

A Historical Overview and Description of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ceremonial and Academic Attire

By Andrew-John Bethke

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) was legally constituted in 2004 when the University of Natal (UN) was amalgamated with the University of Durban-Westville (UDW).¹ In the early 2000s, the South African government sought to decrease the number of higher education institutions in the country from thirty-six to twenty-one through amalgamation.² This rationalization process was part of a larger transformation project originally initiated in 1997.³ The Universities of Natal and Durban-Westville were officially earmarked for merger in the government paper *Transformation and Restructuring: A New Institutional Landscape for Higher Education*, published in 2002.⁴

UN was established in Pietermaritzburg in 1910 as the Natal University College.⁵ It was formally declared a university in 1947. By then it had incorporated two campuses in the Pietermaritzburg and Durban areas. Before 1960, UN was largely for whites, although it had a very small number of Indian students.⁶ A separate higher education institution for Indian students was created in 1960 by the apartheid government. It was named the University College for Indians and was located on Salisbury Island, in the Durban harbour mouth.⁷ At first, its qualifications were examined and conferred through the University of South Africa.⁸ The college was not well supported in its early days because of a political boycott. However, as attitudes to protest began to change through the 1960s, numbers increased and, as a result, the college was declared an autonomous university in 1971.⁹ A year later the campus was moved off the island to Westville (then on the outskirts of the City of Durban).

1 The formal notice of amalgamation appeared in South African Government, *Government Gazette: Republic of South Africa*, 461, 25737 (14 November 2003), pp. 3–4.

2 E. Gillard, S. Saunders, J. Terblanche and M. Sukel, *A Review of Four Case Studies in Restructuring the South African Higher Education System* (Higher Education Merger Study Group, 2012), p. 4.

3 Ministry of Education, *Transformation and Restructuring: A New Institutional Landscape for Higher Education*, *Department of Higher Education and Training Reports* (2002).

4 *Ibid.*, point 3.4.

5 For a comprehensive historical account of this university, see B. Guest, *Stella Aurorae: The History of a South African University* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015).

6 The Vice-Chancellor of UN at the time espoused a 'separate but equal' stance in relation to white and Indian education at the University; see G. Oosthuizen, ed., *Challenge to a South African University: The University of Durban-Westville* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 34.

7 For a full account of the foundation of the University College, as well as the political fallout (both locally and internationally), see Oosthuizen, pp. 32–38.

8 Oosthuizen, p. 32.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37.

The merger of the two universities was not simple.¹⁰ Both had established histories, internationally recognized profiles and racially segregated pasts. Nevertheless, in a joint statement in 2002 they recognized that by merging they could create ‘a strong, academically excellent and socially sensitive and responsive university’.¹¹ By bringing the two together, an uneasy compromise resulted in a new institutional identity purposefully embedded outside the existing racial cultures.¹² As a result, almost all of the symbols and traditions of both institutions were replaced with a completely new and unrelated brand. New official and academic garments were required to reflect these sweeping institutional changes.

Review of the literature

The scientific and historical study of academic attire has a developing international literature to which South Africa is a contributor. In the recent past, the Burgon Society has pioneered and championed the study of academic and ceremonial attire. As a result, in the past two decades this field has had an injection of new vigour. The Society also maintains a comprehensive bibliography of relevant published and unpublished sources relating to academic attire.¹³

One of the major sources in the field was written by a South African academic, based at Rhodes University, assisted by an American colleague. The work by Hugh Smith with Kevin Sheard remains a standard reference which (as will be discussed below) was consulted in the process of designing new attire for UKZN.¹⁴

More recent studies related to academic attire in South African universities have emerged since Smith with Sheard’s monumental work. Kinahan and Grundlingh produced a short booklet with twenty-four pictures of the academic dress, faculty colours, badges and neckties of the University of Cape Town in 1989.¹⁵ At present only three copies of this booklet exist in South African libraries. In 2002 Lundy submitted a research paper in fulfilment of the Burgon Society fellowship which examined the academic attire of a number of South African institutions, but which focused primarily on the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits).¹⁶ Of interest are the sections on the UN’s and UDW’s academic attire. While the section on UN includes the University hierarchy’s

10 Indeed, while on paper only UN and UDW were amalgamated, units from other universities were also included in the overall restructuring process. For example, the music department at the Durban Institute of Technology (now Durban University of Technology) was closed and merged into the new UKZN Discipline of Music. Durban Institute of Technology was itself a product of a merger between Technikon Natal and ML Sultan Technikon in 2002.

11 Gillard, et al., p. 6.

12 Almost twenty years after the merger, staff who were integrated from UN and UDW into a single staff component at UKZN sometimes still complain about the process. Gillard speaks of some of the problems in their report, including stifled debate within university structures and the collective staff strike in 2006 relating to salaries. However, they propose that the merger was a success. See Gillard et al., pp. 8–9.

13 See <www.burgon.org.uk/research/bibliography> [retrieved 26 January 2021].

14 H. Smith and K. Sheard, *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World*, 3 vols (Cape Town: Balkema, 1970).

15 O. Kinahan and G. Grundlingh, *Academic Dress, Colours, Badges and Neckties of the University of Cape Town* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1989).

16 J. Lundy, ‘Academical Dress of the Republic of South Africa, with Especial Reference to the University of Witwatersrand’ (Fellowship Dissertation, Burgon Society, 2002).

and graduand's garments, the section for UDW only describes the gowns and hoods.¹⁷ One notable finding of Lundy's overall study is that South African doctoral gowns tend to be modelled on English bachelor gowns, while bachelors' gowns are based on the Oxford MA gowns.¹⁸

UKZN was established after the sources above were written, but there are several studies which discuss the designing of new attire for either existing universities or new institutions. In terms of existing universities, two articles stand out. Dragčević et al. examine the process of designing new robes for the University of Zagreb in Croatia.¹⁹ Their focus is on the scientific process of using specific materials and designs to create ceremonial attire for the University hierarchy which displays the latest technological developments. They do not concentrate much on the historical processes or cultural influences which informed the designs. Groves, on the other hand, describes in detail the designs he created for the University of Malta and how these designs were received and slightly adapted.²⁰

There are three articles, in particular, on which this study relies as models, because they discuss academic attire for new universities. Hynes examines the transition of the Kingston Polytechnic to Kingston University, with particular reference to the process and production of new academic attire.²¹ This is the closest comparative study to the research represented below. Goff explores the designs of ceremonial and graduation attire for the University of the Arts London.²² While it is clear that Goff speaks from the perspective of an actual 'actor' within the process of design (often called participant observation within academic literature), he provides a broad structure which I follow closely. Like him, I come to this project with insider knowledge. However, although I am an employee of UKZN currently, I was not at the University when the processes described below were taking place. Additionally, while I have access to official documents related to design and procurement, I cannot speak definitively about minutiae of design as Goff does because I am not a designer, but rather a historian. Peay also examines academic attire for a new university, but from a historical approach.²³ He looks back over one hundred years to explore archival material in order to build a picture of how attire was designed at Nashotah House Theological Seminary. While I do not look back so far in time, I do rely largely on archival material to tell the story below.

Finally, Shaw's monumental *Academical Dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, now in its third edition, was an important reference in relation to robe, hood and cap shape

17 See Lundy, pp. 31–36.

18 For the basic designs of the English BA and MA gowns, see N. Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3rd rev. edn (London: Burgon Society, 2011).

19 Z. Dragčević, S. Bogović, E. Vujasinović and T. Bakran, 'Ceremonial Academic Gowns of the University of Zagreb: Idea to a Finished Product Path', *International Journal of Clothing Science and Technology*, 17.3/4 (2005), pp. 150–60.

20 N. Groves, 'Revisions to the Academic Dress of the University of Malta (L-Università ta' Malta)', *TBS*, 11 (2011), pp. 91–107.

21 A. Hynes, 'Development of Academic Dress in Kingston University: A University for the Twenty-First Century', *TBS*, 19 (2019), pp. 79–121.

22 P. Goff, 'An Inside Job: Reflections on Designs of Academical and Official Dress for the University of the Arts London (formerly the London Institute)', *TBS*, 18 (2018), pp. 7–31.

23 S. Peay, '“Appropriate Hoods”: The Development of Academic Dress at Nashotah House Theological Seminary', *TBS*, 18 (2018), pp. 53–74.

and design, especially as UKZN's graduation attire is loosely based on those of Oxford and Cambridge.²⁴ Shaw provides useful diagrams which display all the necessary components of academic attire, along with details of all degree attire for British and Irish universities.

Before the merger

A description of the attire of both older institutions is required. UN's ceremonial and graduation garments are fully described and illustrated in Smith and Sheard and in Lundy.²⁵ It is clear, as Lundy had described in his study, that doctoral gowns were based on the Oxford bachelor's robe design, while the bachelors' and master's gowns were based on the Oxford doctoral gown.²⁶

When Smith and Sheard was published, UDW did not yet exist. At that time, the students at UDW's predecessor, the University College, were granted their degrees through the University of South Africa, and thus wore its academic attire.²⁷ However, the rector and registrar of the College had special gowns. The rector wore a robe of blue velvet with gold silk facings and edged on the inner side with red ribbon. The gown had long, pointed sleeves which were gathered at the front with a silver cord. The College's coat of arms was embroidered just above the sleeve gathering. The registrar's gown was in the same style as the rector's, but in black with blue facings trimmed with silver. Both included black mortar-board caps: the rector with a gold tassel, the registrar with silver.²⁸

UDW came into existence officially in 1971, whereupon the former University College's garments were updated. As far as I can ascertain, UDW's ceremonial attire does not appear to be described in any academic or popular literature. The chancellor and vice-chancellor's robes were both red, with sleeves similar in shape to the Cambridge doctors' undress gown,²⁹ but with the inverted-T armhole quite low on the sleeve. The robes' facings were black velvet with embroidered alternating emblems of Indian origin (Ashoka's Lion Capital and a peacock with outstretched wings). The embroidery and the outer edging of the facings of the chancellor's gown were gold, while the vice-chancellor's were silver. At the top of the inverted-T armhole of the sleeves the Ashoka Lion symbol appears again, also in gold and silver respectively according to rank. The openings of the sleeves were edged in ribbon, while the bottom of each sleeve had a wider band, either in gold or silver. The caps were John Knox [h3]³⁰ in black velvet with gold or silver trimming and tassel.

The deputy vice-chancellors were robed in royal blue, with the same design of robe as the chancellor and vice-chancellor. The peacock-with-outstretched-wings motif appeared six times down the black velvet facings in silver embroidery. The facings also included silver outer edging. The sleeves had silver edging at the armhole, but no band

24 Refer to Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, pp. 25–40.

25 Smith and Sheard, pp. 509–16, and Lundy, pp. 33–36.

26 Smith and Sheard, p. 510.

27 Smith and Sheard p. 578. The University of South Africa's graduation attire is described on pp. 559–60.

28 Ibid.

29 Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, p. 30.

30 Ibid., p. 40.



Fig. 1 (left). The UDW vice-chancellor (far right) and two deputy vice-chancellors (middle) in full regalia. Undated photograph. Fig. 2 (right). Honorary doctors Chris Mann (DLit) and Beyers Naudé (DTh), showing the UDW doctoral robe and caps, 1983.

at the bottom, nor was there any additional embroidery at the top of the inverted-T, as there was for the chancellor and vice-chancellor. The registrar was robed in blue in the same style as the others, but the black facings did not include any embroidery. However, the sleeves included the Ashoka Chakra in silver embroidery just above the inverted-T armhole. The caps for these ranks were all John Knox style in black velvet with a silver tassel.

The red doctoral gown was closest in style to the Dublin BA robe [b10],³¹ but with a shorter, more shaped, split-sleeve. There was silver trimming on the outside of the facings and at the front-bottom of the yoke, creating a capital ‘T’ shape where the facings and yoke met. The sleeves also had silver trimming. The peacock emblem appeared on either side of the front of the yoke. The doctoral hood (resembling the Wales Simple shape [s5]³²) had a thick silver lace (broken at the neckline), as well as a double cord of silver and red on the rim of the cowl. The inner lining was silver silk, while the outer cape was the faculty colour. Doctors wore a square cap with a tassel of the faculty colour.

The basic bachelor’s gown³³ appears to have been standard for all undergraduate and master’s students. The bachelor’s hood was in the Oxford full style [f5],³⁴ with red cape edging and a broad cowl edging in the colour of the faculty. The rest of the hood was lined in white. Honours hoods were exactly the same as the bachelors’, but with a double white and red cord above the cowl edging. Masters’ hoods were also in the Oxford full shape. The cape was the colour of the faculty with red edging, while the lining was silver or white. A plain black mortar-board was standard for both bachelors and masters graduates.

All graduands and staff wore a black University scarf over their academic robes for official occasions. The scarf included alternate motifs of white-blue-red horizontal lines

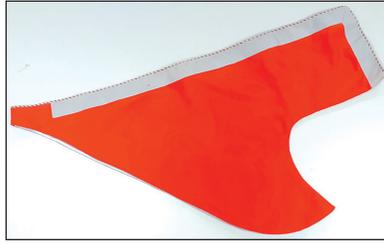
31 Ibid., p. 27.

32 Ibid., p. 36.

33 Ibid., p. 26.

34 Ibid., p. 33.

Figs 3 and 4.
A UDW Doctor
of Laws hood
showing the
shape, double
cord trimming
and silver lining.



Photographs by the author

Fig. 5. Graduates wearing a UDW
BA honours hood. Notice the
double cord trimming on the cowl
edge.



and what look like classical columns. This design is based on the Kente cloth tradition of the Ashanti (Ghana). At the bottom on the wearer's right were the initials UDW in yellow. On the left was the UDW coat of arms in front of the colour of the bearer's faculty. The scarf may have been introduced in order to localize the UDW attire.

The faculty colours were as follows: arts/literature, spectrum green; theology, royal purple; science, gold; engineering, kingfisher blue; commerce, champagne; education, Medici crimson; dentistry, neyron rose; health sciences, peony red and gold; and law, poppy red.³⁵

The liminal period: 2004–06

When a merger of universities takes place, there can be a period of a few years when those who began their academic studies in one of the original bodies still need to complete their qualifications through the same institution. In essence, then, even though UKZN came into existence in 2004, in practice UN and UDW continued to confer degrees and diplomas until 2006. In other words, those who registered for degrees and diplomas at both universities from 2001 to 2003 (and as a result only graduated between 2004 and 2006) needed to be robed according to regulations of the old bodies. The first undergraduates of UKZN emerged only in 2007. Thus, the need for graduation attire was not urgent. However, while the separate universities granted the qualifications, the graduation ceremonies no longer included hierarchies from the separate institutions, but the newly appointed chancellor, vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellors of UKZN. Nor were the graduations for the old institutions held separately. While this was, no doubt, very colourful, it was a fairly complex logistical exercise.

The May 2004 graduation ceremonies included graduands from both UDW and UN. The programmes for each ceremony listed each qualification and then divided the

³⁵ Lundy, p. 32.

candidates according to institution, with UDW students graduating first, followed by the UN students.³⁶ All graduands were hooded according to the institution to which they were registered. Ceremonially, the maces from both older institutions were carried at the front of the academic procession, but the University hierarchy was robed in UN ceremonial attire.³⁷ The same procedure was used in November 2004 for the second round of annual graduations. However, the logistics and organization of these ceremonies, particularly in terms of students graduating from different universities, seemed to cause some problems. At the first meeting of the Academic Ceremonials Committee in March 2005, two minute items relate directly to the 2004 events.

Guidelines should be established regarding the major differences between ex-Westville and ex-Natal Graduation Ceremonies.

The 2005 Graduation Ceremony should be monitored ...³⁸

Interestingly, these guidelines did not seem to be acted upon, but the 2005 ceremonies were different. Firstly, graduands were not listed according to the university at which they registered. They were simply named alphabetically.³⁹ Nevertheless, they were robed according to their respective university of registration.⁴⁰ Again, the hierarchy was robed according to UN's ceremonial attire. Secondly, an interesting matter arose in 2005 and 2006. If a student registered at UKZN in 2005 and 2006 for a degree which was one or two years in duration (an MA degree, for example), and completed their studies before the new UKZN academic attire was designed and manufactured in 2007, which robes did they wear? The answer appears to have been: UN's robes. At the 2005 and 2006 ceremonies the number of UDW robes, hoods and caps gradually decreased, while UN attire dominated.

Setting the parameters and examining the designs

On 22 March 2005 UKZN's Academic Ceremonials Committee met for the first time. Among their agenda items were faculty colours and academic apparel. The Committee's aim was to revise academic procedures before the 2006 graduation ceremonies, but more urgently, they required ceremonial garb for the inauguration of the new chancellor and vice-chancellor towards the end of 2005. Professor W. Peters recommended that all members of the Committee familiarize themselves with academic ceremonial matters as discussed in Smith and Sheard (see Review of Literature above). Professors Ntuli, King, Peters, and Chetty were tasked with making recommendations for the next Committee meeting regarding academic ceremonial dress, colours, themes, mortar-boards and

³⁶ See, for example, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 'Graduation Ceremony: Faculty of Education Saturday 8 May 2004' (Graduation programme, 2004), p. 3.

³⁷ This information was gathered by examining numerous unmarked photographs from the ceremonies in May 2004. These photographs are housed at the Gandhi-Luthuli Document Centre at the UKZN Westville Campus.

³⁸ See points 7.2.1. and 7.2.2. in University of KwaZulu-Natal, 'Academic Ceremonials Committee: Minutes of the Academic Ceremonials Committee Meeting Held 22 March 2005 in the Principal's Dining Room, Westville Campus' (unpublished archival material), p. 5.

³⁹ See, for example, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 'Graduation Ceremony: Faculty of Science and Agriculture Wednesday 13 April 2005' (Graduation programme, 2005), p. 16.

⁴⁰ Numerous video recordings of the graduation ceremonies of that year attest to this. These videos are available from the University Technology Enhanced Learning offices at the Westville Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

capas.⁴¹ In essence, this was a meeting of beginnings. Nothing as yet was decided and designs were yet to materialize.

At the second Committee meeting, held on 9 May 2005, it became clear that a number of meetings in quick succession would be required to organize the official installation of the new chancellor and vice-chancellor of the University, which had now been set for September 2005.⁴² In this particular meeting, the Committee agreed that ‘Gowns would be required for the chancellor, the vice-chancellor, the Chair of Council, Council Members, Members of the Executive and Convocation Members.’⁴³ They also agreed that the colours and symbols to be used in the garments would be drawn from the new University logo.⁴⁴

A mere ten days later, the Committee met again to approve an advert for the gowns, along with detailed guidelines for their design.⁴⁵ The advert was placed in several large South African newspapers: *Sunday Tribune*, *Mail and Guardian*, and the *Sunday Times*.⁴⁶ Again, Professor Peters spoke about and produced photocopies from Smith and Sheard as reference material in the design approval process.⁴⁷ The advert said, ‘The University is looking for designs which will capture the identity of the University, defined in the ... elements of our symbol’,⁴⁸ followed by a detailed explanation of the logo (see Appendix B). While the advert mentions that there are five colours in the logo (representing the five campuses of the university), it never states explicitly what the colours are and, given that the adverts were printed in black and white, these were not immediately obvious to the reader unless they knew the colour logo. The advert required responses by 31 May 2005—a very ambitious timeline, given that the advert was approved only on 19 May.

As a letter from the UKZN procurement office attests, by 1 June three applications had been received: Birches of Grahamstown (a company with well over a century of experience manufacturing clerical and academic garments); Academic Apparel (a Durban-based company servicing numerous local universities); and an independent designer called Paulina Mmaseshoka Ramphisa (a UKZN graduate in design).⁴⁹ The Manager of Procurement for UKZN recommended that Birches and Academic Apparel be invit-

41 See Academic Ceremonials Committee (22 March), pp. 2–3. In November 2004, the UKZN senate had approved the constitution of an Academic Ceremonials Committee. Its required membership, terms of reference and operating procedures are provided in Appendix A. At the first meeting they agreed, ‘that a memorandum would be circulated with immediate effect to the University Community advising that the Academic Ceremonials Committee had been constituted, and was urgently addressing all aspects relating to graduation ceremonies, faculty colours, dress codes, as well as venues’.

42 University of KwaZulu-Natal, ‘Academic Ceremonials Committee: Minutes of the Special Academic Ceremonials Committee Meeting Held 9 May 2005 in the Council Chambers, Westville Campus’ (Unpublished archival material), p. 1.

43 Academic Ceremonials Committee (9 May), p. 3.

44 Ibid.

45 University of KwaZulu-Natal, ‘Academic Ceremonials Committee: Minutes of the Special Academic Ceremonials Committee Meeting Held 19 May 2005 in the Council Chambers, Westville Campus’ (Unpublished archival material), p. 1

46 Academic Ceremonials Committee (19 May), p. 6.

47 Ibid.

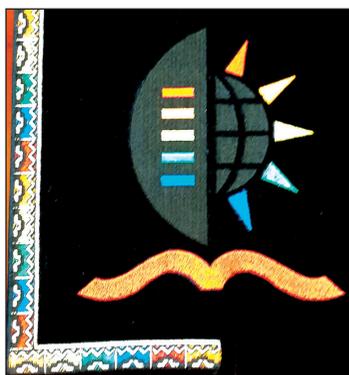
48 Ibid., Annexure 1. The complete advert is provided in Appendix B.

49 P. R. Gareeb, Letter to the Registrar of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (1 June 2005).

ed to make a presentation to the Academic Ceremonials Committee, but suggested that 'the proposal received from PM Ramphisa provides insufficient information ... [and] her work experience is very limited ... therefore [her] proposal cannot be considered'.⁵⁰

From here, there do not seem to be minutes regarding the presentations themselves or when they occurred. One can only assume that the Committee preferred Birches' bid, because on the 13 July a letter was sent to their operations manager ordering gowns for the chancellor, vice-chancellor, registrar, chair of council, orator, council members, members of the executive and members of convocation (a total of 63 robes).⁵¹

The two companies approached the requirement of local elements quite differently. Academic Apparel proposed using original bead-work or embroidery for the facings of all



Photograph by the author

Fig. 6. Facing design of embroidered UKZN logo submitted by Academic Apparel.

the ceremonial robes. For the beading embroidery they recommended a local HIV/AIDS support centre called Sinikithemba.⁵²

One of Sinikithemba's development programmes was a beading and sewing project which employed local people. The proceeds of the work went to supporting HIV/AIDS patients in the community. As Academic Apparel noted in the proposal, both the University of Cape Town and UKZN had supported this project in the past.⁵³ An initial example of the bead work was presented, and is included in the picture below. An alternative was for the logo simply to be embroidered in colour.⁵⁴ An example of this was also included. According to the designs, this beaded or embroidered logo would be on the facings of each gown. The chancellor and vice-chancellor's gowns would have the motif several times down the facings, while for other office bearers it would only appear just below the yoke. The gowns for the chancellor and vice-chancellor were Union Jack Red; for the registrar blue;

and scarlet for all other office bearers. The facings for the chancellor, vice-chancellor and registrar were black velvet, while the other office bearers had different colour facings for their respective ranks. No hat designs were included.

Of the winning design from Birches, only the chancellor's was used almost unaltered. The drawing (see Figs 7 and 8) shows a black robe, with long open sleeves, very much in the Cambridge doctors' style.⁵⁵ The lining is red silk and the sleeves and facings are trimmed with gold ribbon. The sleeves include a small gold tassel at the point, while the University logo is embroidered in colour onto the forearms. The facings include perhaps the most distinctive and attractive aspect of the design: a descending series of diamond-shaped patterns in the five colours of the logo (each 'diamond' is outlined three times in the different colours), which are almost certainly a tribute to Ndebele traditional painting. The bottom of the robe is trimmed with an interlocking triangle motif in the five logo colours, again referencing Ndebele patterns. Each triangle is bordered on two

⁵⁰ Ibid.

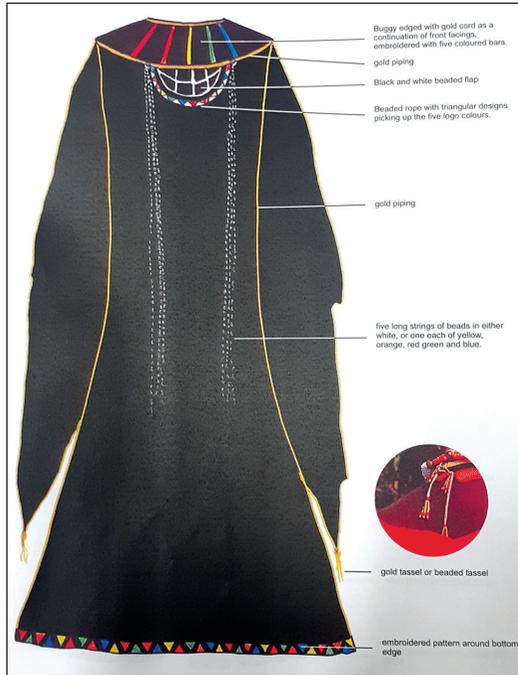
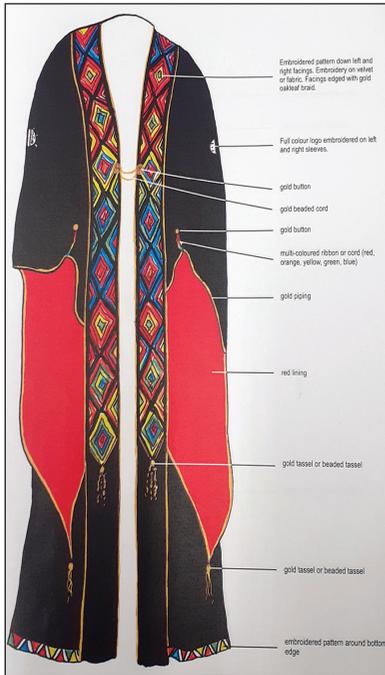
⁵¹ E. Mneney, Letter to B. Garbutt, Operations Manager of Birches and Co. (13 July 2005).

⁵² Academic Apparel, 'Design Proposal for the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ceremonial Robes' (unpublished proposal, 2005), p. 2 (UKZN Registrar's Archives).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁵ Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, p. 31.



Figs 7 (left) and 8 (right). Birches' designs for the UKZN chancellor's robe. Notice the beads at the back of the robe paying homage to local attire, visible in the inserted photo in Fig. 8.

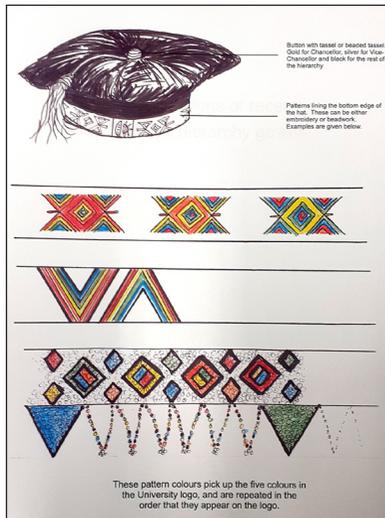


Fig. 9: Birches' design of the UKZN chancellor's cap, featuring geometric designs.

upright sides by a white stripe. On the back yoke of the robe the five colours appear again, almost like long rays of the sun, splayed out radially. A black and white beaded half-circle (obviously a gesture towards the logo's half 'globe') points downwards and is outlined by the interlocking triangle motif (already described above), but this time in bead-work. A trail of beads hangs down on either side of the half-circle, reminiscent of the back of traditional beaded necklaces. The hat is similar to the John Knox,⁵⁶ but with a shaped rim about 5 cm wide. A gold tassel is fitted at the button, while the rim includes a beaded version of the diamond pattern described above. It is, perhaps, this creative incorporation of the new logo's motifs and the incorporation of local bead-work and painting traditions of both the robe and the hat which won the Committee over. The design is uniquely South African, but holds together traditions of the West and Africa creatively and dynamically.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 40.



Fig. 10. Dr Reuel Khosa, the fourth Chancellor of UKZN, is robed by the university orator, March 2022.

The vice-chancellor's robe and hat designs were exactly the same as the chancellor's, save for the lining (which was blue) and the sleeve and facings trim silver (rather than gold).

The beginning of a new tradition

There are no minutes which describe any comments and amendments the Academic Ceremonials Committee had for Birches once they had won the bid to design and manufacture the ceremonial robes. We can only surmise what some of the recommendations would have been, given the resulting final product. So, for example, the vice-chancellor's robe emerged quite differently from the initial design. Instead of being a black robe with blue lining, it became a red robe with black lining, while retaining all the other trim-

Fig. 11. The UKZN Chancellor (middle), Vice-Chancellor (left), and a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (right).



mings and embroidery as initially envisaged. Also, for both chancellor and vice-chancellor, the yoke was re-envisioned. Instead of allowing the diamond motif to run all the way to the shoulder, black velvet would now come over the shoulder from the back down to chest level. On this black velvet ‘shoulder’ the University logo appeared, below which was a V-shape ending of the velvet, linking to the tip of the first diamond motif immediately below. This makes for an elegant and uncluttered yoke.

The deputy vice-chancellors received red robes with black lining, in the same style as the chancellor’s and vice-chancellor’s. The facings are black velvet and include five equally spaced embroidered vertical lines in the five colours of the University logo, stretching from the bottom of the robe right to the top and around the neck. There is no trimming on the facings or the sleeves. The cap is also in the same style as the chancellor’s and vice-chancellor’s, but with a linear beaded design in the required five colours on the rim. A beaded tassel in the five colours is attached at the button of the hat. The registrar’s robe is also the Cambridge doctors’ style, but in light blue with black lining. Like the deputy vice-chancellors’, it also has black velvet facings, but the five vertical embroidered lines are sewn right next to each other (without any black velvet showing in between) and are closest to the edge of the robe. The cap is similar to the deputy vice-chancellors’, but the beaded rim is slightly narrower, showing more black velvet on either side. The tassel is beaded.

These ceremonial garments were worn for the first time at the installation of the University’s new chancellor and vice-chancellor in September 2005.

In November 2005 at the request of the UKZN registrar, Birches furnished the Academic Ceremonials Committee with a list of all the faculty colours for major South African universities.⁵⁷ Between then and the beginning of 2007, the minutes seem to have gone missing. However, the process of designing the graduation attire must have been discussed throughout 2006, because by August a set of designs for bachelors, masters and PhD candidates was prepared by the company Academic Apparel for consideration by the Committee.⁵⁸ It appears that a tender was advertised (probably in much the

⁵⁷ E. Mneney, Letter to B. Garbutt. 22 November 2005 (unpublished archival material – UKZN Registrar’s Archive). This list is provided in Appendix C.

⁵⁸ Academic Apparel, ‘Response to Request for Information: Design of Academic Gowns



Fig. 12. A UKZN master's hood for the College of Health Sciences, showing the modified cowl design and the faculty colour. The lining can just be seen on the edge. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 13. A UKZN PhD hood, showing the thicker cowl binding. Notice the Cambridge shape. Photograph by the author.

same way as for the ceremonial garments) and that Academic Apparel had submitted the winning bid.⁵⁹ Of interest in their submission is Academic Apparel's discussion of the choice of faculty colours. They highlight the symbolism of colours from a broadly Western perspective and according to the Zulu bead code.⁶⁰ Their suggestions for faculty colours were as follows:

- Agriculture: Green (Zulu bead code for contentment)
- Science: Yellow (Zulu bead code for wealth)
- Education: Turquoise (no Zulu code, western symbolic colour of water)
- Health Sciences: White (Zulu bead code for purity, cleanliness and innocence)
- Law: Red (Zulu bead code for strong emotion and love)
- Management Studies: Orange (no Zulu code, western symbolic colour for energy and vibrancy)
- Engineering: Blue (Zulu bead code for faithfulness)
- Humanities: Dark Pink (Zulu bead code for promise and high standing).⁶¹

They also suggested that gold trim be used for all PhD hoods, and silver lining for all postgraduate⁶² hoods.⁶³ Of further significance, the designers noted that the distinctive interlocking-triangle pattern which appears on all the hoods, was inspired by the trimmings of the new orator's gown (the same pattern is also on the chancellor and vice-chancellor's gowns described above).⁶⁴

and Hoods for the University of KwaZulu-Natal: August 2006' (unpublished archival material – UKZN Registrar's Archive).

⁵⁹ Given the date on the designs, it is likely that the tender was advertised in June or July 2006 with the closing date towards the end of July or early August.

⁶⁰ Academic Apparel suggested in their designs that they chose to include the Zulu bead code meanings because of the geographical location of the University. See Academic Apparel, 'Response to Request for Information', pp. 5–7.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² By this they must mean postgraduate diplomas and certificates, because the masters' and doctoral hoods are not lined in silver in the designs.

⁶³ Academic Apparel, 'Response to Request for Information', pp. 5–7.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

By January 2007 two important decision-making meetings took place. Firstly, on 18 January the Academic Ceremonials Committee met to recommend designs for the graduation apparel.⁶⁵ Secondly, on 25 January a delegation from the Academic Ceremonials Committee met with the academic deans of the University to present those recommendations which had been confirmed the week before.⁶⁶ The second meeting agreed as follows:

Bachelors and Masters degrees:

Standard shaped black gowns.

Standard mortar-board caps.

Standard hoods with cowl detail.

Bachelors hoods are unlined.

Masters hoods are distinguished by lining the hood with the faculty colour.

Honours degrees are distinguished by stitching a silver cord on the top edge of the UKZN binding.

Post graduate diplomas (including PGCE) are distinguished by stitching a bronze cord on the top edge of the UKZN binding.

PhD:

Red gown.

Black bonnet with red cord detail.

Square fuller type red hood with black lining.

Senior doctorates:

Red gown with sleeves lined with silver and silver facings.

Black bonnet with silver cord detail.

Certificate qualifications:

Sash instead of a hood with UKZN and faculty colour bindings respectively.

The neckpiece of all hoods should have the UKZN binding... the colours are taken from the UKZN logo and displayed in triangular (jacquard) pattern woven into ribbon to form the binding.

The [neck] band below the UKZN binding should signify the faculty colour. All hoods should show the faculty colour except those of PhD degrees. Faculty colours are as follows:

Science and Agriculture: Forest Green

Education: Royal Blue

Health Sciences: Lilac

Medical School: White

Law: Red

Management Studies: Orange

Engineering: Yellow

Humanities: Cerise

The UKZN and faculty bands should be of equal length.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ University of KwaZulu-Natal, 'Academic Ceremonials Committee: Minutes of the Special Academic Ceremonials Committee Meeting Held 6 March 2007 via Video Conference' (unpublished archival material), p. 2.

⁶⁶ University of KwaZulu-Natal, 'Minutes of a Meeting of Deans and Members of the Executive to Discuss Faculty Colours on 25 January 2007 at the Vice-Chancellor's Dining Room, Westville' (unpublished archival material).

⁶⁷ 'Minutes of a Meeting of Deans' (25 January 2007)', pp. 2-3.

The 'standard shaped black gown' referred to above is based loosely on the Cambridge doctor's gown,⁶⁸ while the 'standard hood' is the Oxford simple shape.⁶⁹ The cap is the normal square cap. The doctor's gown is the same as the bachelor's and master's, but in red, while the hood is the Cambridge style [f1],⁷⁰ and the bonnet is a normal doctor's style.

As can be seen, the designs proposed by Academic Apparel were not accepted without changes. Firstly, some of the faculty colours were changed. Education and Engineering were adjusted to royal blue and yellow respectively. The hood designs were also modified. The interlocking-triangle cowl detail for the bachelors' and masters' hoods was narrowed to allow the faculty colour to be displayed below it. Also, honours hoods received a silver cord above the binding rather than a separate line of the faculty colour under the binding (as in the original drawings). This created a sense of continuity between the UKZN honours hoods and those of UDW and UN (which also had a cord stitched above the binding). Postgraduate certificates and diplomas did not receive a silver lining, as in the original designs, but instead a bronze cord above the binding. It is interesting that an honours degree should receive silver cord, while the postgraduate certificates had bronze. This would seem to indicate that the diplomas/certificates were somehow slightly inferior to the degrees, despite being pegged at the same level in the National Qualifications Framework. Also, the gold trim which was originally included on the doctors' hoods was removed. In fact, the deans dispensed with the original doctors' hoods and the cord colours, preferring black lining for the PhD and a red cord across the board.

Academic Apparel's designs did not include senior doctorates and certificates. These are described above from the meeting with the academic deans. Of interest is the choice of silver for the lining and facings of the senior doctorate. Usually gold would be used for the highest level of a hierarchy, but here it is silver. Since there is no higher degree the University can award, besides perhaps an honorary doctorate (which is not provided for here), it seems strange that silver is used. Also, senior doctorates are normally named degrees, e.g., Doctor of Music, thus it seems unusual that the faculty colours are not represented in the designs.

Comparing the old university garments with the new, there are several notable differences. Firstly, the shape of the first-degree or bachelors and masters' hoods changed from the Cambridge style [f1] to the Oxford simple style [s1]. Secondly, the faculty colours also changed completely compared to the old universities (see Table 1). Thirdly, the distinctive jacquard hood binding was introduced for the new university. However, the gown shape used at both UN and UDW was retained, as were the square mortar-board caps for bachelors and masters graduates.

Returning to the design and manufacture: time was of the essence. The designs which had now been confirmed needed to be manufactured in time for the autumn graduations in April 2007. In early March, a summary of the January meetings and their decisions was presented to the Academic Ceremonials Committee, which thanked Professor T. H. King and Tanya Webbstock for their guidance in the process of design.

68 Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, p. 31.

69 Ibid., p. 35.

70 Ibid., p. 32.

Table 1. Comparison of Faculty Colours

| Faculty | UDW | UN | UKZN |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Science | Gold | Yellow | Forest Green |
| Agriculture | N/A | Light Brown | Absorbed into Science |
| Education | Medici Crimson | Cream | Royal Blue |
| Health Sciences | Peony Red | Cerise | Lilac |
| Medical School | N/A | Cerise | White |
| Management Studies (Commerce) | | | |
| | Champagne | Green | Orange |
| Engineering | Kingfisher Blue | Old Gold | Yellow |
| Humanities (Arts) | Spectrum Green | Blue | Cerise |
| Fine Arts | N/A | Lavender | Absorbed into Humanities |
| Social Science | N/A | Light Blue | Absorbed into Humanities |
| Literature | Spectrum Green | Cream | Absorbed into Humanities |
| Architecture | N/A | Purple | Absorbed into Science |
| Law | Poppy Red | Copenhagen Blue | Red |
| Theology/Divinity | Royal Purple | N/A | Absorbed into Humanities |

It seems that King and Webbstock had worked carefully on the majority of finer details which led to the final designs.

These new garments were first used in the April 2007 graduation ceremonies.

Subsequent changes

Since 2007, the graduation attire has remained unchanged in design, except to reflect one structural change at the University. When UKZN was created in 2004, it was decided that the new institution would follow a governance structure using Colleges, which combined groups of Schools, which in turn comprised groups of Clusters.⁷¹ Thus, the Cluster of Music and Drama is in the School of the Arts, which is in the College of Humanities. The Colleges are governed by deputy vice-chancellors, Schools by Deans, and Clusters by line managers. Thus, a number of faculties were combined to achieve this goal. For example, health sciences and the medical school were merged to create the College of Health Sciences. For a number of logistical reasons, this structural change was slightly delayed until the initial merger between universities had been completed, and thus only came into effect in 2012.⁷² There are now four Colleges in the Universi-

⁷¹ For more detailed information about the restructuring model, see University of KwaZulu-Natal, Colleges and Governance Structures (Approved by Council 14 October 2004), available at <registrar.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/policies/College_Governance_Structures_-_CO15141004.sflb.ashx#:~:text=On%2028th%20June%202004%2C%20with,concerns%20expressed%20by%20Faculty%20Boards> [accessed 13 April 2021] or <bit.ly/3tQfR96> [accessed 22 June 2022].

⁷² K. Cleland, email correspondence with author (20 April 2021): 'While UKZN established Colleges (4 of them) in 2004 when we merged, there were still Faculties until 2011 — that might answer one of your queries below. The Faculties ended in December 2011, with the four Colleges then comprising 19 mega schools'.

ty: Humanities; Health Sciences; Agriculture, Engineering and Science; and Law and Management.⁷³ Thus, faculty colours fell away and College colours were adopted. As a result of this change, a decision was taken to modify the academic attire in 2012.

| College | College Colour |
|---|-----------------------|
| Humanities | Light blue |
| Health Sciences | White |
| Agriculture, Engineering and Science | Green |
| Law and Management | Red |

The only effect was that certain colours lilac, cerise and royal blue disappeared as binding and lining.

Conclusion

This research project aimed to address six main points, all of which have been discussed above. Firstly, I provided references to UN attire in the literature and gave a description of the UDW attire. Then I discussed the liminal period between 2004 and 2006 when ceremonial and graduation attire was still being designed. Both UDW and UN graduation garments were used, but with UN's gradually taking preference. Thirdly and fourthly, I sought to outline the process of procurement and the designs for the ceremonial attire, which was eventually manufactured by Birches of Grahamstown in 2005. Fifthly, I analysed the designs for the graduation attire itself, eventually introduced in April 2007. Finally, I documented the only modification to the attire: the change of faculty to college colours.

In answering these questions, one thing has become apparent. The story of UKZN's ceremonial and graduation attire is one of bold cultural and identity negotiation. The two older universities which formed the core of the new institution had rich traditions of their own, both of which have been replaced by a new and vibrant culture representing aspects of the diversity of South Africa's post-apartheid reality. On the one hand, the new attire is an exciting development of a tradition which stretches back to its origins in Europe. The idea of wearing a robe along with a hood and cap are certainly not a local phenomenon, but the skilful adaptation of these traditional garments to the patterns, colours and symbols of local culture is both fitting and timeous. On the other, the loss of the older traditions from UDW and UN has left gaps which have not been filled.

On the positive side, the use of local bead traditions, and in particular the Zulu bead tradition, in the ceremonial attire and to inform the faculty/college colours, has helped to situate the garments within the geographic location of the University. The Durban and Pietermaritzburg areas have been part of the Zulu kingdom for several centuries and it is right that some of their symbols now form part of the University's identity. The University logo itself, by including the Zulu shield, seems to confirm this newly adopted identity. Birches' designers seem to have been particularly attuned to the latent cultural requirements of the University, because it drew not only on the logo's symbols, but also incorporated Ndebele-like motifs with the mix of colour and the 'diamond-like'

⁷³ For details about how the Schools are clustered, see University of KwaZulu-Natal, Schools, <ukzn.ac.za/schools/schools/> [accessed 13 April 2021].

pattern on the chancellor and vice-chancellor's robes. This has allowed for symbols from other Nguni groupings to be actively in dialogue with Zulu and Western symbols, again providing a rich tapestry of diversity.

On the negative side, while Western symbols have been retained, and local ones added, Indian symbols have been lost or ignored. Indeed, any vestige of UDW's garments has disappeared altogether. For the local Indian community, with its strong cultural ties to India, such a loss must be tragic. UDW was, after all, created as a uniquely Indian university, and during its short existence, it pioneered the study of Indian languages and arts at tertiary level in South Africa. For the most part, these distinct and important contributions to South Africa's multicultural paradigm have now been silenced. It is a pity that a universal symbol of time, such as Ashoka's Chakra, could not have been incorporated in some way to display even further the ideal of multiculturalism.

Appendix A

Academic Ceremonials Committee⁷⁴

CONSTITUTION

Membership

1. Chancellor (ex officio)
2. Vice Chancellor and Principal or nominee (ex officio)
3. Executive Director, Organisational Culture
4. Registrar (ex officio)
5. Senior Graduation Administrator
6. Executive Director of Public Affairs and Communications or nominee
7. Director of Administration (Durban)
8. Director of Administration (Pietermaritzburg)
9. Director of Administration/Facilities Manager (Westville)
10. Executive Dean of Students
11. Four Senate representatives elected by Senate, one of whom will be elected annually as Chairperson
12. One representative of Council elected by Council
13. University Orators
14. Two representatives of the central SRC, one from each centre.

In attendance

Committee Officer

Terms of Reference

To make policy and recommendations to Senate relating to academic dress, academic ceremonies and the use of armorial bearings.

Operating procedures

One formal meeting annually after graduation ceremonies. A second meeting may be called later in the year if deemed necessary.

The quorum for the committee shall be one-third.

⁷⁴ This constitution was included as an Annexure of the 'Academic Ceremonials Committee: Minutes of the Academic Ceremonials Committee Meeting Held 22 March 2005 in the Principal's Dining Room, Westville Campus' (unpublished archival material).

Appendix B

UKZN ceremonial attire advert⁷⁵

Office of the Registrar



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

Design of Academic Apparel

The University of KwaZulu-Natal invites proposals from companies and individuals who have requisite expertise in the design of academic apparel. The University is committed to both the principle and the practical implementation of a procurement policy of Black Economic Empowerment.

The University requires new designs for the following apparel:

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Chancellor• The Chair of Council• Members of the Executive• Convocation Members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Vice Chancellor• Council Members• The Registrar• The Orator |
|--|--|

The University is looking for designs which will capture the identity of the University, defined in the following elements of our symbol:

THE AFRICAN SHIELD: a symbol of protection, for our most valuable assets i.e. Education and Culture, and by extension, African Scholarship.

MULTI-COLOURED BARS: representing five founding campuses of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

THE GLOBE WITH MULTI-COLOURED RAYS: symbolises a rising sun, a new beginning, a symbol of enlightenment.

THE GLOBE: represents a University that is a global player, producing world class graduates.

MULTI-COLOURED RAYS: represent diversity - race, culture, language and social values.

THE WAVE/BOOK/WINGS: underscoring the visual represents the foundation of knowledge, the spirit of the eastern seaboard, and soaring to new heights.

Taken together, this logo represents a University that is rooted in and responsive to Africa's unique qualities, challenges, diversities and strengths, while nurturing and protecting African Scholarship.

THE FOLLOWING TO BE FORWARDED WITH PROPOSALS: • Some idea of costs for such service • Resume/experience with similar work • Profile of companies/individuals • Any other information relating to the type of expertise that will assist the University in making a decision.

Those short listed may be required to make a presentation to the University.

Proposals to reach Mr PR Gareeb, The Procurement Manager, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000 on or before 12 noon, Tuesday, 31 May 2005.

Telephone: (031) 260 7278/ 262 1570.

ADCORP STAFFING SOLUTIONS KZN

⁷⁵ The newspaper from which this advert is excerpted is not provided. It was found in an archive box with the minutes of the Academic Ceremonials Committee meetings.

Appendix C

Faculty colours for several of South Africa's universities in 2005¹

| Faculty | Cape Town | Witwatersrand | Rhodes | Free State | Stellenbosch | Durban Inst. of Tech.* | Nelson Mandela Metropolitan U.† |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------|--------|------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Arts/Humanities | Blue | Yellow | White | Orange | Yellow | Red | Yellow |
| Comm./Econ. | Yellow | Green | Yellow | White | Blue | Blue | Fuchsia |
| Education | none | Ruby | Brown | Green | Blue | none | Orange |
| Engin./Arch. | Green | Crimson | none | Blue | Straw | Green | Blue |
| Health | Red | Grey | none | Mauve | Green | Purple | Green |
| Law | Brown | Purple | Gold | Red | Ruby | none | Blue |
| Science | Purple | Blue | Green | Blue | Red | none | Green |

* Durban Institute of Technology has since changed its name to Durban University of Technology.

† Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University has since changed its name to Nelson Mandela University.

1 Included in the archival box along with the Academic Ceremonials Committee minutes. Mneney's letter refers (E. Mneney, Letter to B. Garbutt, 22 November 2005 (Unpublished archival material)).