irrespective of gender, shall be the square black cap with tassel commonly known as a 'mortar-board'.

### **Diploma and certificate-holders**

At the moment these are entitled to wear a hood of black<sup>26</sup> material with a lining coloured partly claret and partly silver-grey. These should not be changed.

At the moment these all wear with the hood a black bachelors' gown with full sleeves and a yoked-collar. For holders of undergraduate diplomas and certificates the sub-committee would like to see a difference in the gown and suggests that this could be achieved by the use of a full-sleeved gown with the sleeves split up to the shoulder.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> He means light-blue.

<sup>27</sup> He means the Cambridge BA gown (without the strings) which has pointed sleeves with an opening from just after the wrist to the shoulder along the forearm seam.

Holders of post-graduate certificates and diplomas will normally prefer to wear the academic dress of their degree; but in those few cases where the holder is not already a graduate, it would be appropriate for that person to wear a bachelors' gown with the hood described above.

### **Bachelors' gowns**

The sub-committee recommends that these should be of black material, and be of the same full-sleeved pattern with yoked collar as used by BAs of the University of Oxford.

### **Masters' gowns**

The sub-committee recommends that these should be of the same basic shape as used at Oxford for higher degrees save MA (i.e. made of black material, with long narrow sleeves reaching almost the full length of the gown, closed and cut straight, and with a flap-collar at the back) but with no vertical slit above the arm-opening in the sleeve, and without any black lace decoration.

### **Undress gowns for doctors**

It was thought that these should be similar to the black gown for masters but with a distinctive feature provided by bands of black velvet sewn on the sleeves and flap-collars in the following manner:

- (a) for the PhD - a band of black velvet, one inch wide, sewn horizontally a little above the arm-slit in the sleeve, and another sewn across the lower edge of the collar flap.
- (b) for DLitt, DTech, DSc and LLD, two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide and one inch apart, sewn above the opening in the sleeve and on the flap-collar.

### **Hoods for bachelors' and masters' degrees**

The sub-committee took the view that these should not have a tippet and should be of Dean Burgon pattern, and that those for masters should be a little longer (perhaps six inches) than those for bachelors.<sup>28</sup>

The sub-committee recommended the following colours:

BA black lined with claret;  
MA claret lined with claret;  
BSc black lined silver-grey;  
MSc dark silver-grey lined with lighter silver-grey;  
LLB black lined with claret edged inside the hood with two inches of purple;  
LLM claret lined with purple;  
BEng black lined with silver-grey edged inside the hood with two inches of dark blue;  
MEng dark silver-grey lined dark blue;  
MBA dark blue lined with claret;  
MPhil claret lined with silver-grey.

It was agreed that the neckbands of all hoods should be of the same colour as the outside of the hood.<sup>29</sup>

### **Full-dress robes for doctors**

The sub-committee agreed that it wished the full-dress robes for doctors to follow the Oxford pattern, with long bell-shaped sleeves reaching to the wrists, of which the lower two-thirds

---

<sup>28</sup> This is interesting because it is rare for a British university to stipulate the size of a hood. In the USA, of course, the Inter-Collegiate Code, which prescribes academical dress for the majority of universities and colleges, stipulates that all bachelors' hoods should be 3' in length, all masters' hood 3'6" and all doctors' hoods 4'.

<sup>29</sup> This is contradicted by David Avery's memo of 3 November 1992, which states the neckbands are to be the same colour as the lining, at least for bachelors and masters.

should be made from the same coloured silk or art silk as the facings of the robe (and the lining of the hood).

For PhD it is proposed that the robe should be claret-coloured with the facings and the lower part of the sleeves in silver-grey.

For DLitt, DSc, DTech and LLD, the sub-committee favoured robes of traditional scarlet, with facings and the lower-parts of the sleeves in the same colours as used for the pertinent masters' hoods:

DLitt, facings and sleeves of claret;

DSc & DTech, facings and sleeves of silver-grey;

LLD, facings and sleeves of purple.

### **Hoods for doctors**

These should be of the Oxford shape for doctors, with a rounded tippet,<sup>30</sup> and be of the same materials and colours as the full-dress robes:

PhD, claret lined silver-grey;

DLitt, scarlet lined claret;

DSc & DTech, scarlet lined silver-grey;

LLD, scarlet lined purple.

During this time David Avery was in regular communication with Bill Keen at Ede and Ravenscroft and wrote to him on 29 September 1992, after one of his visits:

Dear Bill,

Many, many thanks to you and your colleagues for such a fascinating and enjoyable time!

With regard to the point you raised about HNDs and HNCs:<sup>31</sup> I have spoken to Miss Jane Hopkinson, the Registrar of Westminster University, and she has confirmed that at award-ceremonies they would wear the same dress as other University of Westminster diploma-holders (i.e. black gown and the old PCL hood). She will be phoning Compton<sup>32</sup> about the honorary doctorates for this year as you requested.

Again, a most sincere thank-you for a very memorable visit.

Yours,

David.

This was followed by several telephone calls and another letter of 6 October 1992:

Dear Bill,

As I explained on the 'phone, the Rector of the University of Westminster is anxious to have an official robe which may be worn by members of the Court of Governors, if not wearing academic dress, on the university's ceremonial occasions.

After you and I had our conversation, I spoke to the Rector who took the point you made about a hood being inappropriate; and he is content to have:

A black robe in the doctor's shape (i.e. with bell-shaped sleeves), the lower half of the sleeves being in a claret-coloured material, and the robe having facings of similar material edged in silver-grey. With this a mortar-board would be worn.

---

<sup>30</sup> Cape.

<sup>31</sup> Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates.

<sup>32</sup> Mr Compton DeSouza, Export and Robe Department Manager at Ede and Ravenscroft London until 2000 and involved with designs of academical dress for several universities.

He says that the university would want six such outfits, if possible by 17 November for the ceremony to be held then.

Yours sincerely,  
David Avery.

On 26 October Bill Keen replied, with a formal specification for the robes, as follows:

Dear David

**Proposed New Academic Dress for the University of Westminster**

Thank you for the details you and your colleagues drew up for the new academic dress and following your visit we are pleased to confirm these as follows:

**Diplomas/Certificate Holders**

**Gown:** Black traditional gown in Cambridge style with open forearm.  
**Hood:** As current design. Light blue outside, part-lined grey silk, tipped claret<sup>33</sup>  
**Hat:** Black Mortar board

**Bachelors:**

**Gown:** Black traditional gown as Oxon BA  
**Hood:** (All Dean Burgon shape)  
    **BA** Black lined claret  
    **BSc** Black lined silver grey  
    **LLB** Black lined claret with two inch purple inside top edge.  
    **BEng** Black lined silver grey with two inch dark blue inside top edge.<sup>34</sup>  
**Hat:** Black Mortar board

**Masters (including MPhil):**

**Gown:** Traditional black gown with long hanging sleeves with square end. Cross cut only on sleeve cut<sup>35</sup>  
**Hood:** (All Dean Burgon shape)  
    **MA** Claret cloth lined claret silk  
    **MSc** Dark silver grey lined light silver grey  
    **MEng** Dark silver grey lined dark blue  
    **MBA** Dark blue lined claret  
    **MPhil** Claret lined silver grey  
**Hat:** Black Mortar board

**PhD (all faculties)**

**Gown:** Oxon doctors shape from claret all wool panama. Fronts and bell sleeves trimmed<sup>36</sup> with silver grey.  
**Hood:** Oxon doctors shape in claret panama lined silver grey.  
**Hat:** Tudor bonnet in claret velvet with silver cord and tassel.

---

<sup>33</sup> This means that the lower part of the lining is claret and the rest is silver-grey.

<sup>34</sup> The cowl edge of the hood.

<sup>35</sup> This is the CNAAs masters' gown, which in some institutions has an inverted 'T' opening rather than the horizontal slit. Initially a 'lay' gown with a flap collar had been proposed.

<sup>36</sup> 'Trimmed' is a very unhelpful word, almost as unhelpful as 'tipped'. 'Trimmed' here refers to the front facings (usually 5") and sleeve facings.

### **Higher Doctors**

|                          |                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gown:</b>             | Oxon doctors shape from scarlet all wool panama. Fronts and bell sleeves trimmed with faculty colour. |
| <b>DLitt</b>             | Claret                                                                                                |
| <b>DSc</b>               | Silver grey                                                                                           |
| <b>DTec<sup>37</sup></b> | Silver Grey                                                                                           |
| <b>LLD</b>               | Purple                                                                                                |
| <b>Hood:</b>             | Oxon doctors shape lined with faculty colour                                                          |
| <b>Hat:</b>              | Tudor bonnet in claret velvet with silver cord and tassel.                                            |

### **Doctors' Undress**

|                    |                                                                                                             |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PhD Gown:</b>   | As MA with one band of one inch black velvet sewn horizontally above sleeve cut showing two inches light.   |
| <b>Higher Drs:</b> | As MA with two bands of one inch black velvet sewn horizontally above sleeve cuts showing two inches light. |
| <b>Hoods:</b>      | As with full dress                                                                                          |
| <b>Hat:</b>        | Black Mortar board                                                                                          |

### **Members of Court of Governors**

|              |                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gown:</b> | Black cloth cord gown in Oxon doctors shape. Fronts and sleeves trimmed Claret. The fronts trimmed <sup>38</sup> with one inch of silver oakleaf lace. |
| <b>Hat:</b>  | Black Mortar board                                                                                                                                     |

As soon as the samples are ready we will let you know and perhaps you can come along for a preview. We can then discuss any finer points and put them in writing.

Yours Sincerely,  
W R Keen  
Managing Director.

On 3 November 1992 Dr Avery wrote the following memo to Jane Hopkinson, the University Registrar:

The design details are now all finally settled on the lines authorised by the Court of Governors. There have been some slight variations from what I originally proposed, but these are very minor and in accordance with suggestions which I have discussed with you and the Rector (i.e. the sleeves for the gowns of holders of undergraduate certificates and diplomas, and a yoked collar in place of the suggested flapped collar for the gowns of bachelors and masters).<sup>39</sup>

Full details have been agreed in every respect with Ede and Ravenscroft in so far as they relate to design. They have stated that the robes for honorary doctors will be ready in time for 17th November,<sup>40</sup> and the gowns and hoods necessary for all next year's graduates will also, they say, be ready in time.

---

<sup>37</sup> This should, of course, be DTech.

<sup>38</sup> There are two uses of the word 'trimmed' here. The first refers to the front facings and the second to the outside edges of the front facings.

<sup>39</sup> The prescription of the more usual gathered yoke rather than the gown with a flap collar meant the dropping of the bars of black velvet on the collar.

<sup>40</sup> The first University of Westminster degree presentation ceremony held at the Barbican on 17 November 1992.

The composite list which you have requested for each University award follows on succeeding pages. Perhaps you would be kind enough to copy it to Ms Noonan<sup>41</sup> and the Rector.

Throughout the list the terms 'cloth' and 'silk' should be taken to mean also modern synthetic materials having the appearance of cloth and silk.

#### 1 CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS

- (a) Gown for holders of undergraduate certificates and diplomas: black cord or rayon reaching below the knees, with a yoked collar and with long open-fronted sleeves, with the forearm seam left open to the shoulder.
- (b) Holders of postgraduate diplomas will normally already be graduates and should wear the gown and hood of their degree. (In those few instances when non-graduates obtain a post-graduate diploma, the Bachelor's gown should be worn)
- (c) The hood for holders of certificates and diplomas remains as for PCL: the hood made of light-blue cloth, part-lined with silver-grey silk tipped with claret.
- (d) The hat worn with this dress is a black mortar board.

#### 2 BACHELORS' DEGREES

- (a) The gown for all bachelors' degrees is of black cord or rayon, with a yoked collar and long open-fronted sleeves.
- (b) The hoods for bachelors' degrees are of 'Dean Burgon' shape (i.e. without a tippet), and are made of black cloth. The lining-materials vary in colour according to each degree, and the neckbands are of the same colour as the lining.
- (c) The linings are as follows:
  - BA Claret silk
  - BSc Silver-grey silk
  - LLB Claret silk edged with 2 inches of purple silk
  - BEng Silver-grey silk edged with 2 inches of dark-blue silk
- (d) The hat worn by bachelors is a black mortar board.

#### 3 MASTERS' DEGREES

- (a) The gown is of black cord or rayon with a yoked collar, and with long narrow sleeves hanging almost the full length of the gown, closed and cut straight.
- (b) The hoods are of 'Dean Burgon' shape and the neckbands of the same colour as the linings.
- (c) The hoods are:
  - MA Claret cloth line with claret silk
  - MSc Dark silver-grey cloth, lined with a lighter silver-grey silk
  - LLM Claret cloth lined with purple silk
  - MEng Dark silver-grey cloth lined with dark blue silk
  - MBA Dark-blue cloth lined with claret silk
  - MPhil Claret cloth lined with silver-grey silk.
- (d) With this dress a black mortar board is worn.

#### 4 DOCTORS' DEGREES

- (a) The full-dress robes for doctors are of cloth with bell-shaped sleeves, and with facings and the lower half of the sleeves in silk.
- (b) The full dress robes are as follows:
  - PhD A robe of claret cloth, with facings and half-sleeves of silver-grey silk.
  - DLitt A robe of scarlet cloth, with facings and half-sleeves of claret silk.
  - LLD A robe of scarlet cloth, with facings and half-sleeves of purple silk.
  - DSc/ DTech A robe of scarlet cloth, with facings and half-sleeves of silver-grey silk.

---

<sup>41</sup> Ms Fran Noonan was the ceremonies officer of the University of Westminster at the time.

(c) The hoods for doctors are made from the same materials and colours as the full-dress robes. They have a long tippet, rounded at the bottom, and the cowl includes a liripipe. The neckbands are made of the outer materials of the hoods. They are:

- PhD Claret cloth lined with silver-grey silk.
- DLitt Scarlet cloth lined with claret silk.
- LLD Scarlet cloth lined with purple silk.
- DSc/ Scarlet cloth lined with silver-grey silk
- DTech

(d) With full-dress robes, all doctors wear a round Tudor bonnet of claret velvet decorated with silver cords and tassels.

(e) The black undress-gown for doctors is the gown approved for masters, but with a variation provided by bands of black velvet sewn on the sleeves in the following manner:

- PhD One band of black velvet, 1 inch wide, sewn horizontally above the arm-slit on the sleeve.
- DLitt Two bands of black velvet, each 1 inch wide and 1 inch apart, sewn
- LLD horizontally above the opening on the sleeve
- DSc
- DTech

(f) With the undress-gown doctors wear a black mortar board.

Also on the 3 November, Dr Avery wrote to the Rector:

*A suggestion note by David Avery for possible inclusion in Degree Ceremony programmes for 1993:*

## ACADEMIC DRESS

Academic dress is worn at all formal ceremonies of the University of Westminster. Each British university has its own distinctive dress, and thus the gowns and hoods worn by its graduates are different in shape and colour from those worn by the graduates of any other university.<sup>42</sup> At the ceremony today, a wide variety of academic dress of British universities will be seen.

In the University of Westminster, academic dress is prescribed by the Court of Governors; and the graduates being presented today will, of course, wear the gowns and hoods specific to this university and the qualifications it awards. The black gowns worn by holders of certificates and diplomas, and bachelors' and masters' degrees, vary in the shape of their sleeves; but the easiest way to identify the award made to a graduate is from the colours of the hood.

Certificate and diploma holders wear hoods made from a light-blue material, partly lined with silver-grey silk tipped with claret.

Bachelors wear hoods of black cloth, lined as follows:

- BA (Bachelor of Arts) Claret silk
- BSc (Bachelor of Science) Silver-grey silk
- LLB (Bachelor of Laws) Claret, edged with 2 inches of purple silk
- BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) Silver-grey edged with 2 inches of dark-blue silk

Masters wear the following hoods:

- MA (Master of Arts) Claret cloth lined with claret silk
- MSc (Master of Science) Dark silver-grey cloth lined with a lighter silver-grey silk

---

<sup>42</sup> Whilst hoods are usually distinctive, gown shapes are used in common by many universities. Dr Avery has already told us that he is using Oxford gowns for the bachelors.

|                                                                     |                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| LLM (Master of Laws)                                                | Claret cloth lined with purple silk                            |
| MEng (Master of Engineering)                                        | Dark silver-grey cloth lined with dark-blue silk               |
| MBA (Master of Business Admin)                                      | Dark-blue cloth lined with claret silk                         |
| MPhil (Master of Philosophy)                                        | Claret cloth lined with silver-grey silk                       |
| <u>Doctors</u> wear full-dress robes with long bell-shaped sleeves: |                                                                |
| PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)                                          | Claret robe with facings and half-sleeves of silver-grey silk  |
| DLitt (Doctor of Letters)                                           | Scarlet robe with facings and half-sleeves of claret silk      |
| LLD (Doctor of Laws)                                                | Scarlet robe with facings and half-sleeves of purple silk      |
| DSoc (Doctor of Science) and<br>DTech (Doctor of Technology)        | Scarlet robe with facings and half-sleeves of silver-grey silk |

Doctors' hoods are made from the same materials as their robes.

A black academic cap with a tassel (commonly known as a 'mortar board') is worn with academic dress by holders of bachelors' and masters' degrees, and of certificates and diplomas. Doctors of the University, when in full-dress robes, wear a round bonnet of claret velvet, decorated with silver cords and tassels.

On 30 November 1992 Dr Avery wrote to Bill Keen at Ede and Ravenscroft following the first University of Westminster Presentation Ceremony held at the Barbican:

Dear Bill,

It was a great pleasure for me to go to the University of Westminster degree ceremony on 17th November, and see the first of the new robes.

The robe for members of the Court of Governors was much admired. Thank you for pulling all the stops out to get them ready on time. Everyone was very grateful.

The PhD robes, etc looked, I thought, quite magnificent, and they made a great impression.

The scarlet robes, bonnets and hoods for the honorary doctorates also looked quite splendid. Mr Jeff Banks, of BBC TV's 'Clothes Show', who was one of the recipients of an honorary degree, admired them greatly. He and I got talking at one stage about academic dress and I suggested that he might consider an item on his programme about Ede and Ravenscroft. After all, academic dress is a major branch of the clothes industry and one which his programme has never covered. He seemed to like the idea, so I hope something comes of it. I'll give him a reminder about contacting you.

I am wondering if a complete set of sample dress might be ready by the end of January? The university registrar, Jane Hopkinson, would quite like to have a show for the Court of Governors, and possibly even a show for students and staff.

The only query I have so far concerns the precise shade of purple used for the LLD robe. I am wondering if it needs to be a bit more definite—a bit deeper perhaps.

Again, many thanks to you and all your colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

David Avery.

### 3 The revised scheme of academical dress approved

By the following summer, David Avery had written up the scheme of academical dress for the University, and this was approved by the Court of Governors and issued on 5 July 1993:

#### THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

##### ACADEMIC AND OFFICAL DRESS

##### HOLDERS OF CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS

1. The hood has a tippet with rounded corners, and is made of a light-blue material, lined with silver-grey tipped with claret. This hood has been used for some years by holders of certificates and diplomas of the Polytechnic of Central London.
2. The gown for holders of undergraduate certificates and diplomas is black and reaches below the calves of the wearer. It has a yoked collar and full open-fronted sleeves, with the forearm seam left open to the shoulder.
3. Persons receiving certificates or diplomas who are already holders of degrees, may wear the appropriate gowns and hoods of their degrees.
4. A holder of a postgraduate certificate or diploma who is not already the holder of a degree, wears the bachelors' gown (described below) together with the hood prescribed for holders of certificates and diplomas.
5. With academic dress, holders of the University's certificates and diplomas wear a black academic cap with a tassel (commonly known as a 'mortar board').

##### BACHELORS' DEGREES

6. Holders of the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Science, Laws or Engineering wear a black gown reaching below the calves, with a yoked collar and full open-fronted sleeves.
7. All hoods for bachelors are made in the Dean Burgon pattern (i.e. without a tippet). The neckbands are of the same material as the lining.
8. All bachelors' hoods are made of black corded material lined with silk (or appropriate synthetic materials) as follows:

|                         |                                                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bachelor of Arts        | -Black lined with claret                                      |
| Bachelor of Science     | -Black lined with silver-grey                                 |
| Bachelor of Laws        | -Black lined with claret and edged with 2" of purple          |
| Bachelor of Engineering | -Black lined with silver-grey and edged with 2" of dark-blue. |
9. With academic dress a black academic cap is worn.

##### MASTERS' DEGREES

10. Holders of the degrees of Master of Arts, Science, Laws, Engineering, Business Administration or Philosophy, wear a black gown reaching below the calves, with a

yoked collar, and long narrow sleeves hanging almost the full length of the gown, closed and cut straight, with arm-holes just above the elbows.

11. All hoods for masters are made in the Dean Burgon pattern, with neckbands the same colour as the linings of the hoods.
12. All masters' hoods are made of corded material and are lined with silk (or appropriate synthetic materials) as follows:

|                          |                                              |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Master of Arts           | -claret lined with a lighter shade of claret |
| Master of Science        | -dark-grey lined with silver-grey            |
| Master of Laws           | -claret lined with purple                    |
| Master of Engineering    | -dark-grey lined with dark-blue              |
| Master of Business Admin | -dark-blue lined with claret                 |
| Master of Philosophy     | -claret lined with silver-grey               |
13. With academic dress a black academic cap is worn.

#### DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

14. The full-dress robe for this doctorate is made of superfine woollen cloth (or appropriate synthetic material) coloured claret, and reaches almost to the ankles. It has bell-shaped sleeves reaching to the wrists. The facings on the front of the robe, the collar at the back, and the lower halves of the sleeves, are made of silver-grey silk (or appropriate synthetic material).<sup>43</sup>
15. The hood (which is always worn with the full-dress robe<sup>44</sup> and may be worn with the black undress gown) has a long rounded tippet, and a cowl with liripipe.<sup>45</sup> It is made of claret-coloured material lined with silver-grey.
16. With full-dress, a round Tudor bonnet is worn, made of claret velvet and decorated with silver cords and tassels.
17. The black undress gown for this degree is similar to that prescribed for the master's degree, but with a band of black velvet, one inch wide, sewn horizontally above the arm-slit on each sleeve.
18. With the black undress-gown a black academic cap is worn.

#### DOCTOR OF LETTERS

19. The full-dress robe for the DLitt degree is made of superfine woollen cloth (or appropriate synthetic material) coloured scarlet, and reaches almost to the ankles. It has bell-shaped sleeves reaching to the wrists. The facings on the front of the robe, the collar at the back and the lower halves of the sleeves, are made of claret silk (or appropriate synthetic material).

---

<sup>43</sup> He means that the yoke is covered with silver-grey silk. There is an analogy here with the CNAAPhD robe, which has the yoke covered in maroon silk.

<sup>44</sup> In the University of Oxford, unlike most universities, the hood is not worn with the full-dress robe, but increasingly this rule is ignored in the case of DPhil's when away from Oxford. Perhaps this led Avery to adopt the practice into his scheme. Moreover the current Rector, now also Vice-Chancellor, of the University of Westminster, Dr Geoffrey Copland, who is an Oxford DPhil, wears the hood with his full-dress robe.

<sup>45</sup> A hood of the Oxford doctors' shape.

20. The hood (which is always worn with the full-dress robe and may be worn with the black undress gown) has a long rounded tippet, and a cowl with liripipe. It is made of scarlet material lined with claret.
21. With full-dress, a round Tudor bonnet is worn, made of claret velvet and decorated with silver cords and tassels.
22. The black undress gown for this degree is similar to that prescribed for the master's degree, save that it has two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide, and one inch apart, sewn horizontally above the arm-opening on each sleeve.
23. With the black undress gown a black academic cap is worn.

#### DOCTOR OF SCIENCE AND DOCTOR OF TECHNOLOGY

24. The full-dress robe for the DSc and the DTech degrees is made of superfine woollen cloth (or appropriate synthetic material) coloured scarlet, and reaches almost to the ankles. It has bell-shaped sleeves reaching to the wrists. The facings on the front of the robe, the collar at the back and the lower halves of the sleeves, are made of silver-grey silk (or appropriate synthetic material).
25. The hood (which is always worn with the full-dress robe and may be worn with the black undress gown) has a long rounded tippet, and a cowl with liripipe. It is made of scarlet material lined with silver-grey.
26. With full-dress, a round Tudor bonnet is worn, made of claret velvet and decorated with silver cords and tassels.
27. The black undress gown for this degree is similar to that prescribed for the master's degree, save that it has two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide, and one inch apart, sewn horizontally above the arm-opening on each sleeve.
28. With the black undress gown a black academic cap is worn.

#### DOCTOR OF LAWS

29. The full-dress robe for the LLD degree is made of superfine woollen cloth (or appropriate synthetic material) coloured scarlet, and reaches almost to the ankles. It has bell-shaped sleeves reaching to the wrists. The facings on the front of the robe, the collar at the back and the lower halves of the sleeves, are made of purple silk (or appropriate synthetic material).
30. The hood (which is always worn with the full-dress robe and may be worn with the black undress gown) has a long rounded tippet, and a cowl with liripipe. It is made of scarlet material lined with purple.
31. With full-dress, a round Tudor bonnet is worn, made of claret velvet and decorated with silver cords and tassels.
32. The black undress gown for this degree is similar to that prescribed for the master's degree, save that it has two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide, and one inch apart, sewn horizontally above the arm-opening on each sleeve.
33. With the black undress gown a black academic cap is worn.

## OFFICIAL DRESS

34. The Chairman of the Court on ceremonial occasions wears an official robe introduced in the days of the Polytechnic. This is of black silk with gold-lace trimming and with a representation of St George embroidered on the flap-collar. With this robe a black academic cap, trimmed with gold-lace and with a gold tassel, is worn.
35. On ceremonial occasions, Members of the Court of Governors wear either the academic dress to which they are entitled, or an official robe made from black corded silk, with bell-shaped sleeves, the lower halves of which are of claret-coloured silk. The facings of this robe are also of claret silk and are trimmed with silver oak leaf lace. With this robe a black academic cap is worn.<sup>46</sup>

**Approved by the Court of Governors.  
5<sup>th</sup> July 1993**

## 4 The Fellows' robe

On 30 July Dr David Avery wrote to Bill Keen at Ede and Ravenscroft enquiring about designs for a University of Westminster Fellows' robe:

Dear Bill,

Rather unexpectedly, I have been asked to come up with suggestions for a new design for the robe worn by Fellows. (There is a feeling that they want something different from the existing robe for Fellows of the former PCL).

A couple of ideas suggest themselves to me, and I'd be grateful for your reactions.

Clearly, the shape of the robe should be the same as that for doctors and governors, with bell-shaped sleeves.

When it comes to colours and materials I am thinking of two possibilities to suggest to the Rector et al.

Either: (a) a dark-blue robe, with the lower part of the sleeves and the facings in claret-coloured silk, the outer edges of the facings being trimmed with 1 inch of silver lace (as in the robe for governors);

Or: (b) a robe of apple-blossom (or similarly embroidered) silver-grey damask, with the lower part of the sleeves and facings in claret-coloured silk.

(Personally I should prefer (b) as being in the University colours of silver-grey and claret, and because I think it could look splendid!)

With both robes, I suggest, the round velvet bonnet of claret with silver cords and tassels, would be appropriate.

I suspect that the problem with (b) would be, firstly, the materials (does such a material as embroidered silver-grey damask even exist) and secondly the cost (I suspect it would be considerably more than the cost of (a). On the other hand the Rector may feel the cost would be worth it for the effect!)

I'd be very interested in your reactions.

Yours sincerely,  
David Avery.

---

<sup>46</sup> There is a further note: 'Half-a-dozen of these robes are being presented to the University by Ede and Ravenscroft Ltd.'

Bill Keen, who at the time would have been dealing with enquiries for many of the new universities, wrote a note on the top of this letter asking Compton DeSouza to provide Dr Avery with patterns and an estimate of the costs.

Following this, Avery visited the shop in Chancery Lane and then Mr DeSouza wrote on 23 August as follows:<sup>47</sup>

Dear Dr Avery,

Further to your visit of 20<sup>th</sup> August 1993, we have pleasure in advising as follows:

a) Fellows robe of apple-blossom damask, style as governor's robe. Facings and lower point<sup>48</sup> of sleeve trimmed claret coloured silk. Facings trimmed 1" silver oakleaf lace.

b) Robe of dark blue all wool panama, style as governor's robe. Facings and lower part of sleeves trimmed claret coloured silk. Facings trimmed 1" silver oakleaf lace.

c) Hat for both robes: claret velvet bonnet with silver cord and tassel.

Enclosed please find sample of apple-blossom damask.

We hope you will find this information helpful and look forward to receiving your instructions.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times.

Yours sincerely,

C B DeSouza

Export and Robe Department Manager

David Avery replied on 28 August:

Dear Compton,

Many thanks for your letter and the samples concerning the proposed robe for Fellows of the University of Westminster.

I have now had the opportunity to discuss the options with the Rector. He favours the cream damask robe (and specifically the 'Truro' damask).<sup>49</sup> He has asked me to let you know this, and that he considers the price for the robe and the bonnet acceptable.

He has said that he would like a report to go to the next meeting of the Court of Governors in November, getting governors' confirmation.

That done, he anticipates placing an order for two robes and bonnets in the early part of next year when he has a clearer idea of the next two Fellows to be elected.

Again, many thanks for all your help (and to Bill Keen for his), this robe is going to look particularly fine.<sup>50</sup>

Yours sincerely,

David Avery.

---

<sup>47</sup> There is no mention, in DeSouza's reply, of the silver-grey apple blossom damask. Either he or Bill Keen had not noticed the specified colour, or, more likely I think, neither of them wanted to have such a thing specially woven for a small order. Thus when Dr Avery visited the Chancery Lane shop he would have been shown the cream apple-blossom damask which was held as a stock item. This fabric is used mostly for Doctors of Music degrees in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Dublin and Hull. However there is another factor: the apple-blossom damask was (and is) expensive and often unavailable. It seems, therefore, that Compton DeSouza showed other patterns of cream 'damask' to Dr Avery.

<sup>48</sup> This is a typist's error. It should read, 'part'.

<sup>49</sup> The discussion now turns to 'Truro damask'. The Truro fabric is, in fact, a brocade and is less expensive and more available than the apple-blossom figured damask.

<sup>50</sup> Because Dr Avery accepted cream brocade of a stock pattern instead of the silver-grey apple-blossom damask originally proposed, Fellows of the University of Westminster have ended up wearing a robe that is normally associated with Doctors of Music. It is a fine looking garment but is anomalous in a scheme which otherwise has a reasonable logic to it.

## 5     **Academical dress for music degrees**

During 1994 the subject of academical dress for new degrees in music was raised with Ede and Ravenscroft, and Bill Keen met with the Rector to discuss the proposed designs. These degrees were to be awarded by the University of Westminster to students studying at Trinity College of Music. Bill Keen wrote to Professor Burlin on 28 June:

Dear Professor Burlin,

Very many, belated, thanks for the excellent lunch at the Athenaeum and I am sorry for the delay in replying due to holiday and ceremonial commitments.

Enclosed is a chart of the current Trinity College of Music hoods together with some other shapes. We have highlighted your own style of hood.

Also enclosed are cuttings of the current silks used for the Music College and, as discussed with David Avery, the light lilac is a very fine silk with a nice sheen.

Hoping this is useful and we look forward to having further talks with you in due course.

Yours very sincerely,

WR Keen,

Managing Director.

A year later, on 8 June 1995, Dr Avery wrote to the Rector, Professor Terence Burlin, after they had both met Bill Keen for lunch:

Dear Terence:

### **Music Degrees**

As suggested on the 'phone, I have prepared a paper for the Court of Governors.

My recommendations are as we agreed at our lunch with Bill Keen of Ede and Ravenscroft.

BMus:            hood, black lined with lilac

MMus:            hood, purple lined with lilac

DMus:            hood, scarlet lined with lilac

(using the same shade of Lilac as currently used by Trinity College of Music)<sup>51</sup>

The enclosed paper spells out the technical details. If approved by the Court, the paper will need to be sent to Mr Keen to add to his file.

I am very pleased about the decision to offer an honorary fellowship this year. I really do think our new fellow's robe is quite one of the most beautiful of any of the robes of any university,<sup>52</sup> and I am looking forward to seeing it worn.

Yours ever,

David.

---

<sup>51</sup> These degrees in music were to be studied for at Trinity College of Music, then in Marylebone and now at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. Trinity College uses a purple and lilac colour scheme for its hoods.

<sup>52</sup> Students of academical dress will perhaps see in this phrase an echo of Dr Charles Franklyn's comment on some of his own designs for the Universities of Hull and Southampton. See the frontispiece in Frank W. Haycraft, *The Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges*, fifth edition by Franklyn and others (Lewes, Sussex: W. H. Baxter Ltd, 1972): Franklyn described the illustrations as 'four of the most beautiful and dignified hoods in the world'.

The paper was then sent to the Court of Governors:

**Report to the Court of Governors of the University of Westminster, from Dr D Avery  
3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1995**

**ACADEMIC DRESS FOR MUSIC DEGREES**

1. The Rector has asked me to prepare this paper seeking the approval of the Court to proposals for academic dress for the degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor of Music. These proposals have been discussed with Mr W. Keen, Managing Director of Ede and Ravenscroft Ltd.
2. The proposals conform to the patterns for the University's academic dress for other degrees already approved by the Court.
3. Bachelor of Music:
  - (a) the gown as worn for bachelors' degrees of the University, i.e. of black cotton, cord, or rayon, reaching below the calves, having a yoked collar and full open-fronted sleeves.
  - (b) the hood made according to the Dean Burgon pattern, without a tippet, of black material lined with lilac silk.
  - (c) with this dress a black academic cap (known as a mortar-board) is worn.
4. Master of Music:
  - (a) the gown as worn for masters' degrees of the University, i.e. of black cord or rayon, reaching below the calves, and having a yoked collar and long narrow sleeves, hanging almost the full length of the gown, closed and cut straight, and with arm slits just above the elbows.
  - (b) the hood is of the Dean Burgon shape, and made of purple material lined with lilac-coloured silk.
  - (c) with this dress a black academic cap is worn.
5. Doctor of Music:
  - (a) the black undress gown for this degree corresponds to that for the other higher doctorates of the University, being in the shape of the gown used by masters, but having by way of distinction two bands of black velvet, each one inch wide and one inch apart, sewn horizontally above the arm-opening on each sleeve. With this gown a black academic cap is worn.
  - (b) the full-dress robe for this doctorate is made of scarlet superfine woollen cloth reaching almost to the ankles, and with bell-shaped sleeves falling to the wrists. The facings, the collar and the lower halves of the sleeves are made of lilac silk.

- (c) the hood (which is always worn with the full-dress robe and may be worn with the black undress gown) has a long rounded tippet and a cowl with liripipe. It is made of scarlet cloth lined with lilac silk.
- (d) with full dress, a claret-coloured round bonnet, decorated with silver cords and tassels, is worn.

Following his report to the Court of Governors, David Avery was in touch again with Ede and Ravenscroft<sup>53</sup> because the next exchange of correspondence mentions a fur trim on the BMus. hood and some discussion which took place in June 1996. Most probably Ede and Ravenscroft would have suggested the fur so as to have distinguished the BMus. hood from existing hoods. On 22 October 1996, Dr Avery wrote again to Compton DeSouza:

Dear Compton,

**University of Westminster – music degrees**

Following our discussion last June about the academic dress for the new music degrees, there have been some developments, with Trinity College of Music suddenly taking an interest. (You will recall it will be their students who will be taking these new degrees.) As a result of the ensuing discussions, I am afraid it will be necessary to vary the hoods for both the bachelors' and masters' degrees. (The doctor of music robe and hood stay the same.)

The hood for the Bachelor of Music degree: Trinity College would like the white-fur trim to be 2 inches wide rather than 1 inch (i.e. Dean Burgon shape in black material, lined with lilac silk and edged with 2 inches of white fur – synthetic materials being quite acceptable, of course.)

There is not going to be a Master of Music degree but an M.A.(Music) degree. For this reason the hood we discussed when we met has to be scrapped. Agreement has been reached with Trinity College that the new hood for the MA(Mus.) degree should be: Dean Burgon shape in claret-coloured material, lined with lilac silk, the inside edge to be trimmed<sup>54</sup> with 2 inches of claret-silk. (Effectively this is a compromise between the University of Westminster's MA hood and Trinity College's desire to have something incorporating the lilac they currently use in their diploma-hoods.)

Some further information that might be of interest to you – the first MA(Mus.) students will be taking their degrees next year (1997). They will be 20 in number, according to Trinity College.

The first BMus. students will graduate in 1998. There will 100 of them in that year, rising to 120 graduates in 1999.

I understand that these new music degrees will continue to be awarded at Trinity College's own annual awards' ceremony and not at the University of Westminster's award ceremonies.

Is it possible to have specimen hoods made for these 3 new degrees (BMus., MA(Mus.), and DMus) by the end of November so that they can be seen by the appropriate people? I should be grateful if you could let me know when they are ready.

Many thanks!

Yours aye,

David

---

<sup>53</sup> A letter seems to have been lost.

<sup>54</sup> Faced.

## 6 Later records

There are no more letters in the Ede and Ravenscroft archive between Dr David Avery and Bill Keen. However, it is evident that Bill Keen had also exchanged letters with the Rector of the University of Westminster, Professor Terence Burlin,<sup>55</sup> who himself had a curious connection with the company. His father had worked for several years in the shop in Chancery Lane. In 1996, after Bill Keen's sudden death, the writer had the task of going through his business correspondence and found the following letter:

Dear Bill,

May I thank you for your hospitality last week. I greatly enjoyed the meal in the French restaurant and the convivial company.

It was a pleasure to visit the Ede & Ravenscroft shop again, after what I suppose was 45 years since my father worked there. My wife and sister have better memories than I and were sure there were some photographs of my father at Ede & Ravenscroft. I have found two of him dressing two gentlemen in some regalia.

Thank you for your kind invitation. Pam and I would like to join you and your wife for lunch after I retire. It will be a pleasure to anticipate.

Yours sincerely,

Terence

Terence Burlin

Rector.

Later I was asked to look after the academical dress requirements of several of the universities in and around London, particularly those that had been overseen by Bill Keen. It was in this way that I began to read more of the correspondence between Dr Avery and Mr Keen. Realising that Avery had an interest in academical dress; and having myself a liking for the handsome and dignified system of costume used at the University of Westminster, I invited him to Chancery Lane<sup>56</sup> and asked him to tell me all he could about it. Very little of what he said adds much to the picture already given. However the notes of the meeting are in my day-book for 1998 and this is what I recorded then:

*Background to the University of Westminster dress scheme.*

*Avery was leader of the Conservative group on the GLC and is on Court of Governors' at the University of Westminster. Says he pushed for Uni. Status for the PCL and mentioned the need for new ac. dress to Terence Burlin, the Rector, who said he thought they should carry on using the CNAA scheme. DA spoke to Geoffrey Copland, who was TB's deputy and successor. GC is a Merton man. DA told him they could wear traditional outfits or go really modern. TB said that, given the 1837 origins, they should have a trade. system and asked DA to produce some designs. DA wanted Oxon dress because Cantab is used so much. 'Oxford shapes will make our robes stand out.'*

*The Poly had sporting colours – claret and silver which had been George Caley's family livery colours. DA wanted the colours to pass into the new academical dress but TB insisted on the more traditional scarlet for other doctors. The designs for diplomas were specific to the Poly and TB wanted to keep these. Also there were to be degrees in music studied for at Trinity Coll. of Music and the lilac of their hoods was incorporated.*

---

<sup>55</sup> Professor Terence Burlin, DSc, PhD, CPhys, FinstP, CEng, FIEE, FIPSM, HonFCP.

<sup>56</sup> On the 24 February 1998.

*A subtle distinction between the gowns for undergraduate and postgraduate diplomas was made by use of the open forearm gown for the former and the pointed sleeve gown for the latter.*

*In early summer 1992 there was a big opening service for the Uni. in Westminster Abbey and question arose of what to do about a robe for non-grad governors. like Mary Hogg,<sup>57</sup> so a Governors' robe was designed.*

*TB didn't want any official robes and so Chairman of Court wears the old robe from the Poly days which was made for Sir Percy in the 1920s.*

*If we ever get round to having a Chancellor the robe will be of claret damask with silver ornaments and the hat would be a claret damask mortar board with a silver tassel.*

*DA has done his own water colours of the scheme.<sup>58</sup>*

By 2000 the Burgon Society had been formed and the Council were keen to contact people with a shared interest in (and some knowledge of) academical dress. Dr David Avery was an obvious choice. Attempts to contact him by telephone were unsuccessful.

In 2001 the Society was beginning to think about publications and I had been interested in writing up the story of academical dress in the University of Westminster. As Chairman of Council I wrote the following, on 26 October, to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster, Dr Geoffrey Copland:

Dear Dr Copland,

Some time ago I met with Dr David Avery to discuss the academical dress of the University of Westminster. As academic consultant to Ede and Ravenscroft I was concerned that the story of the history and evolution of your distinctive costume should not be lost (particularly since David was unwell at the time).

Several universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Hertfordshire, Lampeter, London and Manchester have published, or are in the process of publishing, small booklets which relate something of the history of their particular schemes of dress, and provide a means, through illustrations, by which those attending graduation ceremonies, and others who are interested, may make some sense of the colourful robes on display.

I should be interested in doing something similar for the University of Westminster and would invite your comments on this. It may well be that you do not have the time to consider this, in which case I should be most grateful if you would pass or copy this letter to the Registrar or other of your colleagues who may be interested. Please find enclosed a copy of the booklet which I wrote for the University of London. My idea for Westminster would be something on a smaller scale but there is an interesting story to tell – especially the link with the livery colours of your benefactor. The first half of the booklet could be bolted on to the story of the academical dress of any British university.

Recently I have been unable to contact Dr Avery and do hope that he is alive and well. If so it may be that we would work on the booklet together.

As well as working part-time for Ede and Ravenscroft I am also Chairman of the Burgon Society, a learned society founded to promote the study of academical dress. We seek to be a serious and scholarly group who try to keep alive an interest in the historic costume of universities in an age when academical dress has survived by becoming fancy dress: the well

---

<sup>57</sup> Quintin Hogg's great granddaughter, the Hon. Justice Dame Mary Hogg QC, who later received the LLD degree.

<sup>58</sup> At the time of writing the whereabouts of these are still unknown.

earned reward to delight and thrill parents and friends, as well as graduands, at degree ceremonies.

We have links with the major costume collections, and the departments of the history of dress at universities. We offer an examined Fellowship as well as awarding it *honoris causa*. At our recent Congregation at Charterhouse we awarded the FBS to Professor Graham Zellick, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, and Professor Aileen Ribeiro, Head of the History of Dress department at the Courtauld Institute, amongst others. Currently some of our Members are engaged in research into the academical dress of several universities around the world. The Bishop of London is our Patron.

We also wish to encourage the young and are associated with an Internet forum, on the Yahoo site, which has 200 members<sup>59</sup> around the world. Our website is at [www.burgon.org.uk](http://www.burgon.org.uk) and I do hope you may find the time to look it up.

You will have many pressing calls upon your time but I do hope you may find a moment to consider something a little more light-hearted. Vice-Chancellors stand in a long line back to the time when they and their students were clerics and their dress was the means by which those in authority regulated them. Those days have gone, but not a single British university has decided to abandon the curious bits of silk or fur by which we indicate our learning; and there is still so much to discover about this rather arcane area of special dress.

Yours sincerely,  
Philip Goff

On 20 November 2001 Dr Copland replied as follows:

Dear Mr Goff,

Thank you for your letter concerning academic dress at the University of Westminster. Firstly, I should tell you the sad news that David Avery died rather suddenly around New Year 2000. He had been unwell, as I think you know, but his death came unexpectedly to all of us. He had done much work for the University as you know, particularly in the design of our academic dress.

We do include in our graduation ceremony brochures a summary of the principles behind our academic dress which helps to keep alive that tradition and to explain the various codes that we read from this. At our ceremony yesterday one of our honorary doctors was interested in the different styles, colours and decorations worn by staff and I referred them to the internet address of the Burgon Society which you had kindly given me in your letter.

I am interested in ensuring that our successors are aware of matters concerning the history and traditions of the University and so some simple description of our academic dress and its meaning would be of interest. It is, of course, much simpler than many universities and having been designed only recently the memory is alive of the thinking and descriptions that we used at the time.

I am passing your letter and my reply to our Director of Marketing and Development for her further thoughts on the matter.

I am most grateful to you for your interest in this aspect of the University.

Yours sincerely,  
G.M. Copland  
Dr Geoffrey Copland  
Vice-Chancellor & Rector

I wrote to the Vice-Chancellor again in November 2003. In his reply of 8 March 2004, Dr Copland mentions having explored the matter with a number of current and former members of the University's staff and with his predecessor. He writes of his interest in the continuing quest for this information and promises to make contact should anything further come to light. However, the whereabouts of David Avery's papers and drawings

---

<sup>59</sup> 469 members on 1 February 2004.

relating to the scheme of academical dress in the University of Westminster are still unknown, and there is nothing of interest concerning this matter in the University's archives.

Meanwhile, the system of academical dress conceived by David Avery continues in this flourishing university and remains, in the opinion of this writer at least, one of the finest and most dignified schemes in the UK if not the world.

## 7 Postscript

Shortly after writing this I discovered that in common with many universities in the UK, the University of Westminster had introduced new foundation degrees in arts and science (FdA and FdSc). I have therefore submitted the following designs to the University and wait to hear whether they have been accepted.

Gown

*A black gown with long, pointed sleeves and a gathered yoke* (the existing Bachelors' gown)

Hoods

**FdA hood:** *A black stuff hood of the Oxford Burgon shape, faced inside the cowl with 2" of claret silk*

**FdSc hood:** *A black stuff hood of the Oxford Burgon shape, faced inside the cowl with 2" silver grey silk*

Hat

*A black square cap with black button and tassel* (mortarboard).

*With grateful thanks to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster and the Chairman of Ede and Ravenscroft for permission to publish letters and other papers relating to University of Westminster academical dress.*