

Peerage Ceremonies: Options

No peerage ceremony in Lochac is exactly the same as another, and some are very distinct and individual. To assist candidates for peerage in planning their elevation ceremonies, this guide goes through the different elements that may appear in a Lochac peerage ceremony and what choices are available to the candidates when planning them. Not all of these elements appear in every ceremony, or in the same order when they do. Even if you are planning to have a ‘standard’ ceremony, we recommend reading this guide to help you think about some of the ‘standard’ choices available. If you are planning a custom ceremony, we hope this guide will help you write a ceremony that balances Lochac’s traditions with what is meaningful to you.

As you plan your ceremony, we strongly recommend consulting with a court herald and the Crown who will elevate you. A court herald with experience writing ceremonies will be able to help you design a ceremony that suits you and what you value. If you aren’t sure who to ask, you can reach out to Crux Australis (Lochac’s Kingdom Herald) at herald@lochac.sca.org or Bombarde (Lochac’s ceremonies herald) at bombarde@lochac.sca.org.

You may want to ask someone to be a ceremony coordinator for you, to make sure everyone and everything is organised without you having to stress about it personally. Don’t hesitate to ask the people around you for support: your ceremony is for you, and everyone involved wants to help make it a treasured memory.

Part 1: Litany, Arrival of Order, Consent of the Order, Arrival of Candidate

Part 2: Testimonies, Assent to Peerage, Release from Teacher

Part 3: Peerage Oaths, Fealty

Part 4/5: Buffet, Dubbing, Declaration

Part 4/5: Order Regalia, Fealty Regalia, Sword/Arms, Cloak

Part 6: Crown Proclamation, Herald Proclamation

Part 1: Opening

(Components can be reordered)

Litany – Traditional

In a ‘standard’ ceremony, this is the text read by the herald which begins: “*The strength and stability of the kingdom lie in these virtues of its people...*”. This section is fundamentally a statement to the populace of what award is being given and what it is generally given for, to establish the context for everything that follows.

Because the traditional text is so well known, it is highly resonant for the populace, but this is also a section that could be customised to evoke a particular culture from the past, or could be otherwise altered for effect.

Arrival of Order – Essential

The Order you are joining must be gathered before the Crown to bear witness. This can be the first thing that happens in the ceremony, or can take place after the litany and the arrival of the candidate. Keep in mind the amount of space the Order is likely to take up: at a large event, this can be substantial.

Consent of the Order – Essential

The Crown must in some way state that the Order is in agreement with their decision to elevate the candidate. This can be framed as a need for the Order to grow, or that the candidate in particular is worthy of elevation. It can be a simple statement that the Crown has consulted and the Order agrees, or the Order can be asked in the ceremony.

Arrival of Candidate – Essential

This element is extremely flexible, and is a good moment to customise. You may or may not choose to be accompanied in a procession by people who are close to you, and they might carry banners, play or sing music, form an honour guard, or otherwise create a sense of ceremony.

Be aware that the members of the procession will need to get out of the way of the rest of the ceremony, and plan where they will stand once you reach the front. If your partner is accompanying you, and will be involved in later parts of the ceremony (see Regalia), they should remain somewhat behind you when you reach the front.

If you plan for the Order to be summoned before you are, they will need to make room for you to reach the Crown. If you are being summoned before the Order, any procession members will need to make room for the Order to gather.

Part 2: Testimonies

(Components can be reordered)

Testimonies – Traditional to have at least one

The testimonies tell the populace some of the reasons why the candidate is being elevated, and it would be extremely unusual not to have at least one testimony, from a peer of the Order the candidate is joining.

Some candidates choose to have testimonies from representatives of multiple peerage Orders, from a royal peer, and/or a representative of the populace. Be mindful of time: the more speakers you invite, the shorter their speeches should be, as a courtesy to the populace. If you want multiple speakers, and are looking for an organising structure other than ‘members of each Order’, you can consider whether they might speak to different aspects of your SCA life, such as ‘prowess, teaching, virtues’, or ‘learning, mastery, service’, or even different periods in your life.

When inviting people to give testimonies, consider discussing anything you particularly want them to cover, the general tone you are hoping for, and how many speakers you are having so that they can make a speech of appropriate length. Though their words are generally a surprise to the candidate, they will want to speak in a way that suits you and your ceremony.

Assent to Peerage – Essential

At some point in the ceremony, the candidate must verbally agree to the offer of elevation. In the standard ceremony, this is the part where the Crown says “*Mindful of your [prowess/mastery/deeds], and responsive to the wishes of your peers, We are minded to admit you to the [relevant Order]. Will you accept from Us this honour?*”

This might take place after the testimonies, so that it appears to respond to them, but it can be moved if desired.

Release from Teacher – Recommended, where applicable

If you have a formal student relationship with a peer, especially with a peer of the Order you are being elevated to, it is traditional for that relationship to be acknowledged as part of the peerage ceremony. This may be framed as a release from fealty or service to that teacher, or simply as a release from the student relationship. If you have a physical token of the relationship, such as a belt, this is often worn or brought to the ceremony so that it can be formally returned.

While this section is traditional, it is also flexible. If you feel that the nature of your relationship with your teacher does not need this particular acknowledgement, you don’t need to include it. It might take place after the Assent to Peerage (above), as a final step before your oaths, or it might be incorporated into one of your testimonies. It could even be the only testimony, if you’re aiming to keep things simple and your teacher’s words are the ones you most want to include.

Part 3: Oaths

Peerage Oaths – Traditional

This is the component where the candidate agrees to act as befits a peer. This section is usually left to the traditional words, but could be customised to suit a particular historical culture if that was your preference.

Fealty – Optional

Fealty is not a requirement for elevation to the peerage. Even when joining the Order of Chivalry, candidates have the option to join as a Master/Mistress of Arms rather than as a Knight. Consider this decision carefully.

If swearing fealty, you can choose the wording of your oath, and you can also choose what to swear it on. The oath can be sworn over clasped hands, on the Sword of State, or on another sword if that would be more meaningful to you. Some people prefer to swear their oath while holding their fealty chain. If swearing on the chain, it may need to be presented early in the ceremony. If swearing on a sword, you will need to make sure the relevant person knows to bring it.

The traditional oath begins “*Here do I swear, by mouth and hand...*”. Some people choose to write other oaths to specifically represent their personal values, or to more closely fit a particular historical culture. Some people swear their oath in the language of their persona, with the Herald reading a translation in between each line. Whatever wording of oath you choose, it should in some way promise loyalty and service to the Crown and Kingdom, and it must be acceptable to the Crown. (Note: If you are customising your fealty oath, think carefully before customising the Crown’s reply. They will be practiced with delivering the standard return of fealty oath, and it generally goes more smoothly.)

Keep in mind that this is the main part of the ceremony where you will have scripted words. Do you intend to memorise them? To bring a discreet script to read from? To ask the Herald to prompt you? This may affect some of the ‘stage directions’ of the ceremony.

Part 4/5: Elevation

(May be before or after Regalia)

This section is what formally makes the candidate a peer. It can take place before the regalia, so that the regalia is given as a sign of what has already happened, or after the regalia, so that it is the grand finale of the ceremony.

Buffet – Optional, restricted to Martial Orders

The ‘buffet’ – a symbolic blow given to the candidate by the Sovereign – is a historically-inspired tradition used by the Order of Chivalry, which can also be included in ceremonies for the other Martial Orders. Historically, the buffet was an earlier version of dubbing: in both cases, they represent the last blow that should be accepted rather than responding in knightly fashion. It is somewhat controversial, and members of the populace may find it confronting.

If you wish to include a buffet, the ceremony should state that you have requested it, and it is courteous to warn the populace that it will be included before the ceremony begins. Speak to the Crown about what you want the buffet to be like. The buffet may occur before or after dubbing.

Dubbing – Traditional alternative to Declaration, restricted to Martial Orders

It is traditional in the Martial Orders for the candidate to be ‘made’ a knight/master/mistress by being dubbed with a sword. This may be the Sword of State, or another sword with meaning to you. This is typically concluded with some instruction from the Crown as to future actions, such as “*We command you to succour the defenceless...*”.

Declaration – Essential (if there is no dubbing), traditional for Peaceable Orders

This is where the Crown declares that they make you a Master/Mistress/Companion of the Order you are joining. It is typically followed with some instruction such as “*From this day forward, always stand with honour, courage and nobility...*”.

Part 4/5: Regalia

(May be before or after Elevation)

Order Regalia – Essential

In this section, the Herald announces the regalia for the relevant Order, and whoever is gifting that regalia brings it forward and may give its history. Giving the history is common, but optional. These items of regalia can be bestowed by the Crown alone, or a person close to the candidate can help the Crown put them on.

The regalia of the different Orders are:

- Chivalry: White belt and spurs
- Laurel: Medallion with laurel wreath
- Pelican: Medallion with Pelican in her Piety, cap of maintenance (red with ermine trim)
- Defence: White livery collar, medallion with three swords touching at their tips (may be attached to collar)
- Mark: White bracers or vambraces, medallion with nested scale weights in a mascle fleury at the top point

Note: The cap of maintenance for the Pelican is optional; and the Laurel sometimes also use a physical laurel wreath.

Fealty Chain – Essential if fealty has been sworn

In this section, the chain is brought forward and its history may be given, and the Crown bestows it with some words from the Herald about its meaning. Again, giving the history is common, but optional. Sometimes, there are multiple chains to bestow. Sometimes, for non-Chivalry, the fealty chain and medallion are given together.

Sword/Arms – Traditional, restricted to Martial Orders

The Crown traditionally gives peers of the Martial Orders permission to be armed in their presence, and a sword or other weapon may be presented during the ceremony as a symbol of this. The history of the sword may be given if there is one, and it is often buckled on by members of the candidate's household.

Cloak – Traditional for Orders other than Chivalry

A member of the Order is generally the person to bring forward the Cloak of the Order and explain its significance. That member of the Order is the person to put it on the candidate, potentially with the assistance of a member of the candidate's household.

The Order of the Laurel also have an apron given to people being elevated for 'dirty' crafts (e.g. pottery). It is generally the decision of the Order whether this is given.

Part 6: Closing

Crown Proclamation – Essential

The final words from the Crown in the ceremony are a proclamation that the candidate is now a member of their new Order, and an instruction to "*Arise and greet your peers*". If the elevation section took place after the regalia, this can be integrated into the Dubbing/Declaration. The essential difference between the two is that Dubbing/Declaration makes someone a peer, while this section proclaims that to the populace.

If it was not mentioned in the Dubbing/Declaration, this is likely when the title you have chosen will first be announced. You might decide to use a common title like Master, Mistress, or Sir, or you may decide to choose another title that is a better fit for you and the historical culture you like to portray. The current list of titles approved by the SCA College of Heraldry for various ranks is available online at <https://heraldry.sca.org/titles.html>. This list continues to grow as people research new options, so if you think a historical title that isn't listed would be appropriate for you, get a second opinion from a book herald, then go ahead!

Herald Proclamation – Essential

While you hug everyone, the Herald will formally proclaim your elevation and call for cheers. This is a standard formula, and the only decision you need to make is what title you wish to use – see above.