

The Chancellor's Role

Dr Floella Benjamin, OBE DLitt Hon was appointed Chancellor of the University of Exeter in 2006.

The office of Chancellor dates back to 1955 when the fully-fledged University of Exeter was created with the award of a charter from

Her Majesty the Queen. It meant, after a century of higher education development in the city, that the new University could finally award its own degrees, with the power also to appoint a Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor.

In the years since, Floella Benjamin, is only the fifth Chancellor of the University. Exeter's first Chancellor, Mary, Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, gave the University gracious service for the first 16 years of its life. She was succeeded in 1972 by the Viscount Amory, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer and whose family had strong roots in Devon. He served until his death in 1981 and was followed by Sir Rex Richards, a distinguished scientist who pioneered the analytical technique of NMR Spectroscopy. On Sir Rex's retirement from office in 1998, Lord Alexander of Weedon, one of the leading barristers of his generation and Chairman of the NatWest Bank, took up the role of Chancellor, a post he held until his death in 2005.

Whilst the Vice-Chancellor is a full-time paid official of the University, the Chancellor is an honorary appointment and the holder usually has demanding commitments elsewhere. The Chancellor's most public role is to preside over degree congregations held for the University and also for the College of St Mark & St John, an affiliated institution in Plymouth. Behind the scenes, the Chancellor has an arguably more important role, as advisor, mentor and colleague, bringing valuable experience to bear from outside the world of higher education.

