

The Honorary Graduate: Andrew Lewis

The Orator: Neil Larsen

Andrew Lewis is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Technology.

“After leaving school in 1999 I made the brave decision to serve my Queen and country by applying to join the Parachute Regiment, in the British Army. Because of my determination to excel when applying for the army I was super fit as I frequently ran for Gloucestershire in cross country events across the UK.

“I was about to begin my P Company training when I had my motorcycle accident that left me hospitalised for over four months. After waking up in a hospital bed at just 16 years old the reality of exactly what had happened to me set in - I thought both my life and career were over.

“The next couple of months were very hard for me as I didn't lose my leg straight away, Bristol Royal Infirmary did everything they could to save it and for a short time they managed to do so. However, due continual complications, in December 2005 I made the extremely difficult decision to have my leg amputated.

“This was probably the hardest period of time for me I was struggling with my decision as I wanted to join the our troops so much, I had my heart set on it, especially with my brother in Iraq at the time.

“I made the decision that my amputation was not going to be my disability but in fact my ability to achieve something incredible and something that would change my life forever. I knew there would be obstacles and I knew that I would have to learn to get over them.

“I had a burning desire to run after watching the 2012 Paralympics was the pinnacle in my career as Paralympic athlete. Watching these inspirational athletes ignited a flame in my heart that for years had just been a small ember.

“With a fresh resolve I started looking into getting a running blade so I could run again and my employer Airbus UK incredibly part funded the cost of this new leg as it is not available on the NHS and we managed to fundraise the rest, raising a total of £8,000.

“Getting the blade changed my life dramatically and I competed in and won many events including Stoke Mandeville stadium, and I registered for England Athletics.

“Not content with running alone, and a feeling that I could still achieve more, I decided to try my hand at Triathlon. Its multi-faceted disciplines were extremely appealing to me and even though my running was good I had a long way to go with my swimming and bike, it felt like this was the challenge I had been looking for.

“Three years later, I am now part of the Great Britain World Class Performance Program competing for Great Britain all over the world. I have attained a few titles in my short career and am proud to be the British Elite Champion for Paraduathlon, British Champion for Triathlon and the current European and World champion and Paralympic Gold Medalist in Rio 2016.”

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Andrew Lewis' contribution as a Paralympian and elite sportsman alongside his commitment to inspiring others to overcome adversity and to developing new technology.