



**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND**  
A U S T R A L I A

## **The University of Queensland's Coat of Arms: Historical Aspects**

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### **Introduction**

The University of Queensland's coat of arms is an instantly recognizable symbol of the University's corporate identity. Granted to the University in 1912, it has undergone a number of cosmetic revisions and changes, but the motto and essential design have remained constant.

The origins, significance and evolution of the





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Despite the fact that it took decades for a university to be established, the actual progress of the university once the Bill had passed occurred with considerable haste. Within the space of just over a year the newly-formed Senate had to accustom themselves to the new university grounds, er

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University should contribute to the development of Queensland and its economy are also reflected in the phrase 'by means of knowledge and hard work'. A 1912 memorandum from MacGregor indicated that "The Arms of the University in respect of Cross, Motto, &c., are to run on parallel lines with those of the State", suggesting the pragmatic ethos expressed by Kidston at the inauguration of the University (and quoted above) was an important consideration.<sup>16</sup>

In June 1911 MacGregor wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies as to the process of acquiring a coat of arms. The request for arms was forwarded to H.

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successors on Seals, Shields, Banners, or otherwise according to the laws of Arms.<sup>20</sup>

The coat of arms was granted by Letters Patent on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1912. The Letters Patent arrived in Brisbane, via steamer, in November that same year. The coat of arms could now be used in an official capacity by the University (**see Appendix One**).

### **‘Some variations in the printed designs...’**

Almost immediately, notable variations in the design of the coat of arms appeared in the University’s usage. The laws of heraldry do not require the arms to be depicted exactly as they are on the Letters Patent; they may be depicted on any shape of shield, with variation of tinctures and so on. Nonetheless, consistency of design has been an important consideration for the University ever since 1912.

An early use of the coat of arms appeared in the student magazine, *The Magazine of the University of Queensland*, in 1911. As this occurred before the arms had been granted by the Herald’s College, the design may in fact resemble the original made by the Select Committee. It remained in use, however, long after the Letters Patent was granted; it appeared for example in the second incarnation of the student magazine, *Galmahra*, in 1921. The first use of a coat of arms in the Senate Annual Report (1934) reveals yet another design. There was clearly a lack of consistency regarding the basic design (**see Appendix Two**).

This inconsistency was acknowledged by the Registrar, C. Page-Hanify, in 1939:

It was noted recently that, during a period of years, there have been some variations in the printed designs of the University coat-of-arms, and it has been decided to have new blocks made so that, in future, the coat-of-arms will be in accordance with that originally granted to the University.<sup>21</sup>

This request was carried out. The original design (from the Letters Patent) appears sixteen times on the internal columns in the foyer of the Forgan Smith Building, the first building to be erected on the new site at St Lucia. The decision to standardize the design may therefore have been prompted by the desire to render the coat of arms in the building, construction of which began in 1938.

Shortly after the decision by the Registrar, however, the design of the coat of arms was once again altered. This was carried out by the then Professor of English at the University, Frederick Walter Robinson, with Senate approval. (Robinson also oversaw the painting of the arms in the foyer of the Forgan Smith Building in 1952.<sup>22</sup>) This was the first official alteration of the arms since 1912. There is no documentation to indicate why the design was altered. It seems likely the modern appearance of the arms was simply intended to update the corporate identity of the University (**see Appendix Three**). The printing blocks with the

“University publications” and further informed “all graduate and undergraduate organizations requesting them to use such new official coat-of-arms in future on all their publications, invitations, stationary, etc.”<sup>23</sup>

The coat of arms went through another change in 1991 following the adoption by the University of a Corporate Identity Program (see **Appendix Three**). This is only the second time the design of the University’s arms have been officially altered. The Program represented a new and important phase of the history of the University. With regards to the coat of arms, the Program aimed

For a consistent standard of presentation in the visual media, including stationary, advertising and signage. The coat of arms has undergone minor changes throughout the University’s history, but this current version returns the design almost to its original shape.<sup>24</sup>

It would be more accurate to state that the current design is itself an interpretation of the original ‘shape’. The shield is squatter like the original, but the scroll on which the motto is written is closer in style to Robinson’s design in 1940. The sentiment, however, bears a striking resemblance to the Registrar’s comments in 1939, indicating the ongoing need for consistency in the coat of arms as a symbol of the University.

As part of the implementation of the Corporate Identity Program, the coat of arms was incorporated as an integral part of the University logo (coat of arms, ‘University of Queensland’ and ‘Australia’) and as such “is an important and valuable symbol and is the centerpiece of the University's corporate identity”.<sup>25</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Despite the contemporary significance of the University’s logo, the coat of arms has been an important element of the University’s corporate identity since 1912, when the Letters Patent was granted to the University by the Herald’s College. The use of a coat of arms for this purpose is consistent with the use of armorial bearings by universities and corporations since at least the fifteenth century.

The origins of the coat of arms, and the various changes in their design, also reflect aspects of the history of the University. The motto arguably reflects the debate surrounding the creation of the University and the egalitarian, progressive ethos of Queensland in that period. ‘By means of knowledge and hard work’, however, remains as relevant today as it did a century ago. Concern in the late 1930s over the consistency of the University’s public symbol coincided with the relocation to the campus at St. Lucia. Since the implementation of the Corporate Identity Program in 1991 the University has continued a pattern of expansion and diversification as a major international research and teaching university. As the key element in the University logo, the coat of arms remains symbolic of this success. For the University of Queensland, it is indeed a ‘shorthand of history’.

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<sup>23</sup> Registrar to F. A. Perkins, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1939, UQA “Coat-of-arms Seal – policy matters”.

<sup>24</sup> *Contact*, Winter 1991, p. 11.

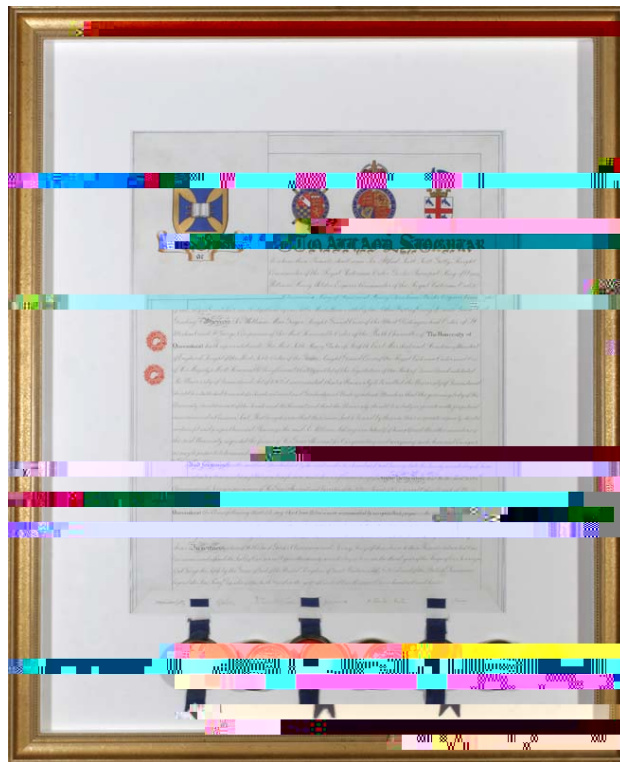
<sup>25</sup> *Handbook of University Policies and Procedures*, at <http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/index.html?page=24981&pid=24980>

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Appendix One



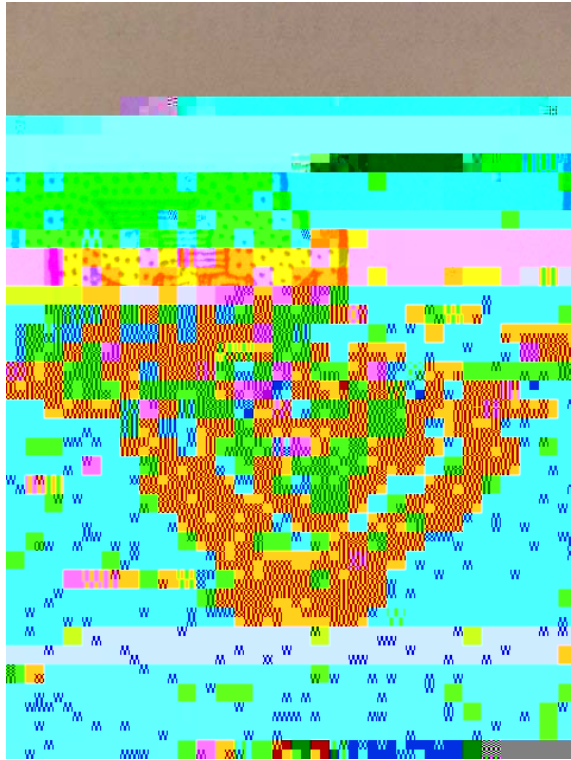
*The original coat of arms as granted by the Herald's College*



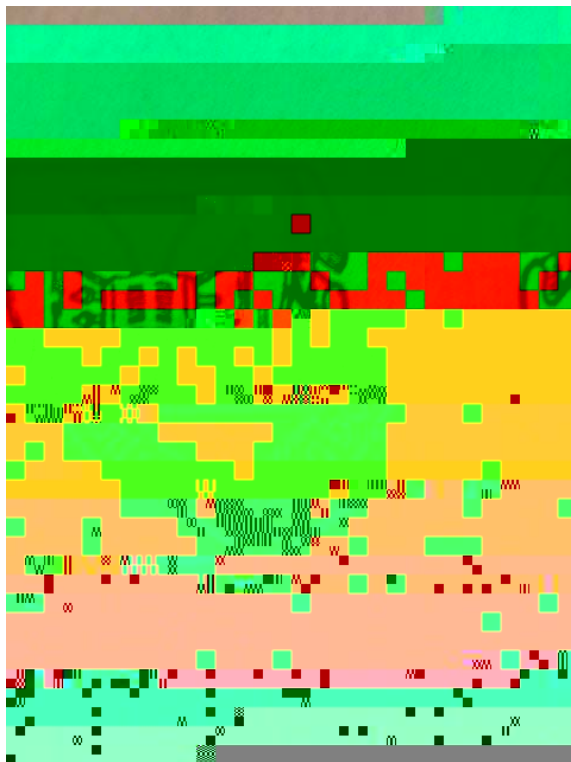
*The Grant of Arms*



**Appendix Two**



*The coat of arms as used in Galmahra, 1921. This is may be the original design by the Select Committee*



*From The University of Queensland Annual Report, 1934*

**Appendix Three**



*The coat of arms designed by F. W. Robinson in 1940.*



*The present design of the coat of arms*