

The Academic Dress of the University of Essex

By Edmund Eggleston

Albert Sloman,¹ the first vice-chancellor of the University of Essex, was invited by the BBC to give the Reith Lectures in 1963. For the title of his lectures he chose ‘A University in the Making’. The lectures were broadcast over a six-week period in November and December 1963.² In them Sloman gives a very detailed account of how to go about planning and building a university from scratch, including all the political, economic and social aspects which the nascent university had to consider. Every component of university life is scrutinized and his vision for the future of the university’s proposed campus at Wivenhoe Park, near Colchester, is discussed in the greatest of detail. There is, however, one element of university life which he does not discuss, and that is academic dress. Sloman was a graduate of Oxford University—he read Modern Languages at Wadham College—and it may be that his early acquaintance with the ancient forms of academic dress used at Oxford was to influence the decisions made in 1963 and in the years following about the choice of the items of academic dress to be used at Essex.

Formation of a Committee on Academic Dress

At a meeting of the Council of Governors of the University of Essex in July 1963 it was resolved that a Committee on Academic Dress be formed.³ The members of this committee were to be the chairman of the Council of Governors, Col Sir John Ruggles-Brise,⁴ the chairman of the Finance Committee, William Wade, and the vice-chancellor, Sloman. They were given the power to co-opt others, and were asked to consider which members of the University should have academic dress, to invite and consider designs for all academic robes, and to send forward proposals for consideration by the Council of Governors.

A memo in the University’s archive sheds a small ray of light onto the thoughts of the Committee on Academic Dress when they were in the process of selecting a firm of robe-makers. The memo has no date, but probably was written for one of the initial meetings of the Committee on Academic Dress:

Robes

1. Ede & Ravenscroft

(a) Likely to be strongly traditional in colour.

1 Professor Sir Albert Edward Sloman, CBE, MA, DPhil, DU, DLitt. 1921–2012. Knighted 1987. Vice-chancellor, 1962–87.

2 At <www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/the-reith-lectures/transcripts/1960/> [retrieved 10 Jan. 2017].

3 Council of Governors, 11 July 1963, p. 23, minute 118.

4 Colonel Sir John Archibald Ruggles-Brise, 2nd Baronet, CB, OBE, DL, TD, 1908–2007. Lord Lieutenant of Essex from 1958 to 1978, and was the first pro-chancellor of the University of Essex from 1964 to 1979.

(b) Likely to be conservative in colour. One can of course always suggest different colours to them, but this, perhaps, ought to be the job of a professional designer.

2. Look into the possibility of Hardy Amies who, it seems, has the right kind of academic interest and is, at the same time, a very practical designer.⁵

The Committee on Academic Dress quickly got to work and, three months later, at the October 1963 meeting of the Council of Governors, the following decisions were minuted:

The Chairman said that the experience of other universities had been borne in mind and advice had been sought from the Royal College of Art. As a result an approach had been made to Hardy Amies who had agreed to submit designs.⁶

It was also agreed that Messrs Ede & Ravenscroft should be asked to advise, without commitment, on the costs of the designs submitted.⁷

Later in the same month, Hardy Amies wrote to Mr Anthony Rowland-Jones, the University registrar, 'Will you please thank the Governors of the Council of the University for their agreeing to our fee of two hundred and fifty guineas.⁸ (£262. 10s., equivalent to £5,330 in 2018.)

The Committee on Academic Dress again reported to the Council of Governors at the meeting in December 1963.⁹ They had approved designs submitted by Hardy Amies for the robes for the chancellor, the pro-chancellor and the vice-chancellor and said that the designs had been shown to the chancellor.¹⁰ Coloured sketches of the designs were circulated at the meeting. The Council of Governors resolved that the designs submitted by Hardy Amies for the robes for the chancellor, the pro-chancellor and the vice-chancellor be approved.¹¹

The chairman also reported that a representative of Ede & Ravenscroft had been associated with Hardy Amies and had advised on costs. Ede & Ravenscroft were to be invited to submit a quotation for making up robes in accordance with Hardy Amies' design. The Council of Governors passed a further resolution which appointed Ede & Ravenscroft to be official robemakers to the University.¹²

In February 1964 the chairman of the Committee reported that it proposed to ask Amies to design robes for the University treasurer and a page for the chancellor, and in due course academic dress for BA, MA, MSc, and PhD graduates. The chairman also reported that the committee had felt that no academic dress for undergraduates should be designed at this stage, and, indeed, none ever was. The report of the Committee on Academic Dress was accepted by the Council of Governors.¹³ However, Amies was, at a later stage, to pass

5 Edwin Hardy Amies, 1909–2003. KCVO 1989.

6 Council of Governors, 2 Oct. 1963, minute 141.

7 *Ibid.*, minute 142.

8 Hardy Amies, letter to Anthony Rowland-Jones, 9 Oct. 1963.

9 Council of Governors, 19 Dec. 1963, p. 41, minutes 215–18.

10 Several requests were made in 2016 and 2017 to Messrs Hardy Amies, London, for access to their archive material. No reply to these enquiries was ever received.

11 In his correspondence Hardy Amies asked the University to return to him all his sketches. These drawings are not in the University's archive collection and it has not been possible to gain access to them in the Hardy Amies archive.

12 Council of Governors, 2 Oct. 1963, minute 142.

13 Council of Governors, 27 Feb. 1964, p. 54, minute 277.

the design of the scheme of academic dress for the University's graduates to the firm of Ede & Ravenscroft.¹⁴ On another occasion he was to describe the University of Essex as being 'a gownless university',¹⁵ meaning that the use of academic dress was not a part of its daily life.

Thus at a very early stage in the planning of the new university it had been decided that the robes would be designed by Hardy Amies and the robemakers would be Ede & Ravenscroft. The decision of the University to appoint Amies in conjunction with Ede & Ravenscroft was to be questioned several times by Dr Charles Franklyn,¹⁶ who considered himself to be one of England's leading experts in the design of new schemes of academic dress in the years following the Second World War. Of the robes which he had designed for other universities, he frequently boasted that they were 'the most beautiful and dignified in the world'.¹⁷ In Franklyn's mind, to appoint him as a consultant on the subject of academic dress was the only way for Essex.

Franklyn's correspondence with the University

While the Committee on Academic dress were getting on with their various tasks of engaging the services of a designer, the appointment of official robemakers and the actual design of robes for the officers of the University, the University's vice-chancellor and treasurer were in receipt of letters from Franklyn. He offered his services to the University, telling them how well qualified he was in the fields of academic dress and heraldic design. To the student of twentieth-century academic dress, Franklyn needs no introduction!

The University's Special Collections archive holds nine letters from him, written between September 1963 and January 1964. These letters are written on the reverse side of headed letter paper which Franklyn had taken from the School of Medicine at the University of Hull.¹⁸ To each sheet Franklyn has glued a printed slip showing his Sussex home address and telephone number.

It is a matter of regret that the archive does not have the very first letter which Franklyn says he wrote to them as early as January 1962. In this letter he had described his proposals for a full scheme of dress at Essex. Throughout this correspondence it is clear that the vice-chancellor and the treasurer are not eager to engage in correspondence with Franklyn. Perhaps they had been warned by vice-chancellors at other universities not to employ him in any capacity or, more probably, they had their own firm ideas on how they wished to proceed with their academic dress project and were not seeking advice from elsewhere. The following paragraphs are a synopsis of the correspondence from Franklyn held at the University of Essex.

In September 1963, Franklyn wrote to the University treasurer, Alderman Leatherland:

May I recall [. . .] letter of 21st Jan. 1962? After two years I have heard
no more and am waiting still to hear from you. You passed my letter on to

14 Hardy Amies, letter to Anthony Rowland-Jones, 4 Jan. 1966.

15 Press Release, Hardy Amies, May 1967. Installation of Chancellor, correspondence and photographs, Box 34(a).

16 Dr Charles Aubrey Hamilton Franklyn, 1896–1982. Medical doctor, and scholar of genealogy, heraldry, and academical dress.

17 Frank W. Haycraft, *The Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges*, 5th edn, revised and enlarged by Frederick R. S. Rogers, Charles A. H. Franklyn, George W. Shaw and Hugh Alexander Boyd (Lewes: privately printed by W. E. Baxter, 1972).

18 For Franklyn's work at the University of Hull see Richard Baker's article in *TBS*, 11 (2011), pp. 30–58.

FRANKLYN, ESQ. MA. MD. FLS.
WICKHAM HILL HOUSE, HASSOCKS, SUSSEX.

Academic Door

Dear Miss Dawson

Monday 13th Jan '64

(1) Many thanks indeed for your letter of the 10th and enclosure. a academic official box received at 9.53 am today. I got it shelling is a academic - reputable (the hand document) I am glad that the V.C. has read the report in OXFORD, Dec. issue.

There is no such thing as a free lunch!

My colleague, Dr. George W. Thwaites, D.Phil. Director of the Dept. of Biology at Lansing, a great authority on hoods & robes, whom I have been helping for years, and I, think it is fantastic to ask a ladies' dress maker to design an official robe! And the fact that he has had to go to Edw & R. to help makes it even more absurd. This means that John F. Austin (one of Edw & R. directors) will virtually control, make sum something - you will have to pay a big fee to Edw & R. Harjams, when I moved here had the best scheme in the world designed for you about 10 years!

I saw no report in TIME, was it in?
(2) As the Univ. of Essex has no Arms and I allowed to design these? This has been my work for 4 1/2 years
Yours sincerely
Charles Dawkins

Fig. 1. A page of a letter from Dr Charles Franklyn, January 1964. Special Collections, Albert Sloman Library. Box 37(c).

the secretary, who passed it on to Sloman, the V-C, but so far no one has taken any action and asked me to do anything. I should mean something to Sloman as an O.T.¹⁹ I have designed already the complete system of academical dress and official dress for 4 British universities incl: Southampton, Hull and Malaya. Can you find anyone better qualified to design [...] the most dignified and beautiful academic dress? There is one beautiful silk available now, that no other has, that you could have if you would seize it before anyone else does.

... and as an Essex man and as an acknowledged authority on the subject, were to be pushed aside as of no account. Sloman ought to jump for me as I am an O.T. He has good reason to know what that means.²⁰

The next day Vice-Chancellor Sloman wrote to the treasurer, 'In fact we were never able to find the letter to which Franklyn refers.'²¹

In a reply to the vice-chancellor, the treasurer wrote,

He [Franklyn] seems to be a tiresome old gentleman. In response to my formal acknowledgement of his letter to me he has written again. I have not acknowledged this letter, and I don't want to get involved in correspondence with him.²²

A few days later, still expecting to be invited to design the Essex scheme, Franklyn wrote again to the vice-chancellor saying, 'Several beautiful wool hoods have been made up already but that is a little secret! *PS*: I would like, too, to design your arms which work I have done for over 40 years.'²³ Not having received an encouraging reply, Franklyn writes again at the beginning of December 1963:

I have had charming letters from several individuals but NIL instructions, NIL definitive, and no word of encouragement to go ahead.

I am sure that there is no other Essex born man who is an expert on the subject and who has devoted a lifetime to it, and has designed complete systems for 4 or 5 of the British universities. It is quite beyond the capabilities of tailors and robemakers.²⁴

Only a week later, on 10 December 1963, the vice-chancellor sent Franklyn the news that an appointment had been made; he wrote, 'The Council of the University has now made an appointment of a person to design its academic dress and there will be a public announcement in due course.'²⁵

The next day, Franklyn replied:

Thank you for your letter of yesterday, which gave me a nasty shock, for it is nasty for an Essex man, and a 300 year connection with the county, to be turned down flat and snubbed: and, presumably a non-Essex born man with no connection with the county asked to do this for you.²⁶

19 O.T. = Old Tonbridgian, a former pupil of Tonbridge School, Tonbridge, Kent.

20 Franklyn, letter to Leatherland, 18 Sept. 1963.

21 Sloman, letter to Leatherland, 20 Sept. 1963.

22 Leatherland, letter to Sloman, 21 Sept. 1963.

23 Franklyn, letter to Sloman, 23 Sept. 1963.

24 Franklyn, letter to Sloman, 3 Dec. 1963.

25 Sloman, letter to Franklyn, 10 Dec. 1963.

26 Franklyn, letter to Sloman, 11 Dec. 1963.

On 13 December 1963 Franklyn wrote to Leatherland to obtain his support and overturn the University's decision:

Further to your kind letter of Sept: 19th, I take it that you know what has happened, that I have been spurned and pushed aside as of no value at all! I had a curt note from Sloman 2 days ago that some other man had been asked to design the robes. I take it that you were not present when this decision was taken else you would have not agreed to it? Even now it is not too late for you can say it would be much to the advantage of the new university if we hear what Dr Charles Franklyn has to say and if we see his proposals before we commit ourselves.²⁷

Alderman Leatherland wrote to the vice-chancellor on 16 December:

Another letter from this troublesome old gentleman. It does not seem to need any further action by you. I merely send it to you so it can go in the archives. I have replied briefly – – sorry he is so disappointed – – decision taken in the light of all the circumstances – – he was certainly not overlooked – – and the designer is an Essex man.²⁸

On 20 December the vice-chancellor replied,

Thank you for the letter from Franklyn about academic dress. I am afraid that he is pestering me so much that I now write only the shortest notes to him. I am sorry that you should have been bothered.²⁹

At the beginning of the new year the vice-chancellor wrote briefly to Franklyn:

As you will have seen from the Press, Hardy Amies has been appointed to design the academic dress of the University of Essex. There is nothing that I can add to the Press statement.³⁰

In his reply, Franklyn asked,

Can you tell me please who Hardy Amies is? Is he a son at Oxford or Cambridge, a professor, a tailor, or what? Is his family in 'Who's Who?' 'Kelly's Handbook' or any other standard work of reference? I seem to know the name but I have no idea what he has to do with academic dress.³¹

The last letter in this sequence of correspondence is from Franklyn to the vice-chancellor's secretary, Miss Dawson on 13 January 1964.

My colleague, Dr. George W. Shaw, M.Sc., D.Phil., Director of the Dept. of Biology at Lancing, a great authority on robes and hoods, whom I have been helping for years, and I, think it is fantastic to ask a ladies' dress maker to design all official robes! And, the fact that he has had to go to Ede & R. to help, makes it even more absurd. This means that John F. Austin [one of Ede & Ravenscroft's directors] will virtually control, make & run everything. You will have to pay a big fee to Ede & Hardy Amies, when you could have had the best scheme in the world designed by an expert for nix!³²

27 Franklyn, letter to Leatherland, 13 Dec. 1963.

28 Leatherland, letter to Sloman, 16 Dec. 1963.

29 Sloman, letter to Leatherland, 20 Dec. 1963.

30 Sloman, letter to Franklyn, 7 Jan. 1964.

31 Franklyn, letter to Sloman, 8 Jan. 1964.

32 Franklyn, letter to Dawson, 13 Jan. 1964.

He concludes his letter by asking again to be allowed to design the coat of arms for the university:

As the University of Essex has no arms am I allowed to design these? This has been my work for 42 years. Yours sincerely, Charles Franklyn.

The university did not reply and their correspondence with Franklyn came to an end.

The design of the robes for the officers of the university

Meanwhile, Hardy Amies had accepted the commission from the University in August 1963 to design its officers' robes. He wrote to Roland-Jones, the registrar:

Firstly, let me say that I am very deeply interested in this project and am very honoured that the University should have asked us to consider designing the new robes. Be assured that we will do our very best for you.

[. . .] we think we ought to ask a fee of 250 guineas.³³

The vice-chancellor, Sloman, was eager to engage the services of Hardy Amies for this project. On his part, Amies wanted to push ahead with the design work between mid-August and mid-September. But Sloman was concerned that during August 1963 the people he needed to consult, and obtain permission from, were away from the University on their summer holidays. He expressed his worry to the University's registrar, Rowland-Jones:

As you know I am keen that we should have him [Hardy Amies], but I wonder if we should try to push this through in August when, presumably, Sir John is away and we cannot get him and Leatherland together. I would have hoped that Amies could have waited until September. If, however, this is completely out, presumably you will have to try to contact the other two, but it could possibly mean setting them against the idea.³⁴

A few days later Rowland-Jones wrote to Hardy Amies:

I have now heard from all the members of our Committee and am pleased to say that it was unanimously agreed that you should be invited to submit a design for the University's robes.³⁵

At the beginning of October 1963 Hardy Amies sent his sketches for the chancellor, vice-chancellor and pro-chancellor's robes. Describing the chancellor's robe, he wrote:

The robe depends a great deal on the cut which must be done so as to give quite a deal of fullness, so that the robe flows in motion. The Chancellor's robe would be the same cut as the other two but slightly more exaggerated and I would almost prefer a train, but, if this is impracticable, it is not absolutely necessary. We propose to line the sleeves with white moiré.

After great consideration I have retained the mortar-board, but I want the board itself to be fixed so that it tilts well forward, as I think this elegant and dashing, and yet not difficult to wear for a man who is no longer young or who feels awkward dressed up.

I think it would be quite easy to make variations and simplifications to the styles we suggest to make robes for Doctors, Masters, etc.³⁶

33 Amies, letter to Rowland-Jones, 7 Aug. 1963.

34 Sloman, memo to Rowland-Jones, 21 Aug. 1963.

35 Rowland-Jones, letter to Hardy Amies, 23 Aug. 1963.

36 Amies, letter to Rowland-Jones, 10 Oct. 1963.

Amies' desire to tilt the square of the mortar-board 'well forward' may have been his idea to provide a design that was both contemporary and dashing, but it was not new. Similar hats with the board tilting forward had been in use in the 1670s and were depicted by David Loggan in his *Oxonia illustrata* published in 1675.³⁷



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

When Hardy Amies suggested a cap with square top tilted forward, Fig. 2, he borrowed from a style illustrated by David Loggan in *Oxonia Illustrata*, 1675.

Dr Nicholas Groves has suggested that Loggan's illustrations may have influenced Cecil Beaton's hood designs for the University of East Anglia, the design of Loggan's Oxford MA hood being similar to UEA's MA hood.³⁸ Similarly, it may also be possible that Amies was aware of Loggan's illustrations of seventeenth-century academic dress and these influenced his design of the square cap for Essex.

The exact details of the robes were discussed at length over the following months and into 1964. In January 1964 Ede & Ravenscroft provided an estimate for the chancellor's robe, describing it:

Chancellor's Robe with Train, in all silk Ottoman of university red, trimmed with hand made gold plate lace, as per drawing submitted by Mr Amies but with further small additions to the gold ornamentation. £630. 1. Od. (inc. Purchase Tax).³⁹

On 13 February 1964, Rowland-Jones wrote to Ede & Ravenscroft giving them the go-ahead to make the gowns and hats for the chancellor, pro-chancellor and vice-chancellor.⁴⁰ The quotations to supply these items were:

Chancellor's Robe with Train	£639.	1.	Od.
Chancellor's Hat	£16.	12.	6d.
Pro-Chancellor's Robe	£317.	2.	6d.
Pro-Chancellor's Hat	£11.	12.	6d.
Vice-Chancellor's Robe	£164.	9.	6d.
Vice-Chancellor's Hat	£10.	2.	6d.

All prices include Purchase Tax⁴¹

³⁷ Loggan, David. *Oxonia illustrata* (Oxford: the engraver, 1675).

³⁸ Nicholas Groves, *The Academical Dress of the University of East Anglia* (London: Burgon Society, 2005), pp. 7–9.

³⁹ Equivalent to £12,790 in 2018. J. F. Austin, Ede & Ravenscroft, 29 Jan. 1964.

⁴⁰ Rowland-Jones, letter to Austin, 13 Feb. 1964.

⁴¹ Austin, letter to Rowland-Jones, 29 Jan. 1964.



Fig. 5. The back of the chancellor's robe, showing the gold plate lace decoration around the yoke.



Fig. 6. Sketch for chancellor's robe, Hardy Amies, no date. This must be a revised sketch for the chancellor's robe, as it does not show the robe's train which was originally proposed.

The total cost for the above six items was £1,159 0s. 6d., equivalent to £23,530 in 2018.

The chancellor's robe at Essex differs from the traditional pattern for these robes, as it does not have a flap collar which is usually found on a lay gown. The back of the robe has an arched yoke and the gold plate lace decoration is continued across the shoulders of the robe and around the yoke.

The University advised Ede & Ravenscroft, in February 1964, that the robe for the vice-chancellor would be required for late April that year, when he would be attending the installation of the chancellor of the University of Newcastle.⁴²

In March 1964 the University approached Messrs Warner & Sons Ltd, a firm of silk weavers, and asked them if they would make a cash contribution to the University. Warners

⁴² Rowland-Jones, letter to Austin, 13 Feb. 1964.

replied stating that they could not make a cash contribution to the University, but they would be happy to supply their fabrics to the University at factory cost. The University did not avail themselves of this offer.⁴³

The University asked Amies to supply an additional design for a robe for the University treasurer and a costume for the chancellor's train-bearer, or page-boy.⁴⁴ Eventually it was decided to omit the train from the chancellor's robe (although initially Amies was not happy to do this) and thereby eliminate the need for a page-boy. The proposed page's costume was to be a suit designed by Amies, made of finest mohair, trimmed with silk and silk velvet, with best quality Marcella waistcoat, and best lightweight 'dogs tooth' trousers and would cost £54 16s. 6d. including Purchase Tax,⁴⁵ equivalent to £1,100 in 2018. To complete the outfit, a black silk top hat was also proposed, but later was considered to be 'not very necessary'.⁴⁶

An article in the *Sunday Times*, April 1966, discussed the academic dress of the University of East Anglia at Norwich. Sloman highlighted this particular paragraph in the article:

Beaton's first 100 undergraduate gowns had cost £3 15s. each. Lord Franks's costume was produced for just over £100, a figure that will startle Scottish academics when they come to pay for the outfit for Sir Alec Douglas-Home, installed last week as the Chancellor of Edinburgh University. It cost £1,000.⁴⁷

In a memo Sloman wrote to the University's chairman Sir Eric Berthoud:⁴⁸

Our Chancellor's gown will not be quite as cheap as Beaton's, but nothing like the cost of Sir Alec's. We shall not, of course, have undergraduate gowns. If Beaton's gowns were cheap, the Norwich installation was an extremely expensive affair, though very impressive.⁴⁹

The design of academic dress for bachelors, masters and doctors

The University's Committee on Academic Dress had always intended that their scheme for Essex graduates would be designed by Hardy Amies, to complement his work on the officers' robes and they discussed the following points in February 1964:

1. Should Mr Amies be asked to design dress for any other officer than the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, and the Vice-Chancellor (e.g. the Treasurer, Public Orator)?
2. Should Mr Amies be give [*sic*] the go-ahead to design the dress for a page?
3. Should Mr Amies be asked to prepare designs for academic dress for the following graduates—BA, MA, MSc, PhD? Should there be some indi-

43 L. St.J. Tibbitts (Managing Director, Warner & Sons), letter to J. F. Crittall (Estates & Planning Officer), 10 March 1964.

44 Rowland-Jones, letter to Amies, 23 March 1964.

45 Austin to Rowland-Jones, 18 June 1964.

46 Senior Assistant Registrar (DWJM), letter to Amies, 6 Aug. 1964.

47 *Sunday Times*, 24 April 1966.

48 Sir Eric Alfred Berthoud, KCMG, DL, 1900–1989. Founding Chairman of the University of Essex. Deputy Lieutenant of Essex.

49 Sloman, memo to Berthoud, 26 April 1966. The installation took place on 20 May 1967.



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Fig. 7. The Right Honourable John Bercow, MP. Appointed chancellor of the University of Essex, July 2017. The University has commissioned a new robe for Mr Bercow's use, it was to be used for the first time at the July 2018 graduation ceremonies.*

* Personal correspondence from Vicky Passingham, Communications Officer, University of Essex, 18 May 2018.

cation of the School in which the person graduated (e.g. by a distinguishing colour on some part of the dress)?

4. Does the Committee agree with the view expressed by the academic staff that there should be no academic dress for undergraduates?
5. Presumably we shall ask Mr Amies to design robes for honorary degrees when it is decided what these shall be.⁵⁰

Two months later, in March 1964, the University wrote to Hardy Amies saying:

We [the Council of Governors] also had some preliminary discussion on other academic robes. We decided not at this stage to design any academic dress for undergraduates. There will be academic dress for graduates (BA, MA, MSc, and PhD) but there are still certain details which need to be decided before we can give you enough information to enable you to prepare your designs.⁵¹

Nearly two years were to pass by before the University revisited the graduates' dress scheme in 1966. By then it had become an urgent matter as they would be required to have gowns and hoods designed and made in time for the conferment of the University's first honorary degrees which was to happen on the same day as the installation of the University's first chancellor, Lord Butler, in less than eighteen months' time, on 20 May 1967.

At the end of October 1965 Rowland-Jones wrote to Hardy Amies:

We should also like you to go ahead to propose designs for academic dress for BA, MA, MSc, and PhD graduates. We have already reached the stage at which we have awarded MAs and MScs and will shortly be awarding our first PhDs. It has been decided, however, not to confer the degrees at a Congregation Ceremony until the first Essex BAs are awarded which will be in the Summer of 1967.

Early in the academic year beginning in October, 1966, we shall give consideration to the question of the award of honorary degrees including any to be awarded at the installation of the Chancellor.

Here again we shall need robes but I will not be able to advise you about the degrees to be awarded until about a year from now.⁵²

Hardy Amies was away on a business tour of America and Australia during November and December of 1965. He replied to Rowland-Jones upon his return to England at the beginning of 1966. He explained his reasons for wanting the graduates' attire to be designed and produced by Ede & Ravenscroft, rather than undertaking this design work himself. He wrote:

As regards the designs for further academic dress, such as BA, MA, etc., Mr Austin [Director, Ede & Ravenscroft] points out that these robes will have to be worn at ceremonies outside of your University. His experience is that they therefore cannot be too revolutionary or eccentric.

In contrast, the Chancellor's robes etc. are more of a domestic matter. In point of fact, however, we have of course stuck to traditional lines and merely added some drama to the cut and design.

50 Committee on Academic Dress, Points for Consideration, 20 Feb. 1964.

51 Rowland-Jones, letter to Amies, 23 March 1964.

52 Rowland-Jones, letter to Amies, 26 Oct. 1965.

I would, therefore, like to suggest that the BA, MA, etc. robes should be left very largely in the hands of Mr Austin⁵³ and that we should be used merely as design consultants. Mr Austin is kind enough to say that he would be very happy with this arrangement.⁵⁴

The University immediately accepted Amies' proposal that the academic dress for graduates should be designed by Ede & Ravenscroft. Rowland-Jones replied, 'I am quite agreeable that the robes for graduates should be left largely in the hands of Mr Austin with you acting as design consultant.'⁵⁵

Hardy Amies confirmed the role of Ede & Ravenscroft, telling Rowland-Jones, 'I confirm again that we should be very happy to be used by Mr Austin for any consultations.'⁵⁶

A few months later, in May 1966, Mr Austin on behalf of Ede & Ravenscroft wrote to Rowland-Jones, 'On the question of designing robes for general academic dress, firstly, may we say that having been appointed your official robe-makers there will be no question of charging any fee for the work we do in helping you to arrive at a satisfactory scheme.'⁵⁷

Austin goes on to ask if the University of Essex has a small committee set up to consider academic dress and says that he would be happy to have a preliminary talk with them. It is not certain when the colours of maroon and white were added to the proposed scheme of academic dress. The colour red had, all along, been the primary colour in the scheme, it being the heraldic colour for the County of Essex. In an undated list of points for consideration when designing a scheme of academic dress, Ede & Ravenscroft give the following advice on the choice of colours:

All colours and most shades have been used in existing Universities and therefore it becomes necessary to use at least a two colour scheme in order to avoid similarity with other Universities, e.g. coloured outside of hood and university colour lining plus faculty colour. Undergraduates could have different coloured gown to graduates.

This would appear to be the only reference to undergraduate gowns at Essex. It is also interesting to note that, at this early stage the use of faculty colours has been suggested by Ede & Ravenscroft, but was never taken up.

Using the four colours of University Red, maroon, black and white, Austin proposed a straightforward scheme of academic dress as detailed below, using Oxford pattern gowns and a grade-specific scheme of hoods (i.e. one hood for the use of all bachelors, one for all masters, and one for all doctors, etc.). The first university to adopt a grade-specific scheme of hoods, without using any faculty colours, was Bristol University in 1909.⁵⁸ Dr Nicholas Groves has conjectured that the use of this grade-specific scheme at Bristol was merely copying the contemporary usage at Cambridge, which had only three hoods for bachelors'

⁵³ This is the scenario of events which Franklyn had predicted.

⁵⁴ Amies, letter to Rowland-Jones, 4 Jan. 1966.

⁵⁵ Rowland-Jones, letter to Amies, 13 Jan. 1966.

⁵⁶ Amies, letter to Rowland-Jones, 26 May 1966.

⁵⁷ Austin, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Nicholas Groves, ed., *Shaw's Academical Dress of British and Irish Universities*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: The Burgon Society, 2011-14), Vol. 1: *Universities and Other Degree-Awarding Bodies* (2011), p. 3.

and masters' degrees prior to the reform of their academic dress in 1934.⁵⁹ Other universities which had employed a grade-specific scheme of hoods after the Bristol scheme but before the Essex scheme were Reading (1926), Hull (1954), Keele (1949/62) and Sussex (1961).⁶⁰

The choice of Oxford patterns for gowns, rather than Cambridge or other patterns, for all graduates may have been influenced by Vice-Chancellor Sloman, himself a graduate of Oxford. However, there is nothing noted in the archive at Wivenhoe to suggest that the patterns for gowns were ever discussed by their Committee on Academic Dress, neither were designs for new patterns for gowns and hoods particular to Essex ever considered.

Proposal for Scheme of Academic Dress, January 1967⁶¹

Gowns

Bachelors

In black similar to Oxford BA.

Masters

In black similar to Oxford MA.

Ph.D

Shape as Oxford Doctors with body of gown in black and sleeves in: a) University Red, b) Maroon. (facings could be University red or Maroon.)

Higher Doctors

Gown of University red of stuff material, shape as Oxford. 8" black cuffs with 1" white edging on bottom of cuffs and facings of black edged with 1" white.

Honorary Doctors

A Mantle of University Red in silk or stuff, shape as Parliamentary Robe without train, front open all the way down with 1½" white ribbon on the fronts, which are to be held together with braided frog clasps.

Hoods

Bachelors

A simple shape with black outside and fully lined with University Red taffeta.

Masters

A full shape, black outside and fully lined with the University Red and faced 3" inside with white.⁶²

Ph.D.

Oxford Doctors shape with the outside a) University Red, b) Maroon. Fully lined University Red taffeta.

Higher Doctors

University red silk outside and fully lined and edged with white, faced with 1" black ribbon on the inside, ½" in from the edge.

59 Nicholas Groves, 'The Academic Robes of the Graduates of the University of Cambridge from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day', *TBS*, 13 (2013), pp. 74–100 (p. 80, n. 33).

60 Personal communication from Nicholas Groves, 28 March 2018.

61 Academic Dress Committee, correspondence – Box 37(c). Special Collections, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex.

62 An unsigned letter, possibly by Rowland-Jones, of 29 March 1967 states that the master's hood should be faced inside 1½" white instead of 3" white silk. A manuscript annotation says the letter was not sent, but this alteration was communicated to Mr Austin by telephone. Academic Dress Committee, correspondence–Box 37(c). Special Collections, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex. The most recent description of the MA/MSc hood in *Shaw* 3 (2011) says it is faced inside 1" white silk and this concurs with the University's own description of this hood on its website, at <www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/academic-dress.pdf?la=en> [retrieved 28 May 2018].



Fig. 8. Bachelors' gown and hood.



Fig. 9. Masters' gown and hood (except MPhil and LLM).



Fig. 10. Doctor of Philosophy, front.



Fig. 11. Doctor of Philosophy, back.

Hats

<u>Bachelors and Masters</u>	Black Mortor [<i>sic</i>] board.
<u>Ph.D.</u>	Black cloth bonnet.
<u>Higher Doctors</u>	Black velvet bonnet.
<u>Honorary Doctors</u>	Doctors bonnet John Knox.

Honorary Doctors at Essex were to be given a mantle patterned on the British parliamentary robe, together with a bonnet in the John Knox style. The use of this mantle for honorary doctors was never adopted. The University's treasurer wrote to Ede & Ravenscroft about the dress for honorary doctors saying:

We had thought that this might be designed as a sleeveless cape entirely in Essex Red, with a clasp and badge of the University's coat of arms or shield. The Vice-Chancellor is not altogether happy about this proposal, as it is likely that some of the persons on whom we shall confer honorary doctorates may be academic persons of very high standing who have no other doctorate and who will, therefore, wish to use the University of Essex doctor's robe as their main academic dress when attending ceremonies at other universities.⁶³

Initially I thought that the dress being proposed for the honorary doctors had been influenced, perhaps, by the closed cope used at Cambridge (the *cappa clausa*). This garment is worn by the Cambridge vice-chancellor or his or her deputy when conferring degrees, and by those presenting graduands for higher doctorates. The Cambridge *cappa clausa* also has an ermine hood and trimmings. Upon further reflection, I am inclined to believe that the 'sleeveless cape' of which Roland-Jones writes could possibly have been a proposal to adapt the scarlet Oxford doctors' convocation habit or chimere. This is a more logical conclusion, as all the other gowns for graduates have been copied from Oxford patterns.

The proposal that higher doctors should wear the John Knox cap was, similarly, never adopted at Essex. It was considered by John Austin at Ede & Ravenscroft to be an article of headgear inappropriate for doffing and the University appear to have accepted his advice. In March 1967 Ede & Ravenscroft wrote to the University:

May we know your decision concerning hats for the Honorary graduands, you may remember that in our suggested scheme we mentioned the John Knox style but indicated that these were not suitable for 'doffing' and since no further comment has been made we assume that the round velvet doctors bonnet is acceptable. To make a difference between Honorary and ordinary Doctors, we suggest the ordinary doctors should have the Essex red cord and tassels and the Honorary doctorates should have a white cord and tassels.⁶⁴

Installation of Lord Butler of Saffron Walden as the first chancellor of the University, May 1967

A great amount of planning happened in the months preceding the installation of the first chancellor, which took place in the Moot Hall at Colchester on Saturday 20 May 1967. The Moot Hall was used because, at this time, the University did not have a building large enough to accommodate all the guests who would be invited to the installation event. The robes for the officers of the University had been designed and made, and similarly the gowns

⁶³ Roland-Jones, letter to Austin, 31 Jan. 1967

⁶⁴ Austin, letter to Rowland-Jones, 30 March 1967.

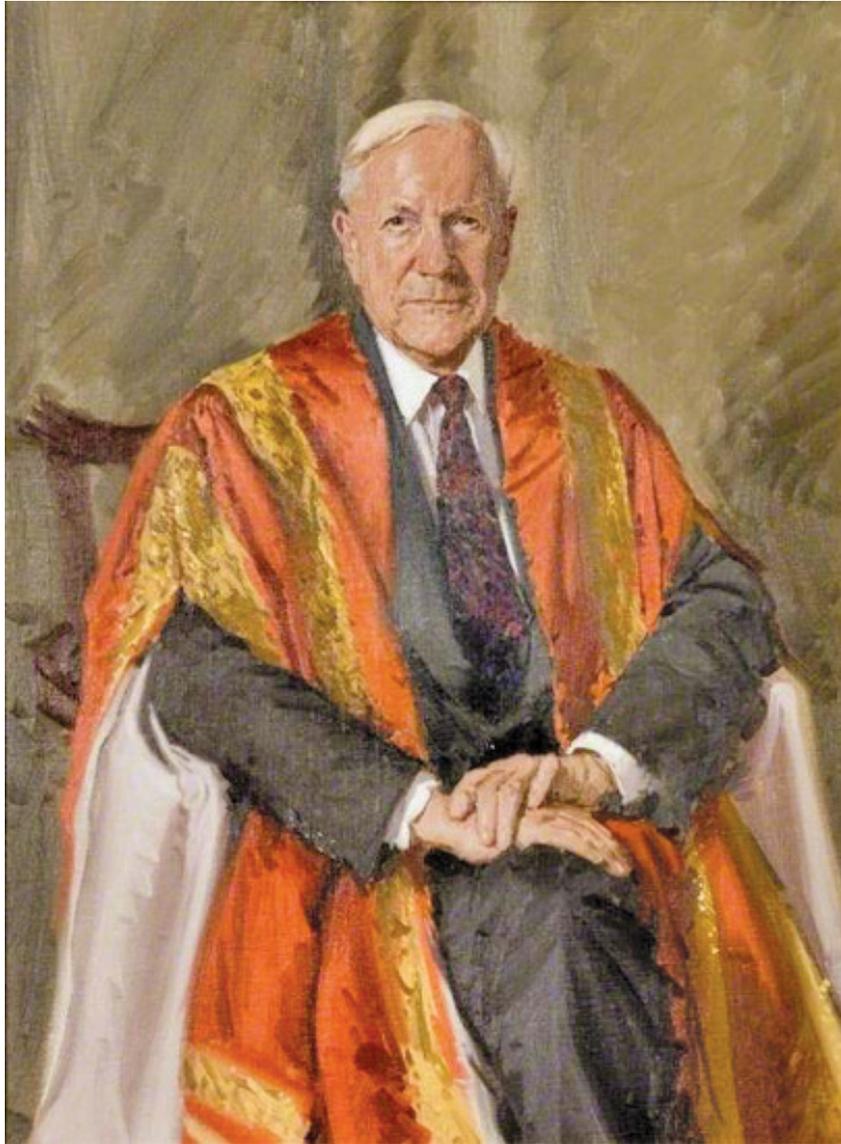


Fig. 12. Sir Patrick Nairne wearing the chancellor's robe. Chancellor 1982–97, by Andrew Festing (b. 1941).

and hoods for the first graduates of the University were also ready for use on this occasion.

Press notices were issued by both the university and by Hardy Amies before the event. Describing the dress which was to be worn on the day by the chancellor and other officers of the University, the Hardy Amies' press notice was indeed informative and is one of the few extant documents which gives an insight into the concept of his design.

Ceremonial robes have their roots in the Middle Ages and cannot evade this archaic quality. This problem is even more apparent at a modern university like Essex, which is virtually 'gownless'.

In his co-operation with the traditional robe makers, Messrs. Ede & Ravenscroft, Hardy Amies relied upon their unique historical experience and expertise and sought only to introduce a more modern approach in the use of traditional materials, trying to achieve an aesthetically pleasing result. Neither he nor the university authorities tried to devise a 'modern' robe, nor did they seek to depart from the essentially English university character of the gown and mortar board.

The Chancellor's robe lacks a train but remains a rich garment in Essex Red—a colour agreed between the University and Mr Amies because of its strong county associations. The material is ottoman silk and the elaborate decoration is gold plate lace of a traditional design woven on a jacquard loom. This robe has long, slashed sleeves. The Chancellor's mortar board is in red silk with a gold bullion tassel (woven gold thread).

The gold decoration reduces with the rank of the University officer; thus the Pro-Chancellor's robe has one less row of lace and the sleeves are short. His mortar board is the same but without gold round the square.

The Vice-Chancellor's mortar board has a red silk tassel, as does the Treasurer—whose robe carries one row less of gold lace.

Mr Amies waived his design fee for this venture and was glad to play a part in the ceremonial attaching to the foundation of the University of Essex because of his early residence and schooling in Essex.⁶⁵

The University's own press release repeats Hardy Amies' description of the officers' robes. Additionally it tells us that the chancellor's chair was a gift from the University of Oxford, designed by Professor R. D. Russell and made in English oak. The University mace was presented to the University by Miss Elfreda Sanders in memory of her brother Sir Percy Sanders.⁶⁶ It was designed and made at the Royal College of Art. There were also gifts of silver hollow-ware given to the University by the Goldsmiths Company.⁶⁷

Prior to the chancellor's installation, he was admitted to the degree of Doctor of the University by the vice-chancellor. At the same ceremony, the public orator presented the following people for the University's first honorary degrees (Doctor of the University):⁶⁸ The Rt Hon. Lord Annan, Mr J. E. H. Davies, Professor M. J. Lightfoot, Mr John Nash, His Excellency U Thant, and the prime minister, the Rt Hon. J. H. Wilson.

The honorary doctors' robe has 2" white silk facings and black cuffs edged 2" white silk. Their hood has a black ribbon of 2" width set ½" inside the cowl edge.⁶⁹

65 Hardy Amies, press release, 20 May 1967. Installation of Chancellor, correspondence and photographs – Box 34(a).

66 Sir Percy Sanders, 1882–1962. Five times mayor of the Borough of Colchester. Member of Essex County Council, 1915–59. Deputy Lieutenant, 1942. High Steward of Colchester, 1950.

67 University of Essex, press release. Anthony Rowland-Jones, 16 May 1967.

68 At <www1.essex.ac.uk/honorary_graduates/> [retrieved 28 May 2018].

69 Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, p. 177.



Fig. 13. The first chancellor and the vice-chancellor, Lord Butler of Saffron Walden and Professor Albert Sloman. Moot Hall, Colchester, 20 May 1967.

Higher doctors wear a dress robe of a similar design to that of the honorary doctors shown above. It is differentiated by having facings and the cuffs edged with 1" of white silk. Similarly the hood is differentiated with a black ribbon of 1" width, set $\frac{1}{2}$ " inside the cowl edge.⁷⁰

Later additions to the scheme of academic dress at Essex

Simplicity has, all along, been the key word to describe the University's scheme of academic dress. It was originally intended to be a grade-based scheme, with one gown and one hood for each level of academic achievement: bachelors, masters, doctors (PhD), and higher doctors. Over subsequent decades the simplicity of this scheme has been compromised by the need to add academic dress for other degrees and certificate qualifications.⁷¹ However, it has remained a grade-specific scheme of dress and not adopted a scheme of hoods based on faculty colours.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ The University of Essex has been unable to provide dates for the introduction of academic dress for undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas. Similarly for foundation degrees.



Fig. 14. Honorary doctor (DU), front.



Fig. 15. Honorary doctor (DU), back.

(a) Academic dress for the degree of MPhil (1974)

The Council of Governors of the early years of the University had evolved to become the University Senate. Early in 1974 the General Committee of the Steering Committee of the Senate were considering additional academic dress for the University. Having sought advice from Ede & Ravenscroft, the following recommendations were proposed:

The University robe makers have suggested that the gown for the MPhil should be the same as that for MA/MSc and that the MPhil hood should be the same as that for the MA/MSc hood except that the top edge would be faced 3" inside with white [silk] instead of 1½".

They have also recommended that, since as the whole basis of our academic dress scheme was intended to be one of simplicity, arts and science should not be differentiated since this could lead to difficulties in the future. Thus the dress would be distinctive for Bachelors, MA/MSc, MPhil, Doctors of Philosophy and Honorary Doctors.⁷²

72 General Committee of the Steering Committee of Senate, 30 Jan. 1974, agenda item: 6(e).



Fig. 16. The prime minister, Harold Wilson, and Lord Annan, provost of University College London, were among the first recipients of doctorates *honoris causa* awarded by the University of Essex. Moot Hall, Colchester, 20 May 1967.

(b) Introduction of the Master of Laws degree (1981)

With regard to the introduction of the LLM, the first time that this degree is mentioned appears to be in the Graduate Studies Prospectus of July 1981, where it is stated: 'The Law School accepts graduates as candidates for the research degree of LLM on conditions similar to those for the MPhil.' The first University of Essex Calendar to mention the LLM is that for 1982–83 (published in September 1982), which lists the 'Principal Regulations for the Degrees of Master of Arts, Master of Science and Master of Laws for Full-time Candidates' and states: 'In the School of Law the degree of Master of Laws (LLM) is conferred.' By way of background, the Department/School of Law was founded only in 1979, and for many years its only LLM degree was in International Human Rights Law.⁷³

⁷³ Information provided by Mr Nigel Cochrane, assistant director, Academic & Research Ser-



Fig. 17. Master of Philosophy.



Fig. 18. Master of Laws

(b) Academic dress for the degree of LLM

A black gown of the Oxford MA pattern [m1]. A black silk hood of the Cambridge shape [f1], lined University red and the cowl bordered inside 1" white silk and 1" black silk.⁷⁴

(c) Academic dress for postgraduate certificates and diplomas

Gown as for masters. A black hood of the Edinburgh shape [s4], the cowl edge bordered 1" white and 1" University red.

(d) Academic dress for foundation degrees (2001 or later)⁷⁵

Gown as for bachelors. A black hood of the Oxford simple shape [s1], the cowl bordered inside 2" University red.

(e) Academic dress for undergraduate certificates and diplomas

Gown as for bachelors. A black hood of the Edinburgh shape [s4], bordered inside 1" University red.

(f) Academic dress for professional doctors (2007)⁷⁶

The dress robe is the same as that used by the Doctors of Philosophy: a black cloth robe of the Oxford pattern [d2], the sleeves (but not the facings) are of maroon cloth. Similarly, the vices, University of Essex. Personal e-mail, 28 March, 2018.

⁷⁴ Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, pp. 176–77.

⁷⁵ Foundation degrees were introduced to British universities in 2001.

⁷⁶ The use of hoods for professional doctors was authorized in 2007. Personal correspondence from Ms Abby Scott-Simonds, secretary to the vice-chancellor, 4 June 2018.



Fig. 19. Postgraduate certificates and diplomas



Fig. 20. Foundation degrees.



Fig. 21. HND, HNC, and other certificates and diplomas.



Fig. 22. Professional doctors, front.



Fig. 23. Professional doctors, back.

hood is that of the Doctors of Philosophy, red hood of the Oxford full shape [f5] lined with maroon silk, but differenced with a border of 1" black silk inside the cowl.⁷⁷

The scheme of dress currently in use still adheres to using gowns based on the Oxford patterns as originally proposed. The gowns and hoods have remained within the confines of the original specification of four colours, viz. black, University red, maroon and white. However, the introduction of some hoods which are specific to certain degrees (e.g. MPhil and LLM) means the scheme of academic dress at Essex has broken away from the original concept of one hood per degree. Nevertheless the University has maintained the original concept of not having any faculty colours. Today four different hood patterns are used, but there is a logical and simple progression to their use: the higher the level of the academic award, the larger is the size of the hood. Thus the progression of hood patterns, according to the Groves classification, is: Edinburgh simple [s4], Oxford simple [s1], Edinburgh simple (again) [s4], Cambridge full [f1], and Oxford doctors' full shape [f5].

Since December 2013, the Graduate Gowning Company (a division of H. Tempest Ltd) has been providing academic dress for the University of Essex. Their first gowning event at Essex was in July 2014.

Conclusion

Nearly fifty-five years after the first meeting of the Committee on Academic Dress at Essex, it is difficult to arrive at a complete understanding of the decisions that were taken by this committee at that time.

⁷⁷ Groves, *Shaw's Academical Dress*, p. 177.

Hardy Amies have not replied to my requests (made in 2016–17) for access to their company's archive. The robemakers, Ede & Ravenscroft, have no material relating to the Essex scheme in their archive. Therefore the only source documents available for consultation are in the University's own archive at Wivenhoe. Whilst most questions can be answered from searching this archive, a number of questions remain unanswered.

First, why did the University feel it was necessary to employ a designer for its academic dress, and why did it go to Hardy Amies? Prior to contacting him they had consulted with the Royal College of Art. Perhaps the RCA had proposed his name to them? It could be that the University considered it the fashionable thing to do, to have a designer on-board. Were they following a trend set by UEA and Sussex—who had employed Cecil Beaton and John Piper respectively as their designers of academic dress?

Secondly, why did the University decline Dr Charles Franklyn's offers of assistance? One of the highlights of researching this paper was finding Franklyn's correspondence. It is quite clear from the correspondence that the University's officers (Sloman and Leatherland) were never going to employ Franklyn as a consultant to their Committee on Academic Dress. Leatherland merely considered him to be 'a tiresome old gentleman' and 'a troublesome old gentleman'.

But nowhere is it mentioned that they have been warned about him by other universities who had had dealings with him. It would appear that their negative reaction to Franklyn is based solely on what they have read in his letters to them. When reading Franklyn's correspondence with the University of Warwick, it becomes clear that Franklyn is using the same arguments to get himself appointed as a consultant both at Warwick and at Essex.⁷⁸

Unlike Essex, Warwick had been warned about Franklyn. They too declined his approaches, they appointed a costume designer, Anthony Powell, whom they later released from his contract and then finally placed their contract with the ecclesiastical tailors and robemakers J. Wippell & Co. of Exeter. This is a scenario similar to that which took place at Essex.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Franklyn had successfully designed schemes of academic dress for Southampton and Hull Universities. It may be that, with more of Franklyn's correspondence coming to light, now is the time for a fuller assessment to be made of this man's achievements in the field of academic dress in the twentieth century.

Thirdly, as soon as the work on the design of the robes for the University's officers is completed, Hardy Amies withdraws and proposes Ede & Ravenscroft for the design of the graduates' dress. He offers to remain in a consultative capacity to Ede & Ravenscroft. However, the graduates' scheme of dress is produced without Amies' assistance.

It is surprising that the University quite readily agreed to this change (a change which, of course, Dr Franklyn had predicted) and leave the design of the graduates' dress in the hands of Ede and Ravenscroft in 1966–67—a scheme which is, in the end, both traditional in character and lacks any of the originality in design seen in other schemes of academic dress designed for use elsewhere in the 1960s.

Acknowledgments

I offer my grateful thanks to Mr Nigel Cochrane, assistant director, Academic & Research Services, University of Essex, for his kind assistance. The Hardy Amies sketch drawing and

⁷⁸ Nicholas Jackson, 'The Development of Academic Dress in the University of Warwick', *TBS*, 8 (2008), pp. 10–59.

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The photograph of the chancellor of the University of Essex, the Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP, is copyright of the photographer, Mr Paul Tait, and is reproduced with permission.

My thanks to Ms Karen Hart, gowning co-ordinator, H. Tempest Ltd, for providing the photograph of the back of the chancellor's robe and the two photographs of the robes for honorary doctors.

Ms Gemma Field, archivist and record collections manager, at Ede & Ravenscroft, kindly searched their company's archives on my behalf. The Ede & Ravenscroft archive does not hold any material relating to the Essex scheme.