

CONNECTING WITH THE POST-ANCIENT WORLD

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Standards 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2



TEACHER BY THE WAY

The Oldest Universities

Please note that “university” refers specifically to a degree-granting institution. In addition to the universities listed in the essay—Bologna (ca. 1088), Paris (ca. 1160), and Oxford (ca. 1200)—students might be interested in learning about some other universities and their foundation dates as well as some related interesting information. NB: This list is by no means exhaustive.

In Italy:

University of Modena, 1175

University of Padua, 1222

University of Naples Federico II, 1224

University of Siena, 1240

University of Rome, 1303

University of Perugia, 1308

University of Florence, 1321

University of Pisa, 1343

University of Pavia, 1361

In England:

University of Cambridge, 1209

In France:

University of Montpellier, 1222

University of Toulouse, 1229

University of Grenoble, 1339

In Portugal:

University of Coimbra, 1290

In Spain:

University of Salamanca, 1218

University of Valladolid, 1241

University of Murcia, 1272

Complutense University of Madrid, 1293

In Central Europe:

Charles University (Prague), 1348

Jagiellonian University (Cracow), 1364

University of Vienna, 1365

University of Pécs (Hungary), 1367

In Germany:

Heidelberg University, 1386

University of Cologne, 1388

- Enrollments at the University of Oxford grew when English students were forbidden to attend the University of Paris.
- The Catholic University of Leuven (1425) in Belgium, the oldest university in the Benelux countries, remains the oldest university still in operation as a Catholic institution.
- Uppsala University (1477) is the oldest university in the Scandinavian countries.
- Two institutions in the Philippines claim the title of the oldest university in Asia—the University of San Carlos founded as a Jesuit college in 1595 and the University of Santo Tomas founded in 1611 but chartered as a university in 1642 long before its competitor for the title.

- In the Americas, the Spaniards founded three universities that vie for the title of oldest: the National University of San Marcos in Peru (1551), the National Autonomous University of Mexico, originally the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico (months later in 1551), and the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, founded as the University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in 1538 but not recognized until twenty years later.
- While Harvard (1636) is the oldest North American institution of higher learning, it was not designated a university until much later. The University of Pennsylvania and the College of William and Mary both claim to be the first university.
- In the Muslim world, the University of Al-Karaouine in Fes, Morocco (859) and Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (988) originated as Islamic religious schools that granted licenses issued by individual teachers rather than by the institution as a certifying body. Over time, however, they began to issue formal, universally recognized degrees.
- Just as the ancient Greeks had developed Plato’s Academy in Athens and the Museum at Alexandria as centers of learning, other civilizations had established schools though they were not degree-granting institutions like the European university. The Chinese established schools for the training of imperial officials. Takshashila University was founded in Taxila, Pakistan, around the seventh century BCE. Nalanda University in Bihar, India, served as a center for Buddhist scholarship in the fifth century BCE. The Academy of Gundishapur in Persia founded by the Sassanids in the seventh century had antecedents in Parthian times. The Byzantines established the University of Magnaura, Constantinople, in 848. With their capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Turks founded the University of Istanbul.

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TEACHER BY THE WAY

Oxford’s Oldest Colleges

All Souls College, Oxford was founded as a chantry, meaning that its members were duty bound to pray for the souls of those in Purgatory (a place where Christians believed souls atoned for their sins prior to being admitted to heaven), especially of those killed in France during the Hundred Years War. The statutes provided for a warden and forty fellows—all to take Holy Orders; twenty-four to study arts, philosophy and theology; and sixteen to study civil or canon law.

The University of Oxford includes a number of constituent colleges. Those founded before 1600 are listed below:

All Souls, 1438	Magdalen College, 1458
Balliol College, 1263–1268	Merton College, 1264
Blackfriars, 1221	New College, 1379
Brasenose College, 1509	Oriel College, 1326
Christ Church, 1546	The Queen’s College, 1341
Corpus Christi College, 1517	St. Edmund Hall, 1278
Exeter College, 1314	St John’s College, 1555
Jesus College, 1571	Trinity College, 1554–1555
Lincoln College, 1427	University College, 1249



TEACHER BY THE WAY

Academic Garb

The history of academic dress and regalia is a complex one. Graduation regalia has its roots in early university dress. Students, however, might find the following overview helpful as they observe the dress depicted in the photograph and the dress they might see at college and university graduations.

A specific type of robe or gown is associated with each academic degree. Pointed sleeves worn close are characteristic of the bachelor's gown. Master's gowns have oblong sleeves, open (as opposed to the bachelor's closed sleeves) at the wrist, with the base hanging down, and the rear part of the oblong cut square while the front arc cuts away. These robes may be worn open or closed. Doctoral gowns sport bell-shaped sleeves and such trimmings as velvet panels down the front and three bars of velvet on the sleeves. The gowns are traditionally black. Nonetheless, some colleges and universities use the colors of the school.

Academic hoods are black and vary in length, according to the degree, from three to four feet. Doctoral hoods are wider. The hoods are lined with the degree-granting college or university's official colors with usually one field color and one chevron color. The outer edge of the hood is lined in velvet in the color of the academic discipline in which the degree is being granted.

A sampling of the fields of study and their colors is listed below:

- Agriculture – maize
- Architecture – blue-violet
- Arts – white
- Business Administration – light brown (drab)
- Canon Law/Divinity/Theology – scarlet
- Communications – crimson
- Dentistry – lilac
- Education/Guidance and Counseling – light blue
- Engineering – orange
- Foreign Affairs/Optomety – aquamarine
- Journalism – crimson
- Jurisprudence/Law – purple
- Library Science – lemon
- Medicine – kelly green
- Music – pink
- Nursing – apricot
- Philosophy – dark blue
- Physical Education – sage green
- Science – gold

NB: All PhDs regardless of discipline use “PhD blue.”

Doctoral recipients often wear a tam with six to eight sides, poofed out at the top. The tam is made of black velvet. The tam comes with a ribbon as well as a gold tassel. Some institutions include four-sided tams as part of the regalia for a master's degree. The woman in the lower right corner of the photograph is wearing a tam.

Mortarboards (the “cap” of “caps and gowns”) are four-sided, flat, not made of velvet, and usually have a tassel in the school's colors that is attached to a single button at the top. The cap is worn like a diamond with a point projecting over the forehead. The tassel is worn to the right prior to receiving the diploma and then moved to the left to signify receipt of the diploma.

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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PAGES 132–135 (SE)

1. In what European centers were schools commonly founded from the time of Charlemagne on? In towns or settlements where there was a cathedral church or seat of a bishop.
2. What features of the first medieval universities distinguished them from institutions of higher learning which had existed previously?
The medieval universities were legal corporations or guilds, either of masters or of students, and they offered degrees in at least one of the three disciplines recognized at that time as “higher” disciplines.
3. What were the seven liberal arts?
The seven liberal arts consisted of the *trivium*, i.e., grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (or logic), and the four, or the *quadrivium*, which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.
4. What were the main degrees offered at the medieval university?
The *baccālaureātus, ūs*, m., or “Bachelor of Arts,” and the *magisterium, ī*, n. or “Master of Arts.” The *doctorātus, ūs*, m. was only awarded for the three higher disciplines of law, medicine, and theology.
5. Cite an example of university scholars having a significant impact on life outside the university.
The theologians of the University of Paris played a major role in settling the Great Schism of the Papacy.
6. What was the universal language of teaching, publishing, and formal academic events in all the universities of Europe during the Middle Ages (and afterward)?
Latin.