



Professor Chris Whitty after receiving his honorary degree at Northumbria University

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Professor Chris Whitty awarded honorary doctorate by Northumbria University

The UK government's Chief Medical Advisor, Professor Chris Whitty, has received an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Northumbria University in recognition of his clinical and academic contributions and his outstanding leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic.

An alumnus of Northumbria University, Professor Whitty is a globally recognised physician and epidemiologist and has become one of the UK's most trusted figures on the Covid-19 pandemic following his numerous

Downing Street briefings. He studied for the LLM in Medical Law at Northumbria University, graduating in 2005.

Alongside his role as Chief Medical Officer for England and head of the public health profession, Professor Whitty is a practicing NHS Consultant Physician at University College London Hospitals and the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, and Gresham Professor of Physic at Gresham College.

As an epidemiologist, Professor Whitty has undertaken research in the UK, Africa and Asia and was Professor of Public and International Health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the Director of the Malaria Centre.

A year later he was appointed Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department for International Development where he led on the UK's technical response to the West Africa Ebola outbreak and other international emergencies.

Professor Whitty went on to become the interim Government Chief Scientific Adviser from 2017 – 2018, during the Novichok poisonings in Salisbury.

Professor Whitty was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath in the 2015 New Year's Honours List, for services to Tropical Medicine in the UK and Africa. Then in 2022 he was knighted for the role he played at the forefront of tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking about his honorary degree, Professor Whitty said: "It is a real privilege to be awarded an honorary degree from Northumbria University. It is a great University with a strong commitment to research and training future healthcare workers. Congratulations to all the students graduating today."

Professor Chris Whitty speaking to graduating students after receiving his honorary degree at Northumbria University

Whilst at Northumbria University, Professor Whitty met with staff across a range of disciplines to find out more about how the University is planning to create a Centre for Health and Social Equity to build on the University's

leading work and ambitions in these areas. He visited Northumbria's state-of-the-art DNA and genome sequencing facility, [the NU-OMICS lab](#), to see first-hand the work of the research team who formed part of the government-backed Covid-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) consortium. This group worked to map the spread and evolution of Covid-19, developing new methods for detecting variants of concern and variants of interest. To date, Northumbria researchers have sequenced more than 100,000 SARS-Cov-2 genomes, including two of the UK's first samples of what became known as the highly contagious Delta variant.

Professor Darren Smith showing Professor Chris Whitty around the NU-OMICS lab which has played a key part in the UK covid genome sequencing effort

Professor Whitty also visited Northumbria's Coach Lane Campus to meet with the team in the University's [new NMC Competence Test Centre](#). The campus is home to the Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, one of the largest healthcare education centres in the north of England, and thanks to this new national testing centre which opened in March, Northumbria will help to bring up to 7,000 more nurses, midwives and healthcare associates onto the front line each year.

Professor Chris Whitty observing a nursing simulation exercise at Northumbria University's Nursing and Midwifery Council Competence Test Centre

Professor Whitty received his honorary degree during the University's summer graduation ceremonies, which were held on Northumbria's Newcastle City Campus.

The ceremonies celebrated the achievements of more than 6,000 students and a number of other honorary graduates, including climate change influencer Professor Saleemul Huq and [newsreader Moira Stuart](#), across five days.

Honorary degrees are awarded each year to inspiring people who merit

special recognition for their achievements, their links to the University and for inspirational qualities.

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