



# National University of Health Sciences General Policies

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Date Adopted: <b>6-15-1995</b>	Date(s) Revised: <b>09/00</b>
<i>James Hinterstein</i> President	<u>2-12-09</u> Date

## POLICY STATEMENT

The academic ceremony policy establishes the standards for type of music, academic dress, conferring of degrees, hooding of candidates, honorary degrees, recessionals, and National Anthem for all commencements at the National University of Health Sciences (NUHS).

There are various occasions upon which members of the academy participate in a celebratory fashion, including inaugurals, dedications, groundbreaking and others however no event has more significance to the academic community than that of the Commencement ceremony.

These events are singular and momentous occasions for the celebrants, including the graduates and their friends and families. They are times when the members of the academy have the opportunity to properly impose a level of dignified celebration which can promote a significant sense of institutional charisma while creating a strong feeling of dedication to and respect for the academic process, the degree being bestowed, for the members of the academy and for the University itself.

The entire process of commencement or inaugurals with all of the pageantry has its roots in antiquity. A statute of 1321 in England required that Doctors, Licentiates and Bachelors of the University wear gowns. Whether this kind of ceremonial dress actually began in the academy or within the church remains an issue of question and some controversy, but its age indicates a level of tradition which should not be taken lightly. The "pomp and circumstance" which is created by the special dress, the dignified processional and recessional and the special music are all part of the creation of an occasion which, when done well, can be treasured for a lifetime. Furthermore, it provides for the attendees, a sense of the significance and the importance of the day. Because of these traditions and the outcomes, it is completely appropriate that we should make every effort to assure all who participate that the academic ceremony will be in the best tradition and will follow accepted academic protocol.

This policy was authored at the direction of the Board of Trustees of NUHS and represents the official policy of the institution on this matter.

### Procedures

Music - While one could choose from a variety of options, in general, the music which is most often used for the academic processional preceding commencement exercises is Edward Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance no.1. This processional march begins with a prelude during which the academic participants are expected to wait in the wings. Upon the start of the actual march, the graduates process to their seats in a dignified manner with enough space for each person to be seen by the observing audience. If the class is large, the processional may extend into the time that the faculty, followed by the stage party, begin their procession. It is imperative that those who participate take their cues from the individual who is coordinating the program so that the faculty procession does not appear to be an undignified rush to the seats. The faculties are the people who are responsible for the accrual of knowledge in those who are about to graduate and they should be recognized as such by the audience. Their procession should be stately, measured and dignified.

At no time should processional music be played willy-nilly or repetitively simply to shorten the time or accommodate the processional. The artist who created the music deserves the same respect and dignity as do those who use the music.

The recessional music is again one of choice and usually includes such pieces as "Trumpet Tune" by Purcell or the "Toccat" by Widor or Purcell's "Trumpet Voluntary", or other similar music. The recessional is lead by the stage party, followed by the faculty and then the graduates. This should be a joyous march but should never be boisterous.

Music used in inaugurals is often a matter of choice by the individual being inaugurated. Regardless, when such choices are made, it should always be remembered that the music chosen should reflect the significance of the occasion and should, therefore, also be rendered in an appropriate manner.

Academic dress -The appropriate academic dress has been stipulated in various ways for centuries. At Oxford and Cambridge, the University control of academic garb is strict and very detailed. In the United States, a conference was held at Columbia University on May 16, 1895 to set parameters for proper academic dress and other regalia. In 1932, the American Council on Education authorized the appointment of a committee to review the decisions of 1895 and approve a code for academic costumes. The code, which resulted, has been in effect since that time with revisions in 1959 and 1960.

Specific gowns are described for the baccalaureate, the masters and the doctoral levels. The specifics of those descriptions are beyond the scope of this paper, however some aspects of the wearing of academic garb should always be observed.

1. Only members of the graduating class, faculty, and university administration are authorized to wear academic gowns. The one exception to this is that members of the institution's governing body are permitted to wear doctoral gowns with appropriate hoods based upon their degree. If there is no degree, the trustee simply wears a doctoral gown.
2. While other organizational officers are always welcome at a commencement ceremony (e.g. alumni directors, auxiliary officers), they do not wear academic dress because they are not members of the faculty.
3. It is customary for the President to wear a gown which is different from the others, usually using the school colors. Additionally, the President often wears the so-called "presidential medal" which, at our University is the traditional University logo.
4. Those members of the faculty or administration who hold degrees other than the doctorate shall wear the appropriate gowns and hoods with the hood colors reflecting their degree major.
5. Graduate's who are to receive the doctoral degree, whether academic or professional, shall wear the black doctoral gown and shall receive the hood at the appropriate time during the commencement ceremony. The graduates shall wear mortarboards with tassels turned to the right side until instructed to turn them to the left, an act which shall follow the granting of the degree.
6. Graduates from certificate programs, baccalaureate or graduate programs shall wear gowns and hoods and caps if such are appropriate to the occasion. The appropriate garb is to be designated by the President in concert with generally accepted academic standards.
7. All members of the stage party shall wear their gowns and caps in the manner displayed by the President. While it is not improper for the doctoral gown to be worn open, the decision regarding how the gown will be worn is made by the president and all other members of the stage party follow suit. The decision to remove or wear the headgear is also made by the President and stage party members shall be expected to follow suit. When headgear is removed, it should be done in unison. It is usually worn throughout the ceremony except during the invocation and the singing of the National Anthem. Women members of the stage party who have the cap pinned in place may be exempted from the requirement to remove the cap.

Conferring of Degrees - Prior to the actual oral conferring of degrees, the chief academic officer/president should publicly state and certify that the candidates have successfully completed the requisite course of study and are hereby presented for the awarding of the degrees or certificates. The oral pronouncement of the conferring of the degree may carry the same legal significance as the actual certificate. For this reason, if a candidate has not completed all components of the program requirements but for valid reasons the Institution chooses to allow the candidate to participate in the ceremony, it is good practice to have the candidate sign a waiver which, in effect, states that he/she is specifically aware that the oral pronouncement of the conferring of the degree does not apply to the individual in question. For all others, the oral pronouncement made by the President represents public proclamation and recognition that the candidate has completed all requirements and has received the specific degree or certificate.

Hooding of the candidates - This process signifies once again that the candidate has actually earned the indicated degree. It should be performed by the President or the chief academic officer and again, it should be performed in a dignified manner and not at all haphazardly. Following the hooding, the President presents the graduate with the diploma and extends congratulations following which the graduate leaves the platform and returns to the assigned seat.

In recent times, some colleges have deviated from traditional academic protocol and have invited some parents to the platform for participation in the hooding or degree granting process. While this may be considered to be very thoughtful by the parents who are given this honor, it is not very practical, can lead to accusations of discrimination and is likely to lead to confusion which, in the final analysis, results in a degraded academic ceremony. The state of domicile of the institution, through its statutory authority, grants to the governing board of the institution, the authority to grant degrees. This authority is traditionally delegated to the office of the President of the institution or program. It is not extended to parents, spouses, grandparents or significant others, and while these people are often very involved in the education of the graduate, they do not represent the academy. This ceremony, by its very definition, is a ceremony of the academy. To preserve its meaning and its integrity, it is best left to the members of the academy to administer.

Honorary Degrees -The conferring of honorary degrees is a well established custom in the academy, however there are times when it is used inappropriately. Earned degrees, for example, should never be conferred as honorary degrees. The earned professional degrees such as the Doctor of Chiropractic degree or the Doctor of Medicine degree are never given as honorary degrees. The conferring of honorary degrees should serve the best interests of the institution; however, giving of such honors should not be done simply as a development exercise. The most popular honorary degrees are the following

1. *Doctor of Laws* (LL.D.) - First conferred in 1773, is the most popular honorary doctorate now awarded. Despite a wide variety of recipients in the past, it is now regarded as the most appropriate award for a person distinguished in general service to the state, to learning, and to humankind in general.
2. *Doctor of Letters* (Litt.D.) - First awarded in 1892, is considered to be appropriate as a reward for scholarly work of a somewhat restricted nature. It is usually conferred upon scholars in particular disciplines.
3. *Doctor of Humane Letters* (L.H.D.) - First awarded in the 1880's, is the honorary doctorate usually given to persons who have distinguished themselves in the humanities, either as a study or as a living example.

Honorary degrees are not typically conferred in absentia. While there have been exceptions to this rule, it should be remembered that the conferring of the honorary degree is a part of the commencement exercise for a given class and the honoree actually becomes a part of the graduating class on that date. Thus, conferring of these degrees outside of the academic ceremony is not usually condoned.

Authority to confer the degree is granted through the institutional governing body and is typically delegated to the President. Thus, the decision to confer an honorary degree is, under normal circumstances, made by the institutional trustees upon recommendation by the President. The conferring of such degrees should be encouraged for it provides quality recognition for an individual's accomplishments while at the same time offers the academy the opportunity for good community public relations.

Commencement or inaugural recessionals - Should be happy events which, never-the-less carry the same sense of dignity conferred on the occasion by the processional. The various musical pieces mentioned above are good examples of appropriate recessionals and should be played to the finish.

Use of the National Anthem - The National Anthem should be used at the opening of commencement or inaugural ceremonies. When it is used, the colors (flag) are often presented. There are accepted rules of etiquette which apply in this circumstance (Amy Vanderbilt's Etiquette). "When the National Anthem strikes up in any public place, men, women and children should stand at complete attention and should sing if they possibly can. They should not talk, whisper or fidget. Civilian men and boys are expected to remove headgear and hold them over the heart with the right hand. Men, women and children without headgear should place their right hand over the heart during the singing of the National Anthem. It is not considered good etiquette to applaud after the National Anthem, although it is often done."