

THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN



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COMMENCEMENTS



Commencements ceremonies are meetings of the Senate of the University of Dublin for the purpose of conferring degrees; they are performances recalling the old traditions of European universities conducted in latin.

'Commencements' is an ancient term which came to the University of Dublin through its founding scholars in the late 16th century, most of whom were graduates of Cambridge University. The term stems from more ancient practices in medieval universities where one of the main methods used to advance learning and understanding, especially in theology and philosophy, was disputation ('*disputatio*' in Latin), a formal debate of a proposed thesis known as the Question ('*quaestio*').

The role which members of the University could perform in such disputations depended on their degree status. Bachelors in Arts were permitted to counter an argument ('reply to the question'). Masters in Arts could propose a question – the Latin formula for their degree includes the words '*ad incipiendum*' which means 'to initiate'. Only Doctors or Professors could 'moderate', i.e. chair or preside over, the debate. The award of a degree signified a step from one level of responsibility to another in the disputation. The degree recipient commenced a higher role in the search for knowledge and understanding so we speak of the degree-giving ceremony as 'Commencements' (and of students being commenced).

The terms '**Moderatorship**' for an honors degree in arts, and 'Moderator' for one who receives an honors degree, also derive from Medieval disputation but were not used here until honors degrees began in the 19th century.

The Senate is comprised of the Caput together with doctors and masters of the university. **The Caput** consists of three people: the Chancellor or a Pro-Chancellor, the Provost, and the Senior Master non-Regent, who is the most senior of the Junior Fellows and is elected annually to reflect the interests of graduates. Each member of the Caput has the right to veto any Grace, or proposal, for a degree; a right that has been exercised only once in the last century.

The Order of the ceremony varies from one meeting to another: at some only Bachelors are commenced, at others Doctors and Masters also receive their degrees, and, occasionally, honorary degrees are awarded. **The following description is intended as a general guide to Commencements ceremonies.**

The procession into the Public Theatre is led by the Book Porter bearing the Proctors Book, which contains the old statutes on the conferring of degrees and the signatures of Senior and Junior Proctors since 1625. Then follow any who are to be commenced as Doctors including, on occasion, recipients of honorary degrees. Next comes the Senior Proctor wearing, as the Statutes require, a Bachelor's gown with a black hood lined with ermine. The Mace Bearer precedes the Caput: the Senior Master non-Regent, the Provost, and finally the Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor.

The Chancellor opens the meeting with the following words:

Salvete senatores omnes, Domini Doctores, Domini Magistri; salvete candidati seniores junioresque; salvete hospites undique hic benignissime congregati. Comititia fiant in nomine Dei. Amen.

We greet all members of the Senate, learned Doctors and Masters; we greet the candidates senior and junior for admission to degrees; we greet our guests whose friendly interest has caused them to gather here from many places. Let Commencements begin, in the name of Almighty God. Amen.



The Registrar reads a formal statement in Latin of the minutes of the last meeting of the Senate, which is signed by the Chancellor. The Proctors, who prepare the lists of candidates for Board approval, then supplicate, or ask, the Senate to approve the award of these degrees. The Junior Proctor supplicates for Bachelor in Arts degrees in the following words:

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie totaque Universitas, supplicant reverentiis vestris ei, qui in his chartis quae in manibus nostris sunt nominantur, ut his Comitiis ad gradum super nomina designatum admittantur. Ego fide mea testor ac spondeo toti academiae unumquemque candidatorum his chartis nominatum omnia exercitia ad gradum ad quem unusquisque adspirat pertinentia pro legibus academicis rite complevisse.

Most honourable Chancellor and all members of the University, those whose names appear on the sheets that are in our hands respectfully request that they be admitted to the degree inscribed above their names. I solemnly affirm to all members of the University that each of the candidates nominated has completed, in accordance with the academic rules of the University, all the requirements pertaining to the degree to which each seeks admission.

The Senior Proctor supplicates for all other degrees. After the two Proctors have made their supplications, the Mace Bearer announces the voting, saying ‘*ad scrutinium*’, and the Chancellor calls first for the votes of the Doctors and then for the votes of the Masters; each group responds by saying ‘*placet*’.

The award of the degrees having been approved, the admission of the candidates begins. Candidates for degrees stand in their places and are presented to the Senate; they are then called to the platform in groups. Candidates for Honorary degrees and Gold Medallists are called to the platform before being presented. The Junior Proctor presents the Bachelors in Arts and the Senior Lecturer introduces the Moderators. The Junior Proctor presents Bachelors in Arts saying:

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie totaque Universitas, praesento vobis hosce meos filios, tam doctrina quam moribus habiles et idoneos ut admittantur ad gradum Baccalaureatus in Artibus.

Most honourable Chancellor and all members of the University, I present to you these my sons and daughters who are by character and ability fit to be admitted to the degree of Bachelor in Arts.

The Chancellor presents them with their parchment and admits them to their degrees saying:

Gratum munus mihi demandatum est ut vobis in manus tradam has chartas honorarias; accipite illas ergo, egregii juvenes, honorificas quidem in praesenti, ominis vero fausti felicisque in futurum. Ego auctoritate mihi concessa admitto vos ad respondendum quaestioni in Artibus.

I have been entrusted with the pleasant task of handing to you personally these certificates. Receive them, you who have distinguished yourselves in your studies, as conferring honour on you today as an earnest sign of your future success and happiness. By the authority vested in me, I admit you to the degree of Bachelor in Arts.



In accord with long standing custom the Professors of Law, Medicine and Surgery introduce candidates for degrees in these subjects. The Senior Proctor, or the head of the appropriate faculty or school, presents the candidates for degrees other than Bachelor in Arts. Essentially the same formulae are used, with appropriate variations, in admitting candidates to the different degrees. Each is admitted by the Chancellor, and presented with the parchment. Each new graduate signs the Register of Graduates before returning to their seat. Honorary degrees are normally awarded at two Commencements ceremonies each year. At these ceremonies the name of each candidate for an honorary degree is announced by the Senior Proctor. The candidate then comes forward, stands before the Chancellor and is introduced in an oration by the Public Orator. The candidate is admitted by the Chancellor and signs the Roll of Honorary Graduates.

The Senior Proctor then presents the list of persons who are unable to be present to receive their degrees in person (*'in absentia'*). Finally the Chancellor closes the Commencements ceremony with the following words:

Valete senatores, non diutius vos morabimur; valete candidati novis honoribus decorati; valete et vos, hospites acceptissimi. Comitia solvantur in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

We bid farewell to you, members of the Senate, we shall not detain you further. We bid farewell to the candidates adorned with new honours. We bid farewell also to you our most welcome guests. Let Commencements be adjourned in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Caput then processes out of the Theatre led by the Mace Bearer, followed by the Senior Master non-Regent, Provost, Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor, Registrar, Proctors and Senior Lecturer, and then all the new graduates starting with the Doctors and Masters.

- Registrar

The Public Theatre Organ of Trinity College Dublin

In May 1684 the then Provost signed an agreement with the great organ builder Lancelot Pease for construction of a new organ with one manual and eight stops that was to cost £120. This was for the "old" College Chapel, and it was to be enclosed in a case 24 feet high and 10 feet wide, which was to be painted and gilded. There was also to be a "faulse organ" in front of the main case, presumably to make the instrument look more imposing. This is the oldest existing Irish made organ case and as such is one of the most important in Ireland and Britain. However in recent times, it had become almost unplayable, with several stops being virtually useless and with the façade pipes collapsing. Something had to be done!

In 2017 a new instrument was installed, with tracker action and an authentic 18th century stop-list, superbly constructed by the UK firm of Goetze & Gwynn while the case and façade pipes have been restored. The original, magnificent polychrome decoration on the façade pipes, which was not known to exist, and which was hidden under layers of ugly brown paint, has been uncovered and restored, and the original 1684 pipes now "speak" again, having been silent for a very long time. The instrument now has two manuals, the second being for a new and no longer "faulse" Chair Organ, which retains the original Pease façade but now breaks through the Gallery railing and is cantilevered over the ground floor. Likewise, the 1684 Pease case has also been restored, repainted and regilded and this, together with its three magnificent shields, now brilliantly complements the decoration of the Public Theatre. The organ is now the jewel in the crown of the College's musical portfolio, and an asset to the City and to the Nation.

The College is immensely grateful to the private donors that have assisted in funding this project, particularly to the Executors of the estate of the late John and Ann Boland, and to the TCD Association & Trust.
