

## Editor's Note

A surgeon in theatre blues, or scrubs, wears an outfit appropriate for the occasion: streamlined, fitting loosely for ease of movement, in a colour that minimizes blood stains.

A chef in whites also wears an outfit for the job. A clean jacket reflects a hygienic kitchen and the toque blanche keeps hair on the chef's head.

The clothing of both occupations renders their practitioners identifiable to anyone, making it a uniform in a practical sense even though no central authority mandates it and its look is determined by manufacturers. Though an employer may require a certain livery for its staff, surgeons and chefs have more leeway in choosing what they will wear than those whose jobs require specific identification. Police officers, package delivery personnel, and fast-food workers wear a livery that instantly makes their employer clear and sometimes even their role or rank.

The same can be said for students in their academic dress, particularly in times past when it was the daily wear at a university. Those of us who can read the details see a lot of information in someone's academic ensemble because an institutional authority decides what its members wear based on their achievements and, occasionally, affiliations.

Dress codes are typically different, however, for an organization's officers. The women and men who run a hospital or operate a fast-food franchise more likely wear clothes typical of the management profession. Modern British universities often take the same approach, with their leaders wearing clothing different from the rest of the crowd. The dress we see worn by chancellors today has its roots in the ceremonial dress worn by the men from outside the university who starting in the seventeenth century were appointed chancellors owing to their exalted status in civic life.

Do their clothes represent the individual, the university office, or something else? Philip Goff writes about an example in which we are left to wonder what a chancellor's new clothes identify. The robe worn by the chancellor of the University of the Arts London in the cover photo boldly steps beyond what traditionalists would call beautiful and dignified. And while his outfit, from 2018, bears a certain resemblance to the shape of an open doctor's gown, the fabric and colour depart about as significantly as possible from any academic predecessor.

The question, then, is whether the clothes made for the chancellor to be worn at graduation ceremonies as official dress are academic dress too. Grayson Perry wears a different outfit each year, preventing tradition from attaching to any specific shape or cut. But even worn a few times to the University's most important ceremonies, the colourful departure may be a harbinger of things to come.

Does such a gown count as academic? Before you decide, read Fr Goff's Primary Source article. He has more to say on the subject, and it begins on the next page.

—*Stephen Wolgast*