

DEVELOPMENT OF CEREMONIAL AND ACADEMIC DRESSES OF OUSL

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INTRODUCTION

Academic dress is a traditional form of clothing in academic setting. It is worn by members of learned societies to represent group affiliation. It gives an identity to the specific University.

Academic dress was originally worn on a daily basis by university students. However now-a-days it is mostly worn during graduation ceremonies and other official functions. The academic dress is designed to give a majestic and pompous look to the wearer. In designing, it is also considered to give prominence to one's personality, by emphasizing the face and the upper body of the wearer. It also comprises articles to reflect the group identity within the university sector. It is usually designed with bright and deep colours. Academic and ceremonial dress of a university would have a collection of designs to reflect the hierarchy of the academic positions or qualifications. Academic and ceremonial dresses usually consist of loose fit with flowing sleeves, a longer gown with broad shoulders, cap or a hood and a garland. Formal or sober clothing are typically worn under the academic dress and as a tradition, casual wears are usually not worn under the academic gown. Materials for academic dress are selected according to the design and climate. Fabrics such as cotton poplin, broadcloth, rayon or silk and synthetic fabrics such as polyester, artificial silk, taffeta, satin, or velvet are used for making the main gown. Trims, laces, cords, pippins, buttons, fur, wool, padding, logos or strings and colours are added to decorate the garment according to the design requirements.

This paper describes the development of the academic dress of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) giving the concepts that were taken into consideration while designing them.

METHODOLOGY

The origin of the development of the OUSL academic dress is studied from the available documents. The existing collections of the academic dress are analyzed with reference to style, colour, design, silhouette, etc. Based on these studies and the contemporary and historical references, new recommendations are forwarded for development of the academic dresses of OUSL.

ORIGIN OF OUSL ACADEMIC DRESS

The academic gowns of Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) were originally designed in 1986 by Mrs. Wimala Palihakkara, of the Board of Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management of OUSL. Contemporary academic dresses of universities such as Sukhothai Thammarath Open University, Thailand, La Trobe University, Australia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, The Australian National University, Canberra, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, Harvard University, USA, etc., were studied to set a background for the design. Further, decorative art works of the Sinhalese were studied to make the designs unique for OUSL. In the first instance ceremonial dresses for Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and Registrar were only designed. However, after the faculties were established in 1988, ceremonial dresses for deans of the faculties were developed. Symbolic colours for the three faculties were chosen as red for Faculty of Engineering Technology, green for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and blue for the Faculty of Natural Sciences and were approved by the Senate. Colours of academic dresses were decided as wine red for Doctorate gowns, burnt sienna for Master's gowns and black for Bachelor's gown. With the establishment of Faculty of Education,

ceremonial dress for dean of the faculty was designed in 2002. Purple was chosen as the colour for that faculty. Academic dresses for honorary degree were designed in 2005. Ceremonial dress for Director of Postgraduate Institute of English was designed in 2007. Cream colour was chosen as the symbolic colour for that dress.

With the evolvement of academic dresses of OUSL from 1986, during the celebration of the 30th anniversary of OUSL in 2010, it was suggested to study the existing designs of the academic and if necessary refresh or modify the ceremonial and academic dresses to reflect a uniform and contemporary look. This paper presents the newer developments done on the ceremonial and academic dress designs of OUSL along with the concepts behind such design developments.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DESIGNS

OUSL ceremonial and academic dresses show differences according to the status of the position in administration and academic sector. Currently in OUSL, different ceremonial academic dresses are used for Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Deans of four faculties, Director - Postgraduate Institute of English and academic dresses for Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy, Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma, Honorary degrees and Bachelor's degree. Table 1 gives the description of these academic dresses.

Academic Dress Types	Style of Gown	Decorations	Additional features
Chancellor	Orange colour, Velvet, long gown	Silver colour sleeve edges. Front border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders decorates with <i>Leyawella</i> and <i>Sinharupa</i> in the silver colour.	Black square cap Lining and padded shoulders
Vice Chancellor	Orange colour, Velvet, long gown	Black colour sleeve edges. Front border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders decorates with <i>Leyawella</i> and <i>Sinharupa</i> in the black colour.	Black square cap Lining and padded shoulders
Deputy Vice Chancellor	Light Orange colour, Satin, little short gown	Black colour sleeve edges. Front border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders decorates with <i>Leyawella</i> and <i>Sinharupa</i> in the black colour.	No cap Lining and padded shoulders
Registrar	Black colour, Velvet, long gown	Orange colour sleeve edges. Front border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders decorates with <i>Leyawella</i> and <i>Sinharupa</i> in the orange colour.	No cap Lining and padded shoulders
Director – PGIE	Black colour cotton / poplin gown	Cream colour sleeve edges. Border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders and sleeve edge in cream colour. <i>Leyawella</i> and <i>Sinharupa</i> decorations are in black colour on cream colour background.	No cap Lining and padded shoulders
Deans	Black colour, Velvet, long gown	Sleeve edges and Front border of the gown around the neck with free moving back part fixed into the shoulders are in faculty colours. <i>Leyawella</i> decoration is not used <i>Sinharupa</i> is embroidered at the edge of the back decoration in faculty colours. Border of the gown is highlighted with colours only.	No cap Lining and padded shoulders

Doctor of Philosophy	Wine red colour, Cotton, Long gown	No special decorations	Round cap with orange colour tassels
Master of Philosophy	Burnt sienna colour, Cotton, Long gown	No special decorations	Round cap with orange colour tassels
Master of Science	Burnt sienna colour, Cotton, Long gown	No special decorations	No cap
Postgraduate Diploma	Black colour, Cotton, Long gown	No special decorations	No cap
Bachelor's degree	Black colour, Cotton, Long gown	No special decorations	Square cap with orange colour tassels

Table 1: Existing design features of academic dresses of the OUSL

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though the ceremonial and academic dress designs of OUSL have been developed by giving proper consideration to various aspects it can be seen that there are certain drawbacks in consistency and uniformity. The reason for this may be that time to time when new ceremonial and academic dress designs have been added as per requirements, due consideration has not been paid to maintain consistency and uniformity. For example, the academic dress of the Deputy Vice chancellor is a much short gown compared to long gowns of other academic dresses. When considering the overall look of the designs, it is required to do modifications in designs to maintain unity, continuation and harmony of designs among the ceremonial and academic gowns of OUSL.

In considering maintaining a standard design among all the ceremonial and academic dresses, free moving back decoration is fixed into the shoulders and *Sinharupa* decoration are used for all ceremonial dresses and it is recommended that as a standard all these dresses must use velvet fabric. *Liyawella* and border are used as decorative items to highlight all ceremonial dress. Two black stripes to be used to emphasize the *liyawella* design in ceremonial dresses of Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor to make the design prominent. To distinguish these ceremonial dresses from other dresses, padding, lining, heavy shiny thick fabric and gathering are used in construction. Table 2 gives the description of the recommended changes for the ceremonial and academic dresses.

Academic Dress types	Recommended Changes
Chancellor	Decoration is modified to emphasize the position. Background colour of front and back border lapels are turned to black colour to highlight the <i>liyawella</i> decoration. Scale of the <i>liyawella</i> decoration is not changed but the colour is changed to gold. In addition to this two 0.5cm wide gold stripes are added to both sides of the <i>liyawella</i> decoration inside the border to emphasize the decoration. <i>Sinharupa</i> decoration is also changed to gold colour in black background. Sleeve edge pippin decoration of the robe is changed to gold and the colour cap decoration is changed to gold colour to match with the overall look of the garment.
Vice Chancellor	Decoration is modified to make a flow and continuation. Academic gown consists of velvet, orange coloured long robe and a square type decorative cap. Decoration is modified to emphasize the position and group affiliation. Background colour of front and back border lapels are changed to black colour to highlight the <i>liyawella</i> decoration. Scale of the <i>liyawella</i> decoration is not changed but the colour is changed

	to sliver. Additionally, two 0.5cm wide silver coloured stripes are added to both sides of the <i>liyawalla</i> decoration inside the border. <i>Sinharupa</i> decoration is in silver on black background. Sleeve edge pippin decoration of the robe and colour of cap decoration is changed to silver colour to match with the overall look of the garment.
Deputy Vice Chancellor	Modified to orange colour velvet gown with same length as per other higher grade ceremonial dresses. Cap is not included with the design. Sleeve edge, front neck border, and the decorative part in the back of the garment around the neck are done with black colour <i>leyawella</i> decoration with black colour <i>sinharupa</i> at the back of the lapel. Background colour of the decoration is orange, with the same fabric type of that of the robe. In addition, two black stripes of 0.5cm wide are added to both sides of the <i>liyawalla</i> decoration.
Registrar	No changes
Director–PGIE	Academic gown is modified into a black colour velvet gown without a cap. Sleeve edge, <i>leyawella</i> and <i>sinharupa</i> embroidery decorations are in cream colour with the background of the decoration in black colour.
Deans	Black colour long velvet robes without caps. Front and back border colours are different according to the faculty colours. <i>Liyawella</i> and <i>sinharupa</i> are used in white / silver colour to decorate front and back borders.
Doctor of Philosophy	Neck border in same colour of fabric without highlighting the design.
Master of Philosophy	No changes
Master of Science	Add a square cap with orange colour tassels
Postgraduate Diploma	No changes
Bachelor's degree	No changes

Table 2: Recommended changes to the design features of academic dresses of the OUSL

CONCLUSION

It is believed that when the recommended changes to the ceremonial and academic dresses are adopted the OUSL dresses would become consistent and uniform, while maintaining the unique design features. Especially the two embroidery lines that have been recommended for both sides of the *liyawella* would distinguish the positions of the three higher grade positions, namely, Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor.

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