

Togas gradui et facultati competentes: The Creation of New Doctoral Robes at Oxford, 1895–1920

by Alan J. Ross

1. Introduction

During the academic year 2009/10, 18,755 students in the United Kingdom completed a doctoral degree after either full- or part-time study.¹ The vast majority of these doctorates were obtained by young researchers immediately after the completion of a first degree or master's programme, and were undertaken in many cases as an entry qualification into the academic profession. Indeed, the PhD today is the *sine qua non* for embarkation upon an academic career, yet within the United Kingdom the degree itself and the concept of professionalized academia are less than a hundred years old.

The Doctorate of Philosophy was first awarded in Oxford in 1920, having been established by statute at that university in 1917. It was the latest in a series of new degrees to be established by Oxford within the space of twenty-five years as part of a wider movement in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century to recognize postgraduate study.² The DLitt and DSc had come into being at Oxford in 1900, several years after the introduction of similar degrees elsewhere.³ In the creation of the DPhil,⁴ however, Oxford was pioneering, preceding other British institutions by a year or so, and thus establishing a model of what this new degree should be. It was also the first to prescribe a form of its dress.

¹ Higher Education Statistics Agency <<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/dataTables/studentsAndQualifiers/download/quals0910.xls>>.

² The history of the introduction of postgraduate degrees in the UK has been expertly treated by Renate Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain: A Century of Struggle for Postgraduate Education* (Guildford, 1983). I will not replicate her work here *in extenso*, but, where necessary, I will introduce some of her arguments and conclusions in summary form. Readers who are interested in the wider history of the advent of postgraduate education are directed to her 1983 publication and the subsequent volume published in 2009: *The Development of the PhD Degree in Britain, 1917–1959 and Since: An Evolutionary and Statistical History in Higher Education* (Lewiston).

³ London had instituted the DSc in 1860 and the DLit in 1868 (Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, pp. 48–49); Cambridge followed in 1882 with the ScD and LittD (*ibid.*, p. 63).

⁴ The Oxonian term for the PhD.

The full dress robes of the DPhil and DSc/DLitt today are prescribed thus:⁵

DPhil: A full scarlet robe with bell-shaped sleeves, of which the body is made from scarlet cloth with facings and sleeves of blue silk.

DSc & DLitt: A full scarlet robe with bell-shaped sleeves, of which the body is made from scarlet cloth with facings and sleeves of grey silk.⁶

The robes have not changed since they were first introduced. The obvious question—why blue and grey?—cannot be answered conclusively by this paper. The relevant minutes have not been preserved in the University Archives, and the precise reasons are therefore lost for ever.⁷ This does not prevent us from speculating on the choice of colour, however, given what we do know about the political and academic reasons for the creation of the degrees themselves.

Furthermore, how the University went about choosing the dress for the new degrees is as important as the choice of colour itself. The period of 1895–1920 was the first time that this ancient institution had been engaged in developing new degrees (and new dress) under the influence, direct or indirect, of what was going on in other, newer, institutions within the UK. How the University’s legislature took these decisions and how the legislative process changed over these twenty-five years are potent questions when assessing the University’s attitude to its new dress.

This paper, then, is primarily concerned with two questions: how did the University legislate for new dress; and what rationale could lie behind both the successful and unsuccessful proposals in each case. The former can be answered with certainty whereas the latter will be based on informed speculation.

2. *Dramatis personae and sources*

Ever since the creation of the Laudian Code in 1636, Oxford had made some provision for academic dress in its statutes. Before any statute could be created or amended, three bodies had to give their assent: the Hebdomadal Council, Congregation and Convocation.⁸

⁵ The DM, DCL, DSc, DLitt and DPhil are also entitled to wear the undress gimp gown, while the DD wears a silk MA gown, with a full-shape scarlet hood lined with the same colour as the facings and sleeves of the full dress gown. They also have Convocation habit: a sleeveless scarlet coat part-lined with the same colour as the lining of the hood and fastened by two similarly coloured buttons, which is worn over the undress gown and with the hood (J. Venables, *Academic Dress of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 14–18). Since the same distinctive colour appears on the hood, habit and full dress robe, this paper will concentrate on the full-dress version.

⁶ Venables, p. 18.

⁷ See Section 2 for the problems with the sources.

⁸ The following description of the legislative structure of Oxford during this period is a synthesis drawn from B. Harrison, ‘Government and Administration’, in B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, Vol. VIII (Oxford, 1994), pp. 683–719 (pp. 683–

The Hebdomadal Council, chaired by the vice-chancellor,⁹ comprised twenty-three members, including the proctors and elected representatives of heads of house, professors and members of Convocation. It was responsible for formulating business which was subsequently to be put before the assemblies of Congregation and Convocation. The text of a new or amended statute would be agreed by the Hebdomadal Council and passed to Congregation then to Convocation for approval. It could also issue decrees which required ratification only by Convocation, without the intermediate step of Congregation. To achieve these ends it had the power to create and dissolve committees at will, as it was to do on the matter of academic dress in 1900.

Up until 1913, **Congregation** consisted of all members of the University administration, professors, regent MAs and resident members of Convocation. After 1913 resident members of Convocation who were not regent MAs ceased to be members. It received, deliberated and voted on any business put before it by the Hebdomadal Council. Furthermore, with a sufficient number of signatories it could suggest amendments which the Hebdomadal Council would be obliged to place upon the agenda for subsequent meetings. In addition to its legislative work, Congregation elected office holders within the University administration.

Convocation comprised all Masters of Arts, regent or otherwise, and all Doctors of Divinity, Civil Law and Medicine who had kept their names on their college books. It was the final arbiter of legislation, but its agenda was controlled by the Hebdomadal Council. Beyond that, it was responsible only for granting honorary degrees and electing the chancellor and Professor of Poetry. It had no powers to initiate its own business or offer amendments.

Although these three bodies may bear some superficial similarities to the Westminster system of Cabinet and two houses of Parliament, Congregation and Convocation were composed of independent college fellows who were not subject to party discipline and were unrestrained by obligations to an electorate. Furthermore, in effect, the same people attended Convocation as Congregation. There was little incentive for non-resident MAs to travel to Oxford in order to exercise their vote,¹⁰ and the pressures of college and faculty work kept several regent MAs away from both assemblies. As we shall see, at some of the meetings of Convocation when academic dress was on the agenda, fewer than twenty-five members were present of a possible total which numbered several thousand.

Rather than the Parliament at Westminster, Congregation and Convocation were 'more like an electorate, free to conduct periodic referenda on the executive's

90), and information on the website of the University Archives <<http://www.oua.ox.ac.uk/enquiries/congandconvthree.html>>.

⁹ Nominally, in fact, the Council was chaired by the chancellor, but by convention he did not attend (Harrison, p. 685).

¹⁰ Harrison, p. 687.

proposals.’¹¹ It thus had the potential to be fickle in its decisions, yet, as we shall see, often long-standing, experienced fellows attended debates when academic dress was on the agenda, and generally exercised a positive check upon the decisions of the Hebdomadal Council.

Before we explore how Oxford legislated for its new dress, a few words need to be said about the sources for this study. Frustratingly, no detailed minutes exist of the meetings of the Hebdomadal Council during this period. Those which are held in the University Archives contain only agendas, and lists of ‘Acts’ for each meeting, devoid of even the least-detailed note of the discussions which produced them. No minutes survive at all from the Hebdomadal Council’s subcommittees.

The weekly *Oxford University Gazette* contains the agendas and minutes of Congregation and Convocation. Between the Acts of the Hebdomadal Council and the information in the *Gazette*, it is possible to reconstruct a timeline for the legislative programme relating to the new degrees. It would be a dry study indeed which relied on these sources alone. Thankfully, in the *Oxford University Magazine* we have a source which adds some flesh to the procedural skeleton outlined by the *Gazette*. The *Magazine* was printed weekly and circulated within the University, but, unlike the *Gazette*, not by the University authorities. Its contributors seem largely to be the same interested college fellows who filled the benches of Congregation and Convocation. It provides a commentary on University business as it passed through each assembly, and is a crucial tool in establishing contemporary reaction to the creation of each successive set of robes.

3. Oxford’s graduate dress in 1895: who decides?

On the eve of the debate about postgraduate education in 1895, Oxford awarded four doctoral degrees, in Divinity, Civil Law, Medicine and Music.¹² For our purposes, this will be the only mention the DMus receives. The cream brocade (rather than scarlet cloth) of its full-dress robe reflects the status of its holder as a non-member of the University. It was designed to be a certificate of proficiency rather than a true academic degree.¹³ The other three by contrast were (and still are) ‘higher’ doctorates, conferred in recognition of several years of study, without the aid of a supervisor or tutor. Thus for a DD in 1895 the candidate had to wait a minimum of fifteen years after his admission as a regent MA.¹⁴ Similar conditions

¹¹ Harrison, p. 688.

¹² *Oxford University Calendar*, 1894, p. 73.

¹³ W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Academical Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 77ff.; N. Groves, ‘Historical English Academic Robes: A Basis for a “National” System’, *Burgon Society Annual*, 2004, pp. 59–62 (p. 60).

¹⁴ *Calendar*, 1896, p. 79.

applied for the DCL and DM, and all three required the intermediate step of the 'higher' bachelors' degree in each faculty (BD, BCL and BM respectively).¹⁵

By 1895, Oxford's statutes made minimal provision for the form of dress for these and all degrees:¹⁶

Doctores omnes cujuscunque facultatis, Baccalaurei etiam in Sacra Theologia, Medicina et Jure Civili, Magistri et Baccalaurei Artium, Baccalaurei itidem in Musica, togas gradui et facultati competentes hodie usitatas juxta exemplar in archivis repositum gerant [Statt. Tit. XIV §3 cl.1].¹⁷

Dress must be fitting to both faculty and degree, but exactly how is not spelt out explicitly. Instead, examples of dress held in the archives were to provide the precise patterns and colours. In practice, Divinity had a scarlet gown with bell-shaped sleeves, faced and covered half-way up the sleeve with black¹⁸ (as they still do today), the DCL and DM the same but with crimson silk¹⁹ in place of the black.²⁰ Similarly, the Bachelors' degrees in Law and Medicine shared a blue hood lined with white fur, whereas the BD had a black hood.²¹ Oxford therefore had no 'faculty' system. The fact that Medicine and Law share a form of dress at both Bachelor and Doctoral level that distinguishes them from Divinity points more towards a differentiation between degrees of a similar rank, with no further distinction between degrees of different faculties.²² The other obvious point is that doctors' full dress gowns are scarlet, regardless of faculty.

¹⁵ *Calendar*, 1895, pp. 74–75. The BD and DD could, however, be taken together by accumulation.

¹⁶ A full annotated and translated version of Statute XIV is given in the Appendix.

¹⁷ 'All Doctors of every faculty, and also the Bachelors in Divinity, Medicine, Civil Law, the Masters and Bachelors in Arts, and likewise the Bachelors in Music, shall wear gowns suitable to their degree and faculty, being those at present in use, after a pattern which is held in the Archives.'

¹⁸ The sleeves and facings of the gown have black velvet, whereas the black of the hood and Convocation habit is silk.

¹⁹ As attested by J. Wells, *The Oxford Degree Ceremony* (Oxford, 1906), p. 75, and the Convocation's proposed decree of 12 June 1900, cf. n. 52 below.

²⁰ This scheme is prescribed clearly in the Laudian Statutes of 1636. The form of the statutes quoted above was introduced in 1770 and replaced Laud's clear instructions relating to colour (G. R. M. Ward, *Oxford University Statutes*, 2 vols (London, 1845), II, pp. 9–12). Nevertheless, though the legislation had changed, practice had not: the dress prescribed by Laud formed the *exempla* retained in the archives.

²¹ The DCL and DM used the lay, lace gown, the BD (as a clerical degree) the silk MA gown. (In 1923 the BD was permitted to wear the lace gown, much to Charles Franklyn's chagrin: *Academical Dress from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Lewes, 1970), p. 169.)

²² B. Christianson, 'Oxford Blues: The Search for the Origins of the Lay Bachelors' Hood', *Burgon Society Annual*, 2003, pp. 24–28 (p. 25). It is not the 'muddle' that Franklyn suggests (p. 165). During some periods, however, attempts seem to have been made to differentiate the colour of the DCL and DM. The Laudian statute prescribes that the sleeves

4. The creation of the BLitt and BSc in 1895

The creation of the BLitt and BSc in 1895 was a tactful compromise. Eight years previously the Hebdomadal Council had tried and failed to create doctorates in Letters and Science.²³ There was a growing awareness in British universities that scientists should be properly trained, and research in both sciences and humanities ought to be encouraged by the awarding of higher degrees in these faculties. Particularly, university authorities were concerned that upon completing their first degrees British graduates were moving to the continent in order to continue their studies, notably in Germany.²⁴ Oxford was initially hesitant about creating doctorates where there was no history of ‘higher study’ and no intermediary higher bachelor’s degree.²⁵ The BLitt and BSc, however, were more palatable to Congregation, and were envisaged as comparable to the BD, BCL and BM.²⁶ The regulations relating to their dress reflected this. On 7 May 1895, Congregation approved the promulgated statutes creating the new research degrees, which also included a clause to be added to Statute XIV regarding academic dress:²⁷

Baccalaurei in Litteris vel in Scientia eodem vestitu quo Baccalaurei in Jure Civili vel Medicina induantur [Statt. Tit. XIV §3 cl.1].²⁸

and facings of the DCL and DM be of some ‘intermediate colour’, ‘in the sense that it was close to, but less vivid than, the dye used for the cloth of the gown’ (J. H. Baker, “‘Doctors wear scarlet’: Festal Gowns of the University of Cambridge’, *Costume*, 20 (1986), pp. 33–43 (p. 37)). They need not necessarily be the same shade, and indeed Christianson suggests that at some points in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were noticeably different (‘In the Pink: The Strange Case of Trinity College Dublin’, *Burgon Society Annual*, 2004, pp. 53–58 (p. 57)). He concludes, however (citing T. W. Wood, *The Degrees, Gowns, and Hoods of the British, Colonial, Indian, and American Universities and Colleges* (London, 1882)), that they coalesced into the same shade of crimson by 1880. Thus, by 1900, when the robes for the new DSc and DLitt were being discussed, the scheme outlined above (distinctions of rank, not faculty) would have appeared the norm.

²³ Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, p. 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁶ The BSc and BLitt would rank immediately below the BCL and BM, since Science and Letters were awarded through the faculty of Arts, not one of the higher faculties (*Calendar*, 1896, p. 73).

²⁷ *The Oxford University Gazette*, 25 (1894–95), p. 474.

²⁸ ‘Bachelors in Letters or in Science go dressed in the same dress as the Bachelors in Civil Law or Medicine.’ L. H. D. Buxton and S. Gibson in 1935 state ‘the Bachelors of Letters and Science have a similar hood [to the BCL and BM], but the colour is, or should be, not light blue, but grey blue.’ (*Oxford University Ceremonies* (Oxford), p. 40). It should not have been the grey-blue, as the statute remained unaltered beyond 1935. Elsewhere in their work, Buxton and Gibson attest a divergence in the colour schemes of several degrees by the mid-1930s: e.g. navy instead of dark blue for the DPhil (*ibid.*, p. 39). Any change must have originated with the tailors rather than the University and is probably connected

For the first time since the Laudian code, we find inscribed in statute some indication of what a particular degree's dress ought to look like (though by a process of comparison to an existing degree, not a prescription of a specific set of robes). The change in practice was necessitated by the University's wish that these new bachelors' degrees be on a par with the BCL and BM.²⁹ The alternative could have been just to add *Baccalaurei in Litteris vel in Scientia* to the list of degrees whose dress is dictated by the *exemplar* in the archives; but this did not happen. It also confirms the practice at this point that analogous degrees of different faculties wear the same dress. This custom was to be extended when the University made the same provision at the introduction of the BPhil in 1946.³⁰

The creation of the BSc and BLitt for the first time enabled those who did not hold an Oxford BA to read for higher degrees.³¹ Oxford, however, did not permit the wearing of 'foreign' academic dress until 1971.³² What did these new members of the University wear whilst they studied for the higher bachelors' degrees? It seems the simple, and yet distressing answer was the undergraduate commoner's gown.³³ It was a situation that was not to be rectified till 1917.

with the loss of the chest containing the set of *exempla*, admitted (and rectified) by Douglas Veale, the University registrar, only in 1957 (which he states in his foreword to the first edition of D. R. Venables and R. E. Clifford, *Academic Dress of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1957), p. 3). Wells (p. 74) suggests the University had lost the chest by the end of the nineteenth century.

²⁹ See Christianson, 'Oxford Blues', for the evolution of the lay bachelors' hood. 'Blue at Oxford became the mark of a bachelor's degree in a faculty other than Arts or Divinity' (ibid., p. 25).

³⁰ *Gazette*, 77 (1946–47), p. 114: '*Baccalaurei in Litteris, vel in Scientia **vel in Philosophia** eodem vestitu quo Baccalaurei in Jure Civili vel Medicina induantur.*' This remained the prescription for the BPhil until the abolition of Statute XIV in 1970. The first edition of Venables and Clifford's guide to Oxford dress in 1957, however, prescribes a hood 'of dark blue navy ribbed silk lined with white silk' (p. 22). It seems likely that the change was made during Veale's re-creation of the set of *exempla* of dress for the archives in 1957. The statute, however, was never altered.

³¹ Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, p. 58.

³² In 1970 the University retired Statute XIV and confined rules of academic dress instead to the vice-chancellor's regulations. The following year a clause permitting 'foreign' dress was introduced (see Appendix).

³³ When promoting the new DPhil to the American market in 1918, E. M. Walker ('The New Doctorate for Research Students the University of Oxford', *The American Oxonian*, 5 (1918), pp. 43–47 (p. 44)) suggests that for the first time advanced students who do not hold the Oxford BA will be entitled to a suitable gown which would distinguish them from undergraduate commoners (discussed in more depth in Section 6). Until 1873, Oxford had provided a gown for the Student of Civil Law, who was studying for the BCL but did not have a BA, but the precedent was not followed for the first of the new advanced students (see Section 6 for more on the Student of Civil Law).

5. The creation of the DSc and DLitt in 1900

It took only five years after the creation of BLitt and BSc before their respective doctorates found their way onto the statute book. The DLitt and DSc were conceived as full doctorates, but of a lower standing than the DCL and DM. All four degrees required the submission of already-published work,³⁴ yet to attain the DCL took a total of eleven and a half years and the DSc/Litt only eight and a half.³⁵ As we have seen, the differing status of the BLitt/BSc and the BCL/BM did not preclude their wearing the same dress (they were all of a very different nature from the 'lower' BA). Would the same 'pairing up' apply for the new doctorates?

The legislation could have made a similar addition to Statute XIV as it did for the BLitt and BSc, namely that the Doctors of Science and Letters wear the same dress as the Doctors of Civil Law. Instead, when it promulgated the new statutes on 5 December 1899, the Hebdomadal Council left the final decision in the hands of Convocation. The text promulgated before Congregation reads as follows:

Doctores in Litteris vel Scientia eo vestitu utantur quem statuto vel decreto ordinare Convocationi placuerit [Stat. Tit. XIV §3 cl.1].³⁶

This was not as dramatic a democratization of the dress code as it may initially seem. Convocation had the power merely to approve or reject any motion put before it by the Hebdomadal Council, and could not offer its own amendments.³⁷ The choice of dress, then, would originate with the Hebdomadal Council.

This was unacceptable to some members of Congregation, and on 20 February 1900 T. E. Holland, Chichele Professor of International Law and Diplomacy at All Souls College, seconded by H. Goudy, also of All Souls, proposed the following amendment in Congregation:

The robes and hoods of Doctors of Letters and Science shall be similar to those of Doctors of Civil Law or Medicine, except that for shades of scarlet³⁸ there shall be substituted shades of **violet** in the case of Doctors in Letters and shades of **yellow** in the case of Doctors of Science.³⁹

³⁴ *Calendar*, 1901, pp. 74–78.

³⁵ For the DSc/Litt: two years for the BSc/Litt then a further twenty-six terms for the doctorate. For the DCL: twenty-six terms from the BA for the BCL then a further five years for the doctorate. At this time there were four terms in the academic year. See *Calendar*, 1901, pp. 72–79. Theology, Medicine and Law remained 'higher faculties', even though Letters and Science now had their own doctorates.

³⁶ 'Doctors in Letters or Science will use that dress which it pleases Convocation to prescribe by statute or decree' (*Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 174).

³⁷ See Section 2, above.

³⁸ *Sic*. The colour of the DCL is usually described as crimson. Cf. n.19 above.

³⁹ *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 311; my emphasis.

If carried, for the first time since 1770 the detailed form of dress for a specific degree would have been set out in statute, thus representing a major shift in Oxford's attitude to the legislation of its dress.

Professor Holland's scheme set out the important precept that a doctoral robe should be scarlet.⁴⁰ Yet the variation in colour of the sleeves and facings breaks with the idea that degrees of the same status (even in different faculties) share the same dress. One might have expected him, as a historian of the University,⁴¹ to be aware of the traditional scheme. However, it seems Holland was looking further afield. The University of London was the first to establish degrees in science in the 1860s, allotting 'yellow-gold' as a faculty colour to the BSc and DSc.⁴² By 1900 Victoria Manchester was also awarding the DSc with a hood lined with gold;⁴³ Glasgow chose gold for science at the reintroduction of hoods in 1868, and Edinburgh yellow.⁴⁴ It appears Holland took his inspiration for the DSc colour from the faculty systems of other British universities which had preceded Oxford in introducing this degree.⁴⁵

However, the same cannot be said for the choice of violet. The Cambridge LittD was lined with scarlet after 1889,⁴⁶ whereas London used russet brown, marking the London DLit out as the doctorate of the Faculty of Arts.⁴⁷ Existing DLitts were not Holland's inspiration. The editor of the *Magazine* drew a parallel with the robes of the county court judge.⁴⁸ It is quite possible that an established lawyer like Professor Holland would have made this connection, but why he thought it a suitable choice for the DLitt we shall never know.⁴⁹

Despite depriving itself of any future say in the choice of robes, Congregation rejected Professor Holland's amendment by 93 votes to 39. In an editorial before the vote took place, the *Magazine* gives us a clue why: 'we shall not be thought

⁴⁰ A tradition observed at Oxford and Cambridge since the sixteenth century (Baker, p. 33).

⁴¹ T. E. Holland, *The Origin of the University of Oxford* (London, 1891).

⁴² B. Christianson, 'Lined with Gold: London University and the Colour of Science', *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 5 (2005), pp. 80–89 (p. 81).

⁴³ Victoria used the same dress for its DSc, DLitt and DPhil, however (Christianson, 'Lined with Gold', p. 83). (*N.B.* the Manchester DPhil was a higher doctorate akin to the DLitt at Oxford; see N. Groves, 'The Development of Academic Dress for Doctors of Philosophy in the British Isles', *forthcoming*).

⁴⁴ Christianson, 'Lined with Gold', p. 85.

⁴⁵ Or indeed American or German institutions (for the USA see G. C. Leonard, *The Cap and Gown in America* (Albany, NY, 1896), p. 12; for Germany see Christianson, 'Lined with Gold', p. 86). In creating the DSc, however, Oxford was responding to a British movement to recognize research in science, and so it seems likely that Holland had the dress of the British universities then awarding degrees specifically in mind.

⁴⁶ Baker, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Franklyn, pp. 199–200.

⁴⁸ 19 (1901), p. 2.

⁴⁹ He had been called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1863.

unsympathetic if we prophesy that many M.A.s will continue to prefer the black gown to the new glories (be they purple or yellow) which may be devised for them.' Holland's scheme was too garish. Perhaps, also, Oxford was not willing to adopt colour schemes which might have been associated with other British universities or institutions.

The original form of the statute (leaving the final choice to a decree of Convocation) was passed by Congregation on 13 May 1900.⁵⁰ There now began a tussle between the Hebdomadal Council and Convocation which lasted six months and saw two proposed sets of colours rejected. The Hebdomadal Council convened a subcommittee for academic dress,⁵¹ and on the 12 June 1900 Convocation was asked by Council to approve a decree:

That Doctors of Letters and Doctors of Science wear the black silk gown used by Doctors of Civil Law; that they wear the Convocation habit used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of black buttons for red, and the hood and full dress gown used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of **black silk** for crimson silk.⁵²

Thus at least we find the endorsement of Professor Holland's precept that the new doctors should be treated as full doctors and wear a scarlet dress gown. Unlike Professor Holland, however, the Hebdomadal Council observes the convention that degrees of the same status use the same dress, but the choice of colour is remarkable: from a distance the holder of the newest and most junior doctorate would be almost indistinguishable from a Doctor of Divinity, Oxford's most senior degree. The DD wears a black scarf with his scarlet robe and usually a cassock underneath;⁵³ but the similarity, if it was not noticed during the preceding meeting of the Hebdomadal Council, was certainly brought to the vice-chancellor's attention before the meeting of Convocation on 19 June: the vice-chancellor vetoed the decree proposed by the Hebdomadal Council, which he himself chaired.⁵⁴

This must have been an embarrassing volte-face, but Hebdomadal Council and its academic dress subcommittee had not learned its lesson, for a week later, on 26 June, they placed before Convocation a new decree:

That Doctors of Letters and Doctors of Science wear the black silk gown used by Doctors of Civil Law; that they wear the Convocation habit used by Doctors of Civil

⁵⁰ *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 483.

⁵¹ No minutes of this committee survive in the University Archives.

⁵² *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 654; my emphasis. Holland had failed to make any provision for undress or Convocation habit, which may have been another factor in the failure of his amendment.

⁵³ Buxton and Gibson, p. 38.

⁵⁴ *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 688. The resemblance with the DD was commented on in the *Magazine* on 13 June (18 (1900), p. 360).

Law with the substitution of black buttons for red, and the hood and full dress gown used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of **scarlet silk** for crimson silk.⁵⁵

Again we find the concept that the same status receives the same dress, but the distinction between crimson and scarlet seems to have been too nugatory for Convocation, which threw out this proposal 14–7.⁵⁶

It was now the end of Trinity Term, and with no more meetings of Convocation scheduled before the annual Encaenia, Charles F. Chandler of Columbia University was forced to receive his honorary DSc in his native academic dress!⁵⁷

The matter was not resolved until the following Michaelmas when the vice-chancellor personally proposed a new form of the decree at Convocation on 13 November, with an attached note:

That Doctors of Letters and Doctors of Science wear the black silk gown used by Doctors of Civil Law; that they wear the Convocation habit used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of buttons of **neutral grey** for red, and the hood and full dress gown used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of **neutral grey** silk for crimson silk.

Note—Specimens of the hood and full dress gown will be exhibited in the Apodyterium⁵⁸ on the day on which the Decree is proposed. If the Decree is passed an exemplar of the new gown and hood will, in accordance with the Statute,⁵⁹ be placed in the Archive Room.⁶⁰

The creation of the specimen robes has an air of finality about it and suggests that Council expected this decree to pass, and pass it did *nemine contradicente*.⁶¹ As has already been noted, the discussions in the Hebdomadal Council which led to this and the previous two forms of the decree are lost to us, but the length of the contest with Convocation, the awkward climb-down over the choice of Divinity-black, the defeat of scarlet, and the embarrassing existence of several robeless holders of the new degrees, suggest that the vice-chancellor and the Council resorted finally to as

⁵⁵ *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 717.

⁵⁶ Note the small numbers in attendance. One commentator in the *Magazine* (19 (1901), p. 123) criticizes the similarity between this option and the dress of the DCL/DM, and goes on to note ‘this second design of hood was, though no one remarked it, identical with that of the Cambridge Litt.D.’

⁵⁷ ‘A coat of many colours, orange and blue predominating’, the *Magazine* notes (19 (1901), p. 2).

⁵⁸ The ante-chamber of Convocation House.

⁵⁹ The statute in fact does not prescribe this for the new doctorates. It is an extrapolation from the less specific prescription of the other forms of graduate dress.

⁶⁰ *Gazette*, 31 (1900–01), p. 100; my emphasis

⁶¹ *Gazette*, 30 (1899–1900), p. 132.

bland and unobjectionable colour as possible.⁶² Even the epithet *neutral* may offer some clue to their exasperation and wish for compromise.⁶³

Convocation had admirably served its purpose of regulating the decisions of the Hebdomadal Council, by forcing it to rethink hasty choices which would have upset the Oxford tradition of dress by rank, not faculty. The Council, on the other hand, despite its reliance on a subcommittee for academic dress, clearly did not think through the implications of their earlier suggestions. It was a mistake that would not be repeated with the DPhil.

By the end of Michaelmas Term 1900, Oxford for the first time since 1770 had legislation prescribing the exact form of dress for a particular degree, albeit by decree rather than statute.⁶⁴

6. The DPhil and the ‘advanced student’—1917

The main purpose of the DLitt and DSc was the encouragement of research in humanities and science, but the senior nature of the new doctorates (especially the time required before one could supplicate for them) still drove recent graduates of the BA abroad to find research training and a doctoral degree achievable within less time.⁶⁵ Congresses held in London in 1912 and Oxford in 1916 attended by representatives of the majority of British universities expressed these views and were particularly concerned that American students continued to move to Germany to read for the PhD.⁶⁶

Having dragged its feet over the DLitt and DSc, Oxford took the lead in preparing the way for a doctorate which was attainable after a prescribed course of study under the guidance of a supervisor, and which could be completed within three years. Oxford’s initial plan was to downgrade the DSc and DLitt to fit these prescriptions and promulgated new statutes accordingly in November 1916.⁶⁷ Had

⁶² As a contributor to the *Magazine* suggests: ‘the House, weary of the struggle, or perhaps intimidated by the array of eminent persons present who had already qualified for the new degrees, accepted a design of hood which will probably, after a little exposure to the weather, become something very like that which marks the D.D. of Cambridge.’ Writing forty years later Charles Oman (an opponent of the new doctorates at the time) notes: ‘I cannot admire their slate-coloured hoods, which look dull amongst the brighter hues of the other faculties in assemblies and processions’ (*Memories of Victorian Oxford* (London, 1941), p. 242).

⁶³ Buxton and Gibson (p. 38) and Franklyn (p. 165) were later to ameliorate it as ‘*French grey*’. ‘*Neutral*’ was dropped in the 5th edition of Venables and Clifford in 1979 (p. 16).

⁶⁴ Ten members of the University were granted the DSc and three the DLitt in Michaelmas 1900 (*Calendar*, 1902, p. 165).

⁶⁵ Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, p. 120.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 124.

⁶⁷ *Gazette*, 47 (1916–17), pp.145–46.

these been passed, there would have been no need to create any new doctoral dress—the ‘new’ DScs and DLitts would have worn the same robes as the old.

Hand in hand with this new research doctorate, however, was the creation of a new status of student: the ‘advanced student’ was to be a graduate of Oxford or another approved institution, and enrolled on a course of study which was to lead to the new doctorates.⁶⁸ Prior to 1895, students reading for a higher degree would necessarily have held an Oxford BA,⁶⁹ and therefore wore the BA dress. Following the opening up of higher bachelors (and then the DSc and DLitt) to graduates of other universities there was no provision made for what non-Oxford graduates should wear.

Historically, Oxford had made ample provision in its statutes for all classes of undergraduates. William Gibson gives a concise overview of the different forms of dress for the nobleman, gentleman commoner, commoner, battelar, servitor and scholar in his article of 2004.⁷⁰ Oxford’s undergraduates were clearly distinguished in their dress according to their rank, and the level of fee they paid. Unlike for graduate dress, Oxford retained its Laudian prescriptions for its undergraduates in the statutes into the nineteenth century. The relevant section of Statute XIV, which was in operation for most of the nineteenth century is quoted in the Appendix.

Only once had Oxford prescribed a separate set of dress for a student reading for a particular higher degree: the Student of Civil Law and the Student of Medicine were equipped with gown and hood prescribed by statute, but both had been abolished in 1873.⁷¹ The new statutes of 1917 finally made provision for graduates of other universities who were to be enrolled as advanced students, ending the rather undignified situation they had been in since 1895:

Advanced Students who are not graduates of the University shall wear the gown customarily worn by gentleman commoners.⁷²

F. C. S. Schiller immediately wrote in the *Magazine* that ‘no doubt the decorative costume, *not* at present (*pace* the Statute) “customarily worn by gentleman commoners” will be a real attraction’.⁷³ His view will be shared by many readers of this article: the only forms of undergraduate dress worn in Oxford at the end of the nineteenth century were the commoner’s and scholar’s gowns (the former now reduced from their ankle-length state to the waistcoat-like form still worn today).

⁶⁸ *Gazette*, 47 (1916–17), pp. 145–46.

⁶⁹ *Calendar*, 1894, p. 74.

⁷⁰ ‘The Regulation of Undergraduate Academic Dress at Oxford and Cambridge, 1660–1832’, *Burton Society Annual*, 2004, pp. 26–41. See also Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 91–101.

⁷¹ They are last mentioned in Statute XIV §3 cl. 6 of 1873 (p. 173). For the form of dress, see Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 91–92.

⁷² *Gazette*, 47 (1916–17), p. 145. This was not an addition to Statute XIV, but part of the new statute creating the advanced student status.

⁷³ *Magazine*, 35 (1917), p. 105.

But the Hebdomadal Council was in some senses correct: the distinction in dress between noblemen, gentleman commoners and commoners was still retained by the statutes in 1917, and indeed it would be until Statute XIV was scrapped in 1970.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the prescription for the new advanced student radically altered the distinctions between the dress of junior members from that of class to status. It was also an admission that the nobleman's and gentleman commoner's gowns had fallen completely out of use, and their prescriptions instead were being put to better employment.

If there was no gentleman commoner's gown in existence in 1917, it is difficult to work out from the statute alone what the difference is between the gentleman commoner and commoner (excluding the issue of the cap, which is not mentioned in the 1917 statute):

*Superioris ordinis commensales togam talarem sericam sive ex quovis panno nigro confectam cum ornamentis secundum exemplar...caeteri vero non graduati, quotquot non sunt de fundatione collegii alicuius, vel aulae alicujus scholares vel clerici, togam talarem ex quovis penno nigro non serico confectam, cum ornamentis secundum exemplar... gerant.*⁷⁵

It is hard to imagine the tailors of Oxford using silk during the First World War when the statutes allowed them to use any sort of cloth; and the type of ornament may well have been open to interpretation.⁷⁶ If there was to be any difference, it was probably of length. As already mentioned, by this stage the commoner's gown had in practice ceased to be *talaris* ('ankle-length'), and one suspects that this was the only major distinction between the advanced student and commoner. Indeed, two years later, Congregation altered the statute, removing the reference to the gentleman commoner and prescribing that the advanced student shall wear:

a long gown of black stuff, whose shape and ornaments shall be in accordance with a pattern to be approved by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors, and preserved in the University Registry.⁷⁷

And such has the advanced student's gown remained since. The recognition of the non-Oxford graduate who matriculated as an advanced student was an important step in Oxford's change in attitude to outsiders. Writing in the *American Oxonian*

⁷⁴ The statute does allow noblemen to wear either a commoner's or gentleman commoner's gown, however, as alternative to the golden robe (see Appendix).

⁷⁵ 'The commoners of the superior order are to wear the long silk gown, or one made of any kind of black cloth, together with ornaments according to the pattern ... but other undergraduates [i.e. commoners] ... are to wear the long black gown of any black cloth, but not silk, with ornaments according to the pattern' Stat. XIV §3 cl.4.

⁷⁶ Even today, the author has noted, some commoners' gowns have streamers of the same breadth and pattern as those of the advanced student gown, just cut short to reach to the waist.

⁷⁷ *Gazette*, 50 (1919–20), p. 151. 19 November 1919.

the following year, the Revd E. M. Walker advertised the new advanced student status with particular reference to the improved state of postgraduate dress:

The post-graduate student will no longer have to enter the University as an ordinary undergraduate. He will still have to matriculate as a member of a college, or as a non-collegiate student; but he will no longer have to matriculate as a freshman. A new status, that of advanced student, has been instituted, and it is marked out by a gown of its own. The advanced students will not be regarded as ordinary undergraduates, either by the University or by the Colleges.⁷⁸

Although the proposals for advanced student status met little resistance, Congregation objected to the downgrading of the DSc and DLitt as an affront to current holders of the degrees. Its simple solution was to retain the proposed conditions for the new degree but to rename it the DPhil.

With the change of title for the new degree, nobody noticed that there was now the need to establish the method by which the dress should be prescribed. After Congregation approved the new statutes for the DPhil on 21 February 1917, the Hebdomadal Council, this time without constituting a subcommittee for academic dress,⁷⁹ placed a decree before Convocation on 19 June:

That Doctors of Philosophy wear the black silk gown used by Doctors of Civil Law, and the hood and the full dress gown used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of **dark blue silk** for crimson silk; and that Doctors of Philosophy who are members of convocation wear the Convocation habit used by Doctors of Civil Law with the substitution of buttons of **dark blue** for red; the dark blue silk being in accordance with a pattern kept in the University Registry.⁸⁰

Ahead of the debate, Reginald Poole, Keeper of the Archives, objected in the *Magazine* that the decree 'proposes to array the new Doctors of Philosophy in all the panoply of Doctors of Civil Law with a variation of colour.'⁸¹ In the debate itself, Professor Holland (the proposer of violet and yellow for the DLitt and DSc back in 1900) tried to argue down the motion. Commentary in the *Magazine* suggests obliquely that objections were made on the grounds that this most junior doctorate should not have scarlet robes, thus marking it out as a full doctorate.⁸² Opponents were not concerned about the proposed colour for the facings and sleeves.⁸³ Despite these objections, the decree passed comfortably on a vote, *placets* 30 *non placets* 11. Council had thus followed the same process as it had done for the DSc and DLitt, but it had neglected to add the necessary provision to

⁷⁸ Walker, p. 44. The subsequent edition records letters of commendation from the heads of several American colleges, among them Yale.

⁷⁹ No record of one survives amongst the Hebdomadal Council's agendas.

⁸⁰ *Gazette*, 47 (1916–17), p. 564; my emphasis.

⁸¹ *Magazine*, 35 (1917), p. 309.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Statute XIV to enable it to do this. It only did so in retrospect, four months after the colour scheme had been created, amending Statute XIV to read ***Doctores in Philosophia** et Doctores in Litteris vel Scientia eo vestitu utantur quem statuto vel decreto ordinare Convocationi placuerit.*⁸⁴ The creation of the DPhil robes, which seemed so free of trouble in comparison to the events of 1900, was entirely illegal.

With no record of the debate in Hebomadal Council or Congregation, the choice of dark blue remains mysterious. Yet, we should take into consideration the Council's intention that this new degree should attract Americans away from PhD programmes in Germany to study instead at Oxford.⁸⁵ From the seventeenth century, German universities tended to observe a system of faculty colours on the trimmings of the robes of deans of faculty and professors.⁸⁶ Either violet or dark blue was the traditional colour for Philosophy, with Düsseldorf, Heidelberg, Hamburg, Mainz and Regensburg all using blue. In his new scheme for a national German system, based partly upon the distinctive colours of the ancient faculties, Thorsten Hauler chooses blue for Philosophy.⁸⁷ Though violet is used for philosophy at some institutions (e.g. Munich and Rostock),⁸⁸ it also appears as a colour for Theology at many of the universities which use blue for Philosophy (e.g. Heidelberg and Kiel). Dark blue, however, is only ever used of Philosophy.

If Oxford did adopt dark blue in imitation of the German colour of Philosophy,⁸⁹ did it risk the importing the concept of faculty colours?⁹⁰ In practice, the DPhil was open to researchers of any field of science or humanities, yet candidates would supplicate for their degrees in the Faculty of Arts.⁹¹

The imitation of the German form of dress certainly seems to correspond well with the University's intention of competing with the German PhD; but is it likely

⁸⁴ 'Doctores in Philosophia and Doctors in Letters or Science will use that dress which it pleases Convocation to prescribe by statute or decree.' 30 October 1917, *Gazette*, 48 (1917–18), pp. 75–76; my emphasis.

⁸⁵ The vice-chancellor had agreed in the conference of 1916 to 'divert the stream of American Advanced Students from Germany to this country' as soon as possible. *Magazine*, 35 (1917), p. 112. See also Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, pp. 132–34.

⁸⁶ H. Smith and K. Sheard, *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World*, 3 vols (Cape Town, 1970), pp. 1035–108, *passim*; T. Hauler, 'Academical Dress in Germany: Part I—A Historical Outline and the Development of a New System', *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 5 (2005), pp. 13–35 (p. 19).

⁸⁷ Hauler, pp. 27; 30.

⁸⁸ Which in turn use black for Theology (Smith and Sheard, pp. 1035–108, *passim*).

⁸⁹ Although blue is associated with philosophy in Spain and Portugal, dark blue is specific to Germany (Christianson, 'Oxford Blues', p. 26, n. 8).

⁹⁰ This was certainly a concern of some members of Congregation (e.g. *Magazine*, 35 (1917), pp. 112–13).

⁹¹ Buxton and Gibson, p. 79. My thanks to Bruce Christianson for drawing my attention to this. Philosophy itself was to remain a sub-faculty of Literae Humaniores until 2001 (Mander: <http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/the_faculty/history_of_philosophy>).

that the Hebdomadal Council was sufficiently aware of the German scheme? This was the same body whose predecessor seventeen years previously had made such a hash of the DLitt and DSc robes, apparently taking little notice even of their local system in Oxford. Furthermore, none of the members of the Hebdomadal Council in 1917 had discernable connections with Germany.⁹² The majority had read Greats and many were priests of the Church of England. None of the scientists on Council held a continental PhD.

The one member of the Hebdomadal Council who emerges from the otherwise impersonal accounts of promulgations and voting found in the *Gazette* is the Revd Edward Mewburn Walker, fellow and later provost of The Queen's College. In 1917 he served as one of the six members of Hebdomadal Council elected by Convocation.⁹³ He seems to have been pro-American, or at least attuned to the financially and politically lucrative nature of attracting Americans to study at Oxford. He was to write the article in the *American Oxonian* in 1918, quoted above, advertising the new degree to the American market, and was Oxford's representative on the British Universities Mission to the USA in 1918. In the same year he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Michigan.⁹⁴

It was Walker who presented the decree to Convocation and who defended it from attacks by Reginald Poole.⁹⁵ It is tempting, therefore, in the absence of a subcommittee for academic dress in 1917, to credit Walker with the creation of the dark blue scheme. If it was so, it seems likely that he intended the DPhil robe not just to imitate its German faculty model, but to be a recognizable PhD to its anticipated recipients from the United States. For the American Intercollegiate Code, established in 1895, prescribes dark blue as the faculty colour for Philosophy.⁹⁶ Even in the few universities which did not adhere to the code, blue usually made some appearance on the PhD dress, for example at Harvard where the PhD is distinguished by dark blue 'crow's feet' on the facings.⁹⁷

⁹² As is revealed by a search of the names recorded by the *Calendar* in *Who Was Who* (A & C Black, 1920–2008; online edn, Oxford University Press, Dec. 2007).

⁹³ *Calendar*, 1917, p. 14.

⁹⁴ 'WALKER, Rev. Edward Mewburn', in *Who Was Who* <<http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U233029>>, accessed 3 June 2011, and <<http://www.umich.edu/pres/committees/honorary1836-1989.pdf>>.

⁹⁵ 'Mr Walker, who moved the decree for the new garment, wisely did not attempt to reply to the points made by the Keeper of the Archives; he preferred to convulse the House with laughter by jokes which, whatever their merit, were at least effective' (*Magazine*, 35 (1917), p. 324).

⁹⁶ That is, at this stage, for the PhD degree regardless of subject (Leonard, p. 12; Smith and Sheard, p. 1529). Perhaps blue was chosen in imitation of the German convention. (Full investigation of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this paper. See also Christianson, 'Lined with Gold', p. 86, for further speculation.)

⁹⁷ Smith and Sheard, p. 1605.

One possibility does not exclude the other, and Walker, if it really was he, may have lighted upon the happy coincidence of the German and American colour schemes to justify the use of dark blue in the DPhil robe. Oxford, then, had become outward looking, matching its prescriptions on dress to the ideology of its newest degree and taking inspiration from the use of colour schemes at universities outside the UK.

Despite its intentions to attract Americans, Oxford conferred its first DPhil upon a Kiwi holder of the Oxford BA, James Gatenby of Jesus College in Hilary Term 1920.⁹⁸

7. Aftermath

Oxford was swiftly followed by the other British universities in adopting the PhD during the following two years.⁹⁹ If Oxford led the way in bringing the PhD to the UK, its chosen form of dress for the new doctorate did not stand as an *exemplum* to other institutions. In university councils around the country, the same debates were held; what is the PhD; a glorified master's degree, or a downgraded doctorate? The answer was not always the same as at Oxford, and the result for the PhD's dress was the tripartite system found today: Oxford's 'full scarlet'; Cambridge's glorified master's gown (black with coloured facings); or London's halfway house—doctoral robes in a colour other than scarlet.¹⁰⁰

Oxford now had four levels of academic doctorate, each with its own colour scheme: Divinity—black; Civil Law and Medicine—crimson; Letters and Science—neutral grey; and Philosophy—dark blue. Having eschewed a faculty system for so long, Oxford flirted with the idea in the latter half of the twentieth century. Several changes have been made to the higher bachelors' degrees. First, as already noted in Section 4, the BPhil was created in 1946, initially for candidates in PPE, then latterly for other arts subjects.¹⁰¹ Initially it took on the fur-lined blue hood of the other higher bachelors.¹⁰² The idea of a higher bachelor's degree became unfashionable in the 1970s, and all three were renamed as masters', the

⁹⁸ *Calendar*, 1921, p. 226. Simpson (*How the PhD Came to Britain*, p. 140) is incorrect in stating that Lakshman Sarup of Balliol was the first recipient in Trinity Term 1919; Sarup had petitioned the Hebdomadal Council in 1918 to be allowed to submit his thesis a year early in 1919, but, as is often the way with doctoral theses, he took longer than expected and he was pipped to the post by Gatenby (*Minutes of Hebdomadal Council*: Oxford University Archives H/C/1/1, 108, p. 137). Gatenby would go on to become Professor of Cytology at Trinity College, Dublin.

⁹⁹ Simpson, *How the PhD Came to Britain*, pp. 140–59. London was the last to do so, in 1919.

¹⁰⁰ For the development of the UK PhD dress after 1917, see Groves 'The Development of Academic Dress for Doctors of Philosophy in the British Isles', *forthcoming*.

¹⁰¹ Harris, p. 222.

¹⁰² Cf. n. 30 above.

BSc first becoming the MSc in 1971, then in 1979 the BLitt become the MLitt and the BPhil the MPhil for all subjects except Philosophy.¹⁰³ By this point Statute XIV had been abolished and the form of dress was in the control of the vice-chancellor alone. Both the MLitt and the MSc retained the Oxford gimp gown of their predecessors, but were given a hood of blue (as their BLitt and BSc had been) but lined in the grey of the DLitt and DSc. Similarly the MPhil was granted a hood of dark blue of the DPhil lined in white.¹⁰⁴ Thus we find a ‘top-down’ imposition of faculty colours from the established doctorates to the new masters. Nevertheless, Oxford continues to eschew a regular system; the grey of Science and Letters being used for the lining of the MLitt and MSc hood, whereas the dark blue of Philosophy is used for the hood itself in the MPhil.

Conclusions

In 1636 Archbishop Laud had created a set of statutes which laid out the exact colour schemes for the degrees then in existence. This had been rescinded in 1770, and replaced with reference only to the *exemplar* in the Archives. Once more, between 1895 and 1917 Oxford began to create legislation which prescribed the particular form of its graduate dress.

Although the Hebdomadal Council exercised initial choice in all cases, any member of the University, regent or otherwise, could have a say during the debates in Convocation. When this was the method of selecting new dress, Oxford tended to support its scheme of prescribing the same dress for the same status of degree regardless of faculty.

Just as 1770 had seen the scrapping of Laud’s detailed statute, so the same cycle played out in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1957 Congregation rescinded Convocation’s decrees of 1900 and 1917, and replaced them with one of its own:

That graduates of the University of Oxford wear robes, gowns, and hoods of the colours, materials and shapes prescribed in the Register of Colours and Materials of Gowns and Hoods for Degrees of the University of Oxford, prepared by the Oxford Branch of the National Federation of Merchant Tailors, approved by the Hebdomadal Council, and deposited in the University Archives.¹⁰⁵

Once more the choice of dress returned to the closed world of the vice-chancellor and his advisors. Only then did Oxford begin to bow to the pressure of

¹⁰³ M. Brock ‘The University since 1970’, in B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, Vol. VIII (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 739–74 (p. 759).

¹⁰⁴ Venables and Clifford, 5th edn, pp. 18, 29.

¹⁰⁵ *Gazette*, 87 (1956–57), p. 662, passed on the 12 Feb 1957. There was no change in dress, however. The forms currently in use merely became the *exempla* stored in the archive, just as they had done in the nineteenth century.

the nineteenth-century concept of a faculty system of colours in its creation of the new MSc, MLitt and MPhil.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, over the twenty-five year period of 1895–1920, Oxford was instrumental in introducing postgraduate study to Britain, and its choice of dress reflects its awareness of this role. At the beginning of the process, when introducing the BLitt and BSc, Oxford had instinctively looked to its existing forms of dress for inspiration for how to clothe the new degrees. In 1900 it had actively rejected a proposed set of robes which would have brought it in line with schemes already existing elsewhere in the UK (Holland's choice of yellow for the DSc). By 1917, however, it was aware that it was making Britain's first step into the international degree 'market,' and it similarly recognized the potency of equipping both its new advanced students and the new doctors in a way that would mark out their status in Oxford and beyond. Its decision has ensured that steady numbers of international students would matriculate over the coming decades. In the academic year 2009/10, for example, 65% of the matriculands at Wolfson, Oxford's largest graduate college, came from overseas.¹⁰⁷ Many of them will return to academic jobs in their home countries, wearing the scarlet and blue DPhil robe at college commencements and degree days, thus advertising and maintaining the international reputation of the Oxford DPhil.

Appendix

Statutes, Title XIV¹⁰⁸

§3 De Habitu Acadmico singulis Gradibus et Facultatibus compente

§3 Regarding the Academic Dress belonging to the several Degrees and Faculties

1. Doctores omnes cujuscunque Facultatis, Baccalaurei etiam in Sacra Theologia, Medicina, et Jure Civili, Magistri et Baccalaurei Artium, Baccalaurei itidem in Musica, Togas gradui et facultati competentes hodie usitatas, juxta exemplar in Archivis repositum, gerant. Baccalaurei in Litteris vel in Scientia¹⁰⁹ vel in Philosophia¹¹⁰ eodem vestitu quo Baccalaurei in Jure Civili vel Medicina induantur.

¹⁰⁶ Faculty colours were first instituted by London in 1844, and revised 1862, imitated partially at Cambridge (Groves, 'Historical English Academic Robes', p. 62).

¹⁰⁷ Academic Committee minutes, 2010.02.

¹⁰⁸ The text is taken from the last version of Statute XIV (1770 version), published in 1969. The dates of additions to the clause dealing with graduate dress are recorded in the footnotes. The English is an adapted version of G. R. M. Ward's translation of the original 1770 statute (*Oxford University Statutes*, II, pp. 9–12).

¹⁰⁹ Add. 1895.

¹¹⁰ Add. 1946.

Doctores in Philosophia¹¹¹ et Doctores in Litteris vel Scientia eo vestitu utantur quem statuto vel decreto ordinare Convocationi placuerit.¹¹²

1. All Doctors of every faculty, and also the Bachelors in Divinity, Medicine, Civil Law, the Masters and Bachelors in Arts, and likewise the Bachelors in Music, shall wear gowns suitable to their degree and faculty, being those at present in use, after a pattern which is held in the Archives. Bachelors in Letters or in Science or in Philosophy go dressed in the same dress as the Bachelors in Civil Law or Medicine. Doctors in Philosophy, and Doctors in Letters or Science will use that dress which it pleases Convocation to prescribe by statute or decree.

2. Ambo Procuratores, eorumque Deputati, Habitu hodie usitato, secundum exemplar, induti incedant.

2. Both proctors and their deputies are to go dressed in the habit at present in use agreeably to the pattern.

3. Barones vel Baronum filii natu maximi, toga deaurata, sive toga nigra laxa manicata serica, et pileo quadrato holoserico cum apice deaurato vel serico, induti incedant. Liceat tamen iisdem, donec gradum primum susceperint, eodem vestitu quo commensales utriusvis ordinis uti, modo eo vestitu induti coram Vice-Cancellario matriculandi comparuerint.

3. Barons or the elder sons of barons are to go dressed in a gown of gold brocade, or in the black loose-sleeved silk gown, and the square cap with a golden or silk tassel. However, they are also permitted, whilst they undertake their first degree to wear the same dress as the commoners of either order, and they may appear for matriculation before the Vice-Chancellor clothed only in that gown.

4. Superioris ordinis commensales Togam talerem sericam, sive ex quovis Panno nigro confectam, cum ornamentis secundum exemplar, et Pileum quadratum holosericum, Anglice *velvet*, cum apice; caeteri vero non-graduati, quotquot non sunt de fundatione Collegii alicujus, vel Aulae alicujus Scholares vel Clerici, Togam talerem, ex quovis Panno nigro non serico confectam, cum ornamentis secundum exemplar, et Pileum quadratum Panno obductum cum apice, gerant.

4. The commoners of the superior order are to wear the long silk gown, or one made of any kind of black cloth, together with ornaments according to the pattern, and a square cap of velvet with a tassel. Other commoners, who are not on the foundation of a college or hall, nor are scholars or clerks, are to wear the long gown made of any black cloth, but not silk, with ornaments according to the pattern, and a square cap, covered with cloth with a tassel.

5. Non-graduati, quotquot sub nomine Socii, Probationarii, Scholaris, Capellani, Clerici vel Choristae, vel alio quovis nomine de fundatione alicujus Collegii sint;

¹¹¹ Add. 1917.

¹¹² Add. 1900.

sicut et quotquot sive in Aula aliqua, ...¹¹³ si modo in matriculam Universitatis sint relati, quoties in publicum prodeunt, Togis laxè manicatis, ita ut manicæ longitudo dimidiam partem longitudinis Togæ non excedat, et Pileis quadratis cum apice, induti incedant.

5. Under-graduates, by the title of fellows, probationers, scholars, chaplains, clerks or choristers, or under any other name on the foundation of the a college; similarly those in a Hall ... provided only that they be entered on the University matriculation book, whenever they go into public within the University, are to go dressed in loose-sleeved gowns, provided that the length of the sleeve does not exceed half the length of the gown, and in square caps with a tassel.

1970: Regulations XI. IV. Dress

Graduates of the University shall wear robes, gowns and hoods of the colours materials and shapes prescribed in the Register of Colours and Materials of Gowns and Hoods for Degrees of the University of Oxford, prepared by the Oxford Branch of the National Federation of Merchant Tailors, approved by Council, and deposited in the University Archives; junior members of the University shall wear such gowns and dress as the Vice-Chancellor shall determine, after consultation with the Proctors and, where appropriate, the heads of colleges; and the Vice-Chancellor shall have power to make regulations and make rulings as to the dress of all members of the University on those occasions when, according to the customs and usages of the University, academic dress is worn.¹¹⁴

[Addition made in 1971]:

Rulings by the Vice-Chancellor:

1. Graduates of other universities who are reading for higher degrees, for diplomas, or for certificates at Oxford to wear the academic dress of their own university, should they so wish, on university occasions when they would otherwise be required to wear the academic dress of this university.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Provision for several individual colleges and halls appear and disappear here in the century up to 1970.

¹¹⁴ *Statutes, Decrees and Regulations of the University of Oxford*, 1970, pp. 628–29.

¹¹⁵ *Statutes, Decrees and Regulations of the University of Oxford*, 1971, p. 649.

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