

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA | OKANAGAN



## OKANAGAN SENATE SECRETARIAT

### Enrolment Services

### Senate and Curriculum Services

3333 University Way

Kelowna, BC · V1V 1V7

Tel: (250) 807-9259 · Fax: (250) 807-8007

[www.senate.ubc.ca/okanagan](http://www.senate.ubc.ca/okanagan)

**13 February 2008**

**Memo to: Okanagan Senate**

**From: Policies and Procedures Committee**

**RE: Naming UBC Okanagan Graduate Ceremonies: Congregation or Convocation (approval)**

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The Policies & Procedures Committee has had several discussions about the optimal name for UBC Okanagan graduation ceremonies. UBC Vancouver calls their ceremonies “Congregation”, although references to “Convocation” in the Vancouver context have turned up from time to time. The questions before the Committee, and now before the Senate, are whether the two UBC campuses ought to use the same name, and which name would be preferred. Associate Secretary Lisa Collins summarized some of the issues for the Policies & Procedures Committee in the attached backgrounder.

A Sub-Committee of the Policies & Procedures Committee consisting of Dr. Jan Cioe and Ms. Michelle Wilson was struck to engage in discussion with their counterparts in Vancouver. On November 23, 2007, the Sub-Committee met with a Sub-Committee of the Vancouver Senate Tributes Committee and representatives of the Ceremonies Office and the Senate Secretariat. The representatives of the Vancouver Senate Tributes Committee indicated at that meeting that “Congregation” remained their preferred term over Convocation. Policies & Procedures representatives preferred “Convocation.”

The Policies & Procedures Committee requests that the Okanagan Senate decide this matter for UBC Okanagan. The Committee further requests that the Vice-Chair of the Okanagan Senate recognize invited guest Ms. Eilis Courtney, Director, Ceremonies & Events so that Ms. Courtney might answer questions from Senators during the debate.

While the Committee is not unanimous in making a specific recommendation on this matter and welcomes Senate's thoughtful consideration, it has nevertheless recommended the following motion for the approval of Senate.

**Motion:**

*That "Convocation" be adopted as the name for meetings of the UBC convocation held at UBC Okanagan for the purposes of conferring degrees, effective June 2008.*

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Keyes  
Chair, Policies & Procedures Committee

# Background on Congregation vs. Convocation as the Name of UBC Okanagan Graduation Ceremonies

**Prepared by the Okanagan Senate Secretariat for the Policies & Procedures Committee, February 2008**

This document provides background information in support of recent discussions about the distinction between “convocation” and “congregation” when referring to UBC graduation ceremonies at the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses. Both terms are currently in colloquial use, and there is debate about which term would be optimal for official use at UBC Okanagan.

## “Convocation”

The UBC “convocation” is a group of people – defined by the *University Act* – including the Chancellor, President, members of the Senate, all faculty members and all graduates of the University. The Convocation, through the Chancellor who serves as its chair, confers degrees, including honorary degrees, and awards diplomas and certificates of proficiency.

Many post-secondary institutions also use the term “convocation” to describe the meeting of their convocations at which degrees are conferred. As many Senators will recall, “convocation” was the term used by the former Okanagan University College.

## “Congregation”

With regard to graduation events, “congregation” has been used by the Vancouver campus of UBC from the start.

In the early years, a separate “Meeting of the Convocation” generally preceded graduation ceremonies by a few days to allow the Convocation to conduct other official business. Over the years, “congregation” has come to mean a graduation ceremony, and separate meetings of the Convocation are no longer normally called.

The Ceremonies and Events Office has expressed a preference for the use of “congregation” as part of a longstanding UBC tradition.

## Senate Decisions to Date

In February 1926, an ad hoc Committee of Senate moved to adopt the term “convocation” over “congregation”.

(see

[http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/senate/UBC\\_Senate\\_Minutes\\_1926\\_02\\_1\\_7.pdf](http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/senate/UBC_Senate_Minutes_1926_02_1_7.pdf))

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The motion was not approved, but “filed” instead. So while we know that at least some members of Senate expressed a preference over 80 years ago, neither Senate has since approved anything binding.

At a November 2007 meeting, representatives of the Vancouver Senate Tributes Committee indicated that they believed that the Vancouver campus would prefer “congregation.” That Committee has no plan at the present time to bring the matter before the Vancouver Senate for decision.

### **UBC Okanagan Transitional Decision**

With the establishment of UBC Okanagan, a debate took place among senior administration as well as the Ceremonies and Events Office on which term to adopt: while UBC had a long tradition of using “congregation”, most other Canadian universities (as well as the former Okanagan University College) used “convocation”. After some discussion, “congregation” was selected as the term for official use in the graduation program, at least for the initial transition period.

### **Use of the Selected Term**

The selected term will appear on the graduation program, in the UBC Okanagan academic year, in the Okanagan Calendar, and on multiple University websites. While informal use of the selected term will always vary to some degree, it would be most useful to be consistent within UBC Okanagan’s official and formal publications.

### **OED Definitions of Convocation and Congregation**

Excerpted from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition

#### **CONVOCATION**

1. The action of calling together or assembling by summons; the state or fact of being called together.
2. An assembly of persons called together or met in answer to a summons.
3. spec. In the Church of England: A provincial synod or assembly of the clergy, constituted by statute and called together to deliberate on ecclesiastical matters.
4. In the English Universities: a. At Oxford and Durham: The great legislative assembly of the University, consisting of all qualified members of the degree of M.A.; also, a meeting of this body (the earlier sense). In the University of London, and the Royal University of Ireland, a body consisting of all registered graduates, having the power of discussing and expressing an opinion on any matter connected with the interests of the University, and of electing certain members of the Senate. b. At Cambridge, formerly: An assembly of the Senate out of term. Obs.
5. The parliament of tinnars in Cornwall: see CONVOCATOR and STANNARY. Obs.

## CONGREGATION

1. The action of congregating or collecting in one body or mass.
2. The result of congregating; a gathering, assemblage, or company[.]

3. A regular meeting or assembly of a society or body.
  - b. Acad. A general assembly of the members of a University, or of such of them as possess certain specified qualifications.
 

At Cambridge an assembly or meeting of the Senate. At Oxford a meeting of the Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, and 'Regent Masters' (Ancient House of Congregation), to grant or confer degrees, etc.; also since 1854, the name of the whole body of resident Masters, Doctors, and Professors (Congregation of the University), and of a regular meeting of this body, constituting the chief deliberative assembly of the University. (The intention of the Act of 1854 was to enlarge the constitution and powers of the 'Ancient House of Congregation': it was held however by the legists that, instead of doing so, it had created a new body, 'the Congregation of the University', leaving the 'Ancient House' intact. There are therefore now two Congregations in the University.)
4. A collective body of colleagues, a company. (Cf. COLLEGE 1, 2.) Obs.
5. In English versions of the Bible, applied in the O.T. to the collective body of the Israelites in the wilderness, and to a public solemn assembly of the people or nation: so congregation of the Lord, etc.
6. Used by Tindale to translate in the N.T., and much used by the Eng. Reformers of the 16th c. instead of CHURCH (on account of the current restriction of the latter term to the clergy or clerical order):
7. A body of persons assembled for religious worship or to hear a preacher. (The most common modern use.)
8. Sc. Hist. The designation given to the party of Protestant Reformers during the reign of Mary. (Also C. of Christ, of the Lord.)
9. R.C. Ch. A community or order bound together by a common rule, either without vows (as the Oratorians), or without solemn vows (as the Passionists, Redemptorists, etc.). Extended, esp. in France, to lay associations of men or women, having a religious end in view, and devoting themselves to some work of instruction or charity (as the Brothers of the Christian Schools). Cf. CONGREGANIST.
10. The name given to several permanent committees of the Roman College of Cardinals of which eleven are of primary importance, each having charge of a certain department of the business of the Church. Sometimes specifically applied to the Congregation de propaganda fide. Also a temporary committee of cardinals and ecclesiastics, constituted a special congregation, to clear up or decide a matter that has arisen.
11. Comb. congregation-house, house of assembly, spec. of a University, as e.g. the Senate-House at Cambridge.

