

The Honorary Graduate: Luke Johnson

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The Orator: Dr Carol Jarvis

Luke Johnson is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Business Administration. A leading figure in private equity and the restaurant industry, Luke is the pioneer behind several instantly recognisable high-street brands. An Oxford medical graduate, he began his career as a media analyst at Grieson Grant, before being appointed as Chairman of PizzaExpress PLC in 1993. The business grew from 12 to over 150 restaurants during his tenure. In 1999, he started Signature Restaurants, which owned The Ivy, Le Caprice and the Belgo chain, before establishing the Strada restaurant concept. The total proceeds from these two disposals were in excess of £90 million.

Luke is the Chairman of Risk Capital Partners, a private equity firm he co-founded in 2001, as well as Chairman and part owner of Gail's bakeries, Neilson Active Holidays and Patisserie Holdings PLC. He also serves on the board of Brompton Bicycles and is chairman of the Gaucho restaurant business. He also chairs Brighton Pier Group PLC. He was appointed Chairman of StartUp Britain in 2012 and, a year later, he created a think tank called The Centre for Entrepreneurs. During his time as the Chairman of Channel 4 Television (2004–2010) the organisation enjoyed record ratings and revenues. He has also previously served as Chairman of the Royal Society of Arts and as a Governor of the University of the Arts. As well as being the Chairman of the Institute of Cancer Research and the Almeida Theatre, Luke writes weekly for The Sunday Times, and, until 2015, he contributed a weekly column to The Financial Times for seven years.

The Honorary Degree is awarded for Luke Johnson's service to entrepreneurship.