

The Honorary Graduate: Derek Sprague

The Orator: Dr Marc Griffiths

Derek Sprague is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University

Derek Sprague left school in 1979 and was commissioned into the Royal Air Force the same year, before commencing his navigator flying training. He joined his first squadron in 1981, and in 1982 flew operational sorties during the Falklands war. Two years later he flew in the international famine relief operations in Ethiopia. He became a training officer for graduate entry officers at the Royal Air Force College in Cranwell in 1987 and, after returning to flying duties, saw service during the first Gulf war. Later in his career he held a senior post at the Royal Air Force staff college where junior officers were prepared for senior posts in the MOD, or for working in international appointments. Derek left the Royal Air Force in 1998 with the rank of Squadron Leader.

On leaving the service, he worked for an international business consultancy and gained an MBA from the Open University in 2000.

Derek joined the NHS in 2003 and took up a post in education commissioning, and it is here where he first engaged with UWE and other universities. Early work included commissioning nursing and allied health professional training programmes across the south west. He also championed and supported the introduction of non-medical prescribing to the nursing and pharmacy workforce. He also became heavily involved in dental workforce education and was a member of the Chief Dental Officer for England's Dental Programme Board from 2004. His leadership and ability to bring parties together resulted in him chairing the UK Dental Foundation Board and this led the way in new selection and training for newly qualified dentists.

Subsequent promotions led to him becoming the South West of England, Director for Education and Quality for Health Education England, where, amongst other achievements, he commenced championing the emerging role of the Physician Associate in the region. In 2014, he became the Regional Director for the South West of England and continued to work with medical, dental and non-medical education providers, and especially UWE, at a strategic level.

Derek retired from his full-time NHS role in December 2018 and is now working part-time as the CEO of an Oxfordshire GP Federation. The role supports the move towards the brand-new Primary Care Networks and the emergence of a greater prominence of the non-medical workforce supporting the delivery of the NHS Long-term plan.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Derek's outstanding contribution to healthcare education and partnership work with the University