

The Honorary Graduand: Alexandra Clarke

The Orator: Diana Harcourt

Dr Alexandra Clarke is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science.

Dr Alex Clarke is a consultant clinical and health psychologist. Having started her career as a nurse at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, she went on to study psychology at University College London and to complete training as a clinical psychologist at the University of Surrey. Upon qualifying, she worked first as a clinician for the Royal Free Hospital in London, and then as a lecturer in the medical school.

In 1995 she joined Changing Faces, a charity providing support to people with facial disfigurements, where she developed information and programmes of support for people with an unusual appearance caused by trauma, burns and medical conditions. At this point she began to collaborate with colleagues from the Centre for Appearance Research at the University of the West of England, notably Professors Nichola Rumsey and Diana Harcourt. This collaboration has produced a substantial body of influential work combining both a strong academic foundation from UWE and a focus on clinical application and evidence of effectiveness in applied settings.

In 2002 she left Changing Faces to set up and lead a small team specialising in the psychology of plastic and reconstructive surgery, once again at the Royal Free Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in London. In addition to establishing the role of psychology in the multidisciplinary plastic surgery team, she led the psychology strand of the facial transplantation programme which helped to lay the foundations for this novel reconstructive procedure worldwide. Over 25 facial transplantations have been completed in the last 10 years with good physical and psychological outcomes.

Since 2014, when she retired from the NHS, Alex Clarke has focussed on academic activities as a visiting professor at the Centre for Appearance Research. Current research interests here include the development and evaluation of brief screening tools for surgeons working in private cosmetic surgery settings, psychological aspects of shared decision making and online interventions to manage visible difference in appearance. She has published over 100 research papers, book chapters and information guides written specifically for patient groups and continues to contribute actively to the development of younger researchers and health professionals.

In the wider context of health psychology she also works as an associate consultant at the UCL Centre for Behaviour Change, providing training in evidence based behaviour change in a range of applied contexts.

The Honorary Degree is awarded for her internationally recognized work in Appearance Research and supportive interventions.