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Labour peer Lord Falconer becomes Doctor of Civil Law.

Barrister Lord Falconer of Thoroton, who served in the Blair government and led moves to bring about historic changes in the administration of justice, was this week awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from Northumbria University, Newcastle.

Lord Falconer's career includes more than 25 years as a commercial barrister and a decade as a member of the UK government.

Born in Edinburgh in 1951, Lord Falconer was educated at the Edinburgh

Academy and Trinity College, Glenalmond. He went on to read Law at Queen's College, Cambridge and became a flatmate of Tony Blair when they were both young barristers in London in the late 1970s. While Blair went into politics, Lord Falconer concentrated on his legal career. He practised from Fountain Court Chambers in London, and became a Queen's Counsel in 1991.

Falconer was made the first peer of the new Labour government in 1997, on the new Prime Minister Blair's recommendation, and immediately joined the government as Solicitor General.

Serving in the Blair government from 1997-2007, and as Lord Chancellor and Secretary for Constitutional Affairs from 2003, he led moves to bring about historic changes in the administration of justice.

His reforms included the creation of a Supreme Court for the UK, the creation of a commission to appoint judges and introducing an elected Speaker for the House of Lords. As a result, he took up the opposition post of Secretary of State for Justice, bringing together courts, prisons and justice policy for the first time from 2010.

Lord Falconer has gone on to hold various positions outside of Parliament since leaving office. He was appointed Chairman of the AmicusHorizon Group Limited on 2008 and in the same year joined US law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher as a senior counsel.

In 2014, Lord Falconer proposed the Assisted Dying Bill to the House of Lords, which seeks to legalise euthanasia in the UK for those who have less than six months to live.

Lord Falconer, who is married with four children, has a keen interest in the arts and is Chairman of The Sage, Gateshead.

Upon receiving his honorary degree, Lord Falconer said: "Over the last 30 years I have seen Northumbria University grow into one of the first division universities in the UK with a worldwide reputation. Today was a wonderful day for me. I felt very honoured to be given an honorary degree by Northumbria."

The recipients of honorary degrees are nominated by the University's staff for

their achievements, their links to the University – and for their sheer inspirational qualities.

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