Academic Attire

In 1895, the Intercollegiate Commission, a group of leading American educators, introduced an academic costume code which by design of gowns and hoods would indicate the various degrees, and which by colors would identify the various faculties.

Three types of gowns are indicated by the code. Those worn by the bachelors have long, pointed sleeves. Those worn by masters have long, closed sleeves with the arc of a circle near the bottom. Doctoral gowns are faced with velvet. The sleeves are full, round, and open with three bars of velvet on each sleeve. The velvet facing of the bars on the sleeves may be black or the same color as the binding of the hood.

Hoods are made of material identical with the gown and are lined in the official academic color of the institution conferring the degree (e.g., green and white for MSU). If the institution has more than one color, the chevron is used to introduce the second color. Colored velvet or velveteen binds the hoods and indicates the department of faculty to which the degree pertains.

The color of the velvet of the hood is distinctive of the subject to which the degree pertains. For example, the trimming for the degree of Master of Science in Agriculture should be maize, representing agriculture, rather than golden yellow, representing science. Generally, the code for the velvet of the hood is the same as listed for tassels.

At Michigan State University, it is customary to identify the candidates graduating from the different areas of study by tassels of the official color as established by the Intercollegiate Code. Candidates graduating from the Honors College wear a white stole with the initials “HC.” Candidates graduating “With Honor” or “With High Honor” wear a gold braid.