

The presentation of credentials consists in giving the Head of State of the receiving State an official document bearing the seal and signature of the Governor General, accrediting the ambassador to the host country. The ambassador also presents his predecessor's letter of recall.

The date of presentation of these documents determines the ambassador's place in the order of precedence of the country's diplomatic corps.

This ceremony varies according to country. The ambassador should request precise instructions — or even a scenario — from the Office of Protocol of the host country regarding the procedure to follow.

Required dress is usually what is referred to as the "diplomatic uniform" — morning coat and striped trousers or, if appropriate, national dress. The Office of Protocol should indicate whether decorations and medals are to be worn, whether the spouse may attend the ceremony and, finally, dress for ladies.

In Canada, women ambassadors or wives of ambassadors who attend the event wear national dress or an afternoon dress, without gloves or hat, and a few simple jewels (if they so wish). The ambassador usually serves a "glass of champagne" at the official residence after the ceremony.

(b) High Commissioner

A high commissioner is a head of mission accredited to a Commonwealth country. When the country concerned does not recognize the Queen as Head of State, he presents a letter of commission. This document is written by the Head of State of the sending State (in the case of Canada, the Governor General) to the Head of State of the receiving State (the President of India, for example).

In Canada the ceremony of presenting a letter of commission is the same as that for the presentation of credentials.

In the case of countries that recognize the Queen as Head of State, the document presented by the high commissioner is a letter of appointment issued by the Prime Minister of the sending State and addressed to the Prime Minister of the receiving State.

In Canada a lounge suit is worn for this presentation. Questions as to the procedure elsewhere should be addressed to the Office of Protocol of the receiving country.

It is usually considered that a high commissioner who presents a letter of appointment officially takes up his functions on the day he arrives in the receiving country. This date also establishes his place in the order of precedence. Here again, information may be obtained from the Office of Protocol of the country concerned.