

**Protocol Governing the Organisation of an  
Off-site Oxford Brookes University Graduation**

**Academic Registry: Graduation Office  
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## CONTENTS

1	The Purpose of Graduation Ceremonies and these Regulations .....	3
2	The Status of Graduation Ceremonies.....	3
3	Approval to Organise an Off-site Graduation .....	4
4	The Costs of Graduation Ceremonies and Partners .....	5
5	Service Providers at Graduation Ceremonies (other than academic dress) .....	7
6	Marketing and Publicity .....	7
7	Hospitality .....	8
8	Officials and Attendance at Graduation Ceremonies .....	8
9	Speeches and Orations .....	10
10	Maintaining Academic Credibility .....	10
11	Academic Dress .....	11
12	During the Graduation Ceremony .....	12
13	Access Considerations .....	12
14	Health and Safety .....	12
15	General Advice and Guidance .....	13

## **1 The Purpose of Graduation Ceremonies and these Regulations**

- 1.1 The University and, in the case of collaborative programmes, its partners hold graduation ceremonies to ensure that students have an occasion to celebrate their achievements publicly with their peers, family and friends. The event should focus on the achievements of the students graduating and provide a context in which those achievements can be recognised and celebrated.
- 1.2 Graduation events held for students who have studied on a collaborative partnership also present an opportunity to celebrate that partnership, taking into account different cultural expectations and the hopes and expectations of the partner. Especially, though not exclusively, those graduation ceremonies held in international locations offer an opportunity to demonstrate the University's welcoming approach to cultural diversity and this should be reflected in the nature of the ceremonies.
- 1.3 All Oxford Brookes University graduations, regardless of location, should maintain a high standard of service and presentation that reflects the University's academic standing, branding and positioning in the market place whilst ensuring the position of the partner is also recognised. These regulations are designed to ensure that these expectations are satisfied wherever and whenever a student graduates from Oxford Brookes.

## **2 The Status of Graduation Ceremonies**

- 2.1 The fundamental purpose of an Oxford Brookes University graduation is to celebrate publicly the conferment of an award to the graduate. A graduation at Oxford Brookes University does not confer awards, however, this is done at the examination committee and, as such, compulsory attendance at the graduation ceremony is not required (either in person or in absentia). The only exception is an honorary award, which is approved at the Honorary Conferment Committee and then conferred at the graduation ceremony.
- 2.2 The terms graduation, graduation ceremony and awards ceremony, as used in Oxford Brookes University documentation, are interchangeable, encompassing the celebration of awards and not the conferment.
- 2.3 The graduation ceremony itself is only one part of the public event. Associated hospitality, celebratory events and publicity are inextricably linked to the ceremonial occasion and should take into account the different cultural expectations and traditions of the students and partner organisations. Those organising and hosting graduations need to achieve high standards in these associated activities as well as in the ceremony and should ensure that the reasonable expectations of all those involved are considered.
- 2.4 This protocol applies to all graduation ceremonies: including events for both enrolled and registered students whether on Oxford Brookes University premises, its partners' locations or any external venue. It should be applied sensitively with due regard to local cultural expectations and the needs and expectations of partners.

### 3 Approval to Organise an Off-site Graduation

- 3.1 The University, its Faculties and Directorates, acknowledges the important contribution of its partners and recognises the importance of effective collaboration with its partners. The following section on the processes for approving an off-site ceremony, therefore, is based on the principles of co-operation and agreement between partners. The University (including the Graduation Office, Faculties, Corporate Affairs and University Officers) has legitimate expectations in respect of the organisation of graduation ceremonies as do partners in the delivery of collaborative programmes. This protocol is designed to support dialogue between partners in arriving at mutually convenient arrangements for graduation.
- 3.2 Given the importance of graduation ceremonies to the University and its partners, all off-site ceremonies must be approved through the Graduation Office of the Academic Registry before any preparations are made or undertakings given to partners or other third parties. Such approval will not unreasonably be withheld but an approval process ensures that each Faculty and partner can be supported in the organisation of their event and that resources are used most effectively through planning and co-ordination.
- 3.3 The schedule for off-site graduations is organised and managed by the Graduation Office. The schedule covers three academic years: the first academic year in the three year schedule contains confirmed dates whilst details in the second and third academic years are provisional. The dates in the second and third year may need to be indicative and general and may refer to a period (a specified week or month) rather than a specific date. Each academic year the schedule is reviewed and the dates for the first academic year of the next period are confirmed.
- 3.4 In June each year, all Deans will be asked to supply a list of all graduations planned for the following three academic years (other than those organised directly by the Graduation Office at the Headington Campus). A completed *Graduation Proposal Form* will be required for each graduation in the first academic year of the three year schedule. Provisional graduation ceremony details only will be requested for the second and third academic years. These details are submitted to the Graduation Office for consideration by a panel and approval by the Vice Chancellor on behalf of Academic Board.
- 3.5 The details collected in June each year will be considered and confirmed in October. The schedule announced in October commences at the start of the following academic year. For example: in June 2009 dates are proposed for the three-year schedule covering 2010/11 (confirmed details), 2011/12 and 2012/13 (provisional details only). This three year schedule (2010/11 to 2012/13) is published in October 2009.

<b>June/October 2009</b>		
2010/11 (confirmed)	<b>June/October 2010</b>	
2011/12 (provisional)	2011/12 (confirmed)	<b>June/October 2011</b>
2012/13 (provisional)	2012/13 (provisional)	2012/13 (confirmed)
	2013/14 (provisional)	2013/14 (provisional)
		2014/15 (provisional)

- 3.6 The *Graduation Proposal Form* requests specific details which need to be considered by the panel. Collecting and considering these details also ensures that the standard of service presentation and credibility, expected by the University, its partners and graduating students and their guests, is maintained across all off-site ceremonies.
- 3.7 The panel will include:
- the Vice Chancellor (or alternative member of SMT);
  - the Academic Registrar;
  - the Head of Conferment;
  - two representatives from Faculties with a significant interest in off-site ceremonies as nominated by the Deans.
- 3.8 The panel will meet between June and October each year to co-ordinate all the off-site graduations. The panel will consider whether the graduation could be incorporated into another University event taking place in a similar location at a similar time of year. This, and other negotiations in the process of organising an off-site ceremony, will be carried out via discussions with the Faculties and partners affected (through the relevant Faculty). The purpose of this process is to ensure that the duplication of graduations and other University events is avoided. The co-ordination of such events ensures that the University and its partners are maximising their resources and avoiding unnecessary costs.
- 3.9 Once approved, the three year schedule will be circulated to the Deans of Faculties and each contact person detailed on the *Graduation Proposal Form*. The Graduation Office will also inform the following staff in Corporate Affairs:
- Alumni Office
  - University Events and External Relations Manager
  - Corporate Relations Manager

In addition, the date and location of all approved graduations will be published on the Graduation Office website.

#### **4 The Costs of Graduation Ceremonies and Partners**

- 4.1 Within the general framework of costs for collaborative programmes, as agreed through the approval process, all graduations must aim to be self-funding; where a graduation does not cover its own costs, the additional resource must be provided by the Faculty and/or the partner. Staff wishing to organise an Oxford Brookes University graduation must be clear from the outset of the following financial arrangements in respect of the ceremony concerned (taking into account different arrangements with different partners):
- who will be covering the cost of the event (including the ceremony, reception, hospitality, travel costs, publicity costs, printed materials, staff attendance – including the staff detailed in section 8.2 - and so on);
  - what income will be derived from e.g. ticket sales and commission to off-set these costs;
  - that the resource is available;
  - that the resource has been authorised for that purpose.
- 4.2 As part of the approval process for collaborative programmes Faculties must submit a thorough business case which details the financial viability of the

proposal including all its associated costs and specifically the costs connected with graduation ceremonies. The costs of the graduation ceremony should therefore have been agreed at the beginning of the partnership.

- 4.3 This protocol covers only those costs directly associated with the graduation event. Whilst it is good practice to maximise the use of staff time and financial resources by joining a graduation ceremony with other activities occurring in the same location (see section 8.1) where other activities are linked in with a graduation, the budget for the graduation should not be used to pay for the linked activities. The costs for the linked activity should be covered by the appropriate budget for that activity.
- 4.4 Travel and all other expenses should be in line with University financial policies. In respect of air travel, the University's expenses policy states that "the preferred mode of transport for University staff is public transport, and should be standard or economy class. The only occasion where a higher grade class of travel is permitted is where travelling by plane and the travelling time is greater than six hours, and there is no recuperation time".
- 4.5 For University graduations for enrolled students organised by the Graduation Office, currently held at the Headington Campus, the cost of the ceremony is covered by the Academic Registry, within the Graduation Office budget. The graduations are funded from the commission the University receives from the service providers (photographers, gown hire, memorabilia merchandise and DVD sales).
- 4.6 The Oxford Brookes University collaborative provision Operations Manual (part of the contractual documents agreed with partners) sets out the mechanistic description (i.e. who does what) relating to the delivery of the course and this includes the agreements specifically relating to graduation and academic dress. Staff must ensure that they are familiar with the specific partners' contractual agreement to determine who is responsible for the cost of the awards ceremony.
- 4.7 For a University graduation organised by a Faculty for enrolled students, held in the United Kingdom or at any international location, the cost is covered by the Faculty, and/or the partner, and off-set by income from the graduation. These costs are agreed through the approval process, as described in 4.2.
- 4.8 For a University graduation organised by a Faculty for registered students, held in the United Kingdom or at any international location, it is also University practice that the cost is covered by the Faculty, and/or the partner, and offset by income from the graduation. These costs are agreed through the approval process, as described in 4.2. In addition, however, the template Operations Manual for collaborative programmes states that:  
  
*16.1 'The [partner] shall arrange and conduct at its own expense a graduation ceremony for all students who are granted an award'*
- 4.9 Staff wishing to organise a graduation ceremony must be familiar with the contractual agreement with the partner regarding such an event, in particular the agreement relating to costs and academic dress. There are, in a few instances, contractual agreements with partners that allow for the graduates to wear the partner's academic dress. Unless this is specified within the contractual agreement all graduates being presented with an Oxford Brookes University award at a graduation should either wear Oxford Brookes University

academic dress, or attend with no academic dress. For details concerning the hire and sale of academic dress, please see section 11.

## 5 **Service Providers at Graduation Ceremonies (other than academic dress)**

- 5.1 Service providers at graduation ceremonies, such as photographers, memorabilia and merchandise sales, DVD sales etc., appointed for the graduation ceremonies held at Headington Campus, do not have sole right as providers at other Oxford Brookes University graduations held elsewhere. A staff member organising a graduation will need to set up contracts specifically for their event. This is frequently arranged by the partner in consultation with the Faculty (to satisfy the expectations of both the partner and the Faculty within the University's wider framework).
- 5.2 The University has a protocol and a contract template for this purpose. For more information, see the *Finance Administration Handbook*, or contact the *Purchasing Manager* in the Directorate of Finance and Legal Services.
- 5.3 The providers of services to the University's graduations at Headington Campus may be able to offer preferential rates for other University ceremonies (including, depending on the supplier, graduation ceremonies held outside the UK). Details of these providers can be obtained from the Graduation Office.
- 5.4 For details concerning the hire and sale of academic dress, please see section 11.

## 6 **Marketing and Publicity**

- 6.1 All documentation used at the graduation must adhere to the University's branding policies including protocols for working with partners.
- 6.2 The documentation must meet the standards of, and be consistent with, the University graduations held at Headington Campus. The graduation documentation and publications provided for either graduates or guests must mirror the University's current graduation style in order to maintain consistency of practice and to ensure the same high standard of publication. Advice or guidance may be sought from Creative Services and the Graduation Office.
- 6.3 Normally, it would be expected that for a University graduation organised by a Faculty, held either in the United Kingdom or at an international location, the following documents are produced for graduates and guests:
- Graduation Information Pack (either on-line or in hard copy); for graduates with details of the time, date, venue and costs for the ceremony;
  - Graduation Order of Proceedings/Programme; for guests (and graduates if there is no Awards Book);
  - Awards Book; for graduates and/or guests (separate book is optional, this information may be included in the Graduation Order of Proceedings/Programme);
  - Information on the Alumni Relations programme.
- 6.4 Documentation for staff only must, as a minimum requirement, be presented on standard University branded templates. These documents include:

- Graduation Order of Proceedings/Programme; staff copy
- Order of Procession
- Guidance for Readers/Orators
- Graduate Name Cards; used by the Reader in the ceremony
- Scripts for the ceremonies, to include relevant speeches (see section 9 for more details concerning speeches)

6.5 Signage at the venue hosting the graduation must be clear, accurate and (where relevant) produced using Oxford Brookes University brand guidelines, including protocols for working with partners. There must be sufficient signage at the venue to avoid confusion and to facilitate easy access to the relevant locations.

## 7 Hospitality

7.1 Some form of hospitality for graduates and their guests is normally provided at Oxford Brookes University graduations. All hospitality costs for a graduation, either held in the United Kingdom or at an international location, need to be agreed in advance as noted in section 4.

7.2 The hospitality costs normally include refreshments (food and beverages) for the following attendees (as applicable):

- Vice Chancellor or Senior Management Team representative
- University and Faculty guests agreed in advance
- Guests of the partner institution agreed in advance
- Faculty staff (plus other University staff who may form part of the platform party)
- Honorary Graduate(s) and their guests
- Alumni Association President from that country or alumni representatives
- Oxford Brookes University agent or representative from that country
- Any additional helpers

7.3 Where charged, the cost of tickets for the hospitality event, for graduates and their guests, may also cover additional costs generated by organising a graduation (see section 4).

7.4 All aspects of invitation management and response handling needs to be undertaken by the partner and/or the Faculty and following best practice guidelines, as discussed with the University Events and External Relations Manager and the Graduation Office.

## 8 Officials and Attendance at Graduation Ceremonies

8.1 It is expected that every graduation ceremony will be attended by a significant number of staff involved in the teaching and administration of the programmes connected with the ceremony. This representation demonstrates the University's commitment to the programmes in a very clear way. In addition, feedback from previous graduates indicates that the attendance of staff that taught on their programme and assisted them in their studies either academically, pastorally or administratively greatly enhances their enjoyment of the ceremony. Faculties are expected to ensure that where a ceremony is organised off-site sufficient attention is given to how best to maximise staff attendance, for example, by ensuring that the ceremony coincides with other

duties (such as teaching) and that therefore the number of staff travelling simply and only to attend the ceremony is minimised. This ensures staff time is used efficiently and that costs are minimised.

8.2 In addition to the attendance of staff involved in the programme, the following officials are required at each graduation ceremony:

- A member of the University's Senior Management Team (SMT) to preside over the ceremony;
- A senior representative of the Partner (if applicable)
- A senior representative of the Faculty (who may also be the Reader or the Orator, but not both)
- A Reader (who may also be the Orator)
- An Orator (who may also be the Reader)
- A Master of Ceremonies

8.3 A member of the University's SMT must preside at all University graduations for enrolled and/or registered students. This is a requirement whether the graduation is organised by the Graduation Office or a Faculty and/or partner. The member of SMT is responsible for:

- Opening the graduation ceremony; the opening address should include a welcome and set the scene of the ceremony.
- Closing the graduation ceremony; the closing address should include, if applicable, the location of the ceremony reception.
- Presentation of the awards; the presentation of the award is made by a public handshake. In some graduations, the graduates will also be presented with a scroll and/or their award certificate. The honorary graduate and/or visiting professors are presented with a framed certificate. A professor is presented with a University medal.

8.4 A senior member of staff drawn from the Faculty and the Partner (if applicable) should also be in attendance at the graduation ceremony though does not need to take on any formal role. The senior staff representative may, however, also act as Reader or Orator, or may be asked to provide a speech either in addition to those already arranged or on behalf of the presiding member of SMT, but the senior staff representative would not normally act as Reader and Orator; i.e. the roles of senior staff representative, Reader and Orator should normally be filled by at least two people.

8.5 The Reader is responsible for reading out the award titles and names of those receiving the award, including professorships, other than the honorary awards if a separate Orator is in attendance. The Reader must be familiar with the correct pronunciation of all the graduates' names. The Reader may be a member of staff from the Faculty or the partner.

8.6 The Orator is responsible for introducing the honorary awards and inviting the honorary graduate to address the ceremony. The Orator may be a member of staff from the Faculty or the partner. The Reader may also act as an Orator.

8.7 The Master of Ceremonies (MC) is normally a member of staff drawn from the Graduation Office. The role of the MC is to ensure that the formal aspects of the graduation ceremony are carried out smoothly and according to usual University protocols and to lead the academic procession.

## 9 **Speeches and Orations**

- 9.1 All speeches and orations presented at an Oxford Brookes University graduation must be relevant to the audience, timely, aware of local cultural and social expectations and meet the standard expected of the University and the partner.
- 9.2 Speeches for University representatives should celebrate the relationship with the partner and reflect local interests and practices. The speech for the Vice-Chancellor or SMT representative will be drafted by Creative Services on the basis of information presented by Faculties, which should include information gathered from the partners. This information will need to be forwarded in good time to allow for the speeches to be prepared.
- 9.3 Speakers must be familiar with the speech to ensure clarity and understanding. It is advisable that prior to the ceremony, speakers practice speaking in the ceremonial venue, using the microphone equipment to be used on the day.

## 10 **Maintaining Academic Credibility**

- 10.1 In order for a student to attend a graduation ceremony, they must have been conferred an Oxford Brookes University award or joint award at a quorate examination committee.
- 10.2 Staff organising an Oxford Brookes University graduation must ensure that the student awards are confirmed by the Graduation Office prior to confirming places at the ceremony to students. Students may book into a graduation ceremony prior to the formal conferment of their award, but in such circumstances it must be made clear to the student that their attendance at the ceremony is dependent on successfully complete their programme and having their award conferred through a valid examination committee.
- 10.3 An Honorary Graduate to be conferred at the graduation must have been approved by the Honorary Conferment Committee. Support in the arrangements for Honorary Graduates will be provided by Corporate Affairs.
- 10.4 The presentation of an award must be made to the holder of that award, not by proxy. The only exception is for a posthumous award.
- 10.5 In general, the full award title is read out at the graduation, prior to the student being presented, but not the classification or merit/distinction, with the exception of an oral distinction in a language award.
- 10.6 The full name, registered on the University system should be read out for the presentation of the award unless the student specifically requests otherwise.
- 10.7 A list of graduates who attended the graduation should be kept and returned after the ceremony to the Graduation Office as part of the official record. The Graduation Office will forward a copy of this list to alumni relations in Corporate Affairs.

## 11 Academic Dress

- 11.1 As noted in 4.6 and 4.9, the specific agreement with each partner will cover matters concerning academic dress. Where students are to receive a Brookes award normally Brookes academic dress should be worn, arrangements for dual and joint awards may include other arrangements for academic dress. Such matters should be considered, discussed with the partner and agreed during the validation of new programmes.
- 11.2 It is expected that staff attending a graduation as part of the 'Platform Party', and the officials presiding at the ceremony, will dress smartly and wear academic dress.
- 11.3 Although it is encouraged, it is not compulsory for academic dress to be worn by graduates being presented at an awards ceremony. In general, graduates should be encouraged to dress smartly. If graduates ask for guidance on what to wear, the general guide is: dark suit, white shirt and dark footwear. However, smart dress is best interpreted locally and according to local customs.
- 11.4 Graduates who are wearing academic dress, and staff who are part of the Platform Party, are expected to wear the headwear appropriate to their academic dress (mortarboards, bonnets, soft caps etc) throughout the ceremony.
- 11.5 Those attending a graduation and wearing academic dress must present themselves in the correct dress:
- **Staff** attending a graduation as part of the Platform Party must be in the academic dress of the award and University from which they have received their highest award (unless they wear the academic dress of the University appropriate to the position, e.g. Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellor).
  - **Graduates** attending a graduation, and opting to wear academic dress, must wear the correct dress for the award being presented to them at the ceremony as agreed through the validation process.
- 11.6 For the University graduations being held at Headington Campus the Graduation Office hire, and pay for, academic dress for staff. Staff are required to inform their Faculty Graduation Co-ordinator (details published in Onstream prior to each graduation period) if they wish to attend the ceremony and whether they wish for an academic gown to be hired.
- 11.7 For University graduations held at other locations, those organising the event within the Faculty and/or partner are responsible for hiring, and paying for, academic dress for staff.
- 11.8 Graduates attending a graduation ceremony and wishing to wear academic dress are responsible for the hiring and costs involved, as arranged by the Faculty and/or partner.
- 11.9 The University currently has a contractual arrangement with Ede & Ravenscroft (Robe Makers), who own the copyright of the Oxford Brookes University hoods and who, as part of the contractual agreement 'have sole right to hire and sell Academic dress on behalf of the University'. As such, any member of staff

organising an awards ceremony will be responsible for ensuring that graduates who wish to either hire or purchase academic dress are directed to Ede & Ravenscroft.

- 11.10 Ede & Ravenscroft are also able to supply academic dress to many international locations, including Hong Kong, Malaysia and other European countries. Some countries, including those in the Middle East, China (other than Hong Kong) and most African countries, can pose more difficulties. As the owner of the design copyright on the University's academic dress, however, the Graduation Office is legally obliged to consult with Ede & Ravenscroft about the provision of academic dress wherever the graduation is to be held. If Ede & Ravenscroft are unable to support the graduation other arrangements will be agreed as appropriate to the local circumstances, for example, Ede & Ravenscroft may under certain circumstances issue a license for a specific company to manufacturer hoods locally, or may agree to the hire of academic dress through a local company or partner.

## 12 **During the Graduation Ceremony**

- 12.1 The order of proceedings should, where feasible, follow the University graduation format as conducted at the Headington Campus.
- 12.2 Similarly, the order of procession should, where feasible, follow the University graduation format as conducted at the Headington Campus.
- 12.3 The procession must process into, and out of, the ceremonial venue to appropriate ceremonial music. Examples of music used at the Headington Campus graduations are:
- Gaudeamus Igitur from the Academic Festival Overture by Johannes Brahms
  - Music for the Royal Fireworks, Overture, by George Frederic Handel

These examples are not prescriptive and appropriate music for the local venue should be chosen in accordance with the expectation of graduates and the University and as may best be provided by the local musicians available.

## 13 **Access Considerations**

- 13.1 Staff, graduates or guests with a disability, who wish to attend the graduation, must be given the opportunity to participate fully. Therefore, staff members organising a graduation must consider access issues alongside all aspects of the process in order to be inclusive.
- 13.2 The ceremonial venue and any other accommodation used for the graduation ceremony must meet the requirements set out within the Disability Act, Part 4 (SENDA) and local expectations. In order to be SENDA compliant any staff, graduates and guests with a disability must be able to participate fully in the ceremonial proceedings and any other event prior to, or after, the ceremony.

## 14 **Health and Safety**

- 14.1 The staff member organising the graduation must ensure that the ceremonial venue and any other rooms used for the event meet reasonable health and

safety standards. The Master of Ceremonies will be responsible for health and safety during the ceremony.

- 14.2 The Master of Ceremonies must make a safety announcement prior to the start of the graduation ceremony to ensure that all graduates, guests and staff know where the nearest emergency exits are located and are aware of the procedure for an emergency evacuation.
- 14.3 A first aid officer must be appointed for the ceremony and any event held after the ceremony.
- 14.4 If the ceremony is open to the public (i.e. not by invitation only) then security staff must be appointed.
- 14.5 A risk assessment must be completed for each ceremony to ensure that potential risks have been identified and considered and that appropriate mitigating actions have been taken. The University's Health and Safety Manager is available to advise on the assessment.

## 15 **General Advice and Guidance**

- 15.1 General advice and guidance on any matters relating to the organisation of graduation ceremonies may be obtained from Corporate Affairs (01865 484864) and the Graduation Office (01865 484016), which is part of the Academic Registry within the Directorate of Academic and Student Affairs.