

The Lack of a Theology Hood at The University of the West Indies

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The University of the West Indies (hereafter The UWI), formerly the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), was established in 1948, and gained full university status in 1962. It came after much dedication, research and funding thanks to the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies formed by Oliver Stanley in 1943 when he was the Secretary of State for the Colonies. High Court Judge Cyril Asquith was made head of the Commission and a West Indies Committee was formed of which Sir James Irvine was made head.

This Commission made provisions particularly for key areas of study to be taught and thus catered for, within the university setting. The curriculum proposed initially for the new University was limited to the Faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine. No school or institution was set up for the teaching of agriculture or of engineering; but ‘provision [was] made for education leading to graduation in these important branches of applied science’, particularly for agriculture through the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad which was established in St Augustine, Trinidad, on 30 August 1921 (His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1945).

No arrangements were made for the study of law, music or of theology, though these subjects would have been common to find in many other universities predating the UCWI. Though theology was not included within the proposed curriculum, there was already a college—and a considerably renowned one—which facilitated theology and pastoral studies, within the Island of Barbados.

Codrington College, completed in 1743 and opened in 1745 in St John, Barbados, was established by the will of Christopher Codrington dated 22 February 1703 and later branched into the Codrington Theological College and the Lodge School in 1830—the latter so named after the Mansion House, which later became the Principal’s ‘Lodge’.¹ The College was affiliated with Durham University from 1875 in which students at Codrington read theology (for either the BA or LTh) whilst others read classics. The Durham degree in classics ceased in 1955, and students studied at the UCWI as external students of London University until 1962. Codrington then became affiliated with the UCWI in 1965 where the Licentiate (LTh) started the same year and subsequently the newly Senate approved BA in Theology was introduced in 1971 (Holder, 1988).² As a result of the affiliation with Durham, the holders of the BA in Theology, BD (Bachelor of Divinity) or the BCL (Bachelor of Civil Law) or any other degree from Durham, would have worn Durham’s academic dress for degree ceremonies at The UCWI/UWI. This was the case up until 1974 when the

1 Read more about the history of Codrington College in Holder.

2 The Right Revd Dr. John W. D. Holder is the former Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church in the Province of the West Indies and Lord Bishop of Barbados; he retired in 2018.

first holders of the BA in Theology from The UWI were graduated, by this point wearing academic dress of The UWI which was adopted in 1966. Durham's BA hood is full [f6], black, the cowl part-lined and the cape bound 1" [white] fur, Figure 1 (Groves, 2001).³

The BA in Theology is still offered at Codrington to this day however, as well as Durham's degrees in Theology, though since the introduction of the BA at The UWI, degrees in theology from Durham through Codrington are particularly at the postgraduate level. It is interesting that theology was not made or rather designated a 'professional' degree as is the case for degrees in education, medicine, law as well as agriculture and engineering—some of which came long after the BA in theology. The custom at The UWI was—as was the case at many other universities—that every faculty would have had its own colour and as faculties developed and new programmes were introduced, new colours were added. Due to the complexity of the academic system and the creation and development of specialist areas, faculty colours eventually became discipline colours. These discipline colours were coordinated in such a way to reflect the principal area of study—the Faculty—and were differenced with other colours to show specializations. The colours are then reflected in the lining of the academic hood indicating which degree the graduand would be receiving or rather, the degree to which they have been admitted.

These discipline colour variations could be seen at The UWI where, for example, the colour of the Faculty of Science and Technology (formerly Pure and Applied Sciences, hereafter SciTech), was once Allamanda Yellow regardless of the area of study, however today a BSc in Natural Sciences is Allamanda Yellow, whilst a BSc in Engineering is Aluminium Grey, and a BSc in Agriculture is Avocado Green.⁴ (Nicholls, 2020.) These advances and distinctions never happened for the area of Theology, like as though theology as a specialization was all but forgotten.⁵ Many other universities included theology amongst their primary degree areas, for example, the Regulations for the Academic Dress of London *c.* July 1952, listed their faculties and their colours: Theology—Sarum Red, Arts—Russet Brown, Law—Blue, as well as a variety of colours for varying specializations in Medicine.

Academic dress of The UWI began to be formally developed circa 1962, with the finally agreed dress being worn for the first time in 1966. The gowns feature the use of the lightweight and very breathable blue princetta fabric⁶ of a modified shape—which is essentially a Cambridge BA [b2] gown with the forearm seam opened to the shoulder and the inner side of the sleeve removed. The hoods are of the old Fellow of the Royal College of Organists shape *c.*1930, similar to the Wales [s5], maintaining a rounded cowl, and a rounded cutout towards the liripipe, however unlike Wales, which has a pointed liripipe, the Organists' pattern is rounded downwards. The hood generally is cut at a steeper angle.

³ Nicholas Groves PhD, MA, FRHistS, FBS, is a historian who has published widely on the topics of ecclesiastical history and academic dress.

⁴ UWI Archives, 'Did You Know?!: The UWI Academic Dress'.

⁵ There is no set or particular process to denote an area as a professional degree which would grant it its own postnominals, discipline colour and recognition, other than a decision via the Senate of the university. What particularly makes these areas worthy of 'professional or specialization' status can range from the niche area of the subject—for example music (BMus)—to the focus, type or quality (credit weightings) of courses involved. A BMus more than likely contains more 'hard core' music topics than a BEd(Mus) or a BA(Mus), which would contain more education and liberal arts topics respectively. Comparatively, the same is true of the BA in Theology and the LTh at The UWI.

⁶ Princetta is a fabric made of wool and cotton, it is light, thus suitable for use especially in tropical climates.

As the degree, the BA in Theology is offered within the Faculty of Humanities and Education (HumEd), holders of the BA in Theology or the Licentiate (LTh), would be entitled to wear the hood lined with the faculty colour for Humanities (formerly Arts) which is a blue princetta hood, lined Plumbago Blue bound University Red. As Education has been denoted as a professional degree and is taught within its own school—The School of Education (SOE), it was assigned its own discipline colour which is White. One may posit, that because theology was not included in the main faculties of The UCWI and later The UWI, nor was it formally recognized as a special degree within HumEd, theology was never denoted a specialist or professional degree, and thus never gained its own distinct colour or post-nominals. Due to the aforementioned points, no hood was ever developed for the specific area of theology.

To ‘combat’ this, theology would first have to be designated as a professional or special degree, gaining it a particular post-nominal and recognizing it as the first professional degree for priests and religious scholars—where it would gain an extension of the BA, through BA(Th) or BA(Theol) as in the case of the science degrees like BSc(Eng) or BSc(Agr). It could also be denoted as a BTh or BD if given its own school faculty as per the BEd in the School of Education; for example, ‘The Faculty of Theology and Religion’. It could finally be structured—as stated before—where there are different degrees for different ‘classes’ or qualities of course content. Perhaps the LTh and BA in Theology would remain in HumEd, whilst the BD or BTh would only be offered through the Faculty of Theology and Religion—as is the case for the geography degrees at The UWI—Mona, where there are three different geography degrees: BSc (SciTech), a BA (HumEd) and the BEd (SOE).

Secondly, a colour would be chosen usually to reflect the principles, or the nature of the degree, particularly a colour not in use for other faculties, as well as a colour with reasonable significance and meaning—for example blood red to represent the blood of Christ, or perhaps palatinate purple with a trim of white fur as tribute to Durham’s BA and BD degrees. Thirdly, this colour is then reflected within the academic dress whether the hood be differenced with these colours or solely containing them, similar to The UWI’s medical degree hoods—particularly those of nursing and of basic medical sciences.

In conclusion, as the university grows and develops and new areas of study are introduced, the university usually makes every effort to highlight the importance of every area. Not to say that the degree in theology would increase in rank or specialty if granted ‘professional or specialty status’ compared to the other degrees offered by the university, as to date, there is no set hierarchy of degrees at The UWI outside of the general ranking from Bachelor degrees to Honorary Doctorates. However, granting such status is an outward symbol that the area and discipline of theology forms one of the fundamental areas of study within academia and this is important as it is the only area that caters specifically to the spiritual needs of those who read for their degrees—particularly those preparing for the priesthood within the faculty.

And, in light of the College’s much esteemed history, one spanning 275 years, as well as the nature of the degree, I am sure the designation of a discipline colour would be welcomed with open arms by all those who study in the faculty and receive their BA in Theology or LTh, thus placing it among the ‘ranks and dignity’ of the much esteemed and revered degrees such as the BEd, LLB, MBBS and BSc(Eng).

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