

**The University of Manchester Medal of Honour  
Presented to Mr Yakub Patel on Tuesday 18 March 2025**

**Citation:**

Distinguished Guests,

It is with great pleasure that I present Mr Yakub Patel, who holds honorary doctorates from The University of Lancashire and The University of Greater Manchester, for the Medal of Honour, in recognition of his extraordinary contributions and unwavering commitment to the community.

Mr Patel is a businessman and accountant by training. In 1980, he and his late brother, Anwer, opened the first Cohens Chemist shop in Rochdale. Their vision and strong work ethics transformed the business from a single-branch retail unit to a reputable and successful nationwide chain.

Mr Patel is dedicated to creating ongoing opportunities for children to thrive and develop into disciplined, well-educated, and employable young adults. His family played a significant role in establishing the Essa Foundation in Bolton, which transformed the former comprehensive school into the town's first academy. This initiative was driven by a bold ambition: to make a real difference in their hometown by supporting the local community, particularly in the areas of education, youth work, and drug awareness and rehabilitation. His impact extends to his involvement in the Bright Future Education Trust, a multi-academy trust founded in 2011, where he has helped shape the futures of students across a richly diverse group of schools. This trust comprises a diverse group of 11 schools located in Greater Manchester and Blackpool, including Altrincham Grammar School.

Mr. Patel is the founder and former director of the Independent Pharmacies Association (IPA), an organization that represents and supports over 4,000 privately owned and independent pharmacies. The IPA actively engages with politicians, policymakers, and local government stakeholders on a national level to shape decisions related to community pharmacy, services, and compensation.

Mr. Patel embodies the spirit of giving, holding several philanthropic and voluntary roles, such as serving as the Governor of Bolton Muslim Girls' School and as a Trustee of the British Muslim Heritage Centre. He stands as a role model for many charitable organizations. Furthermore, his generous sponsorship of The Paterson research facility at The Christie Hospital NHS Trust in memory of his late brother highlights his commitment to making a lasting impact, a gift that researchers like us deeply benefit from and wholeheartedly appreciate.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Patel and his family. He is a modest man with a brilliant mind and a warm heart. He patiently listened to me talk passionately about our mission to make a difference for brain cancer patients for over an hour, which is no easy feat since I tend to speak a lot when it comes to our mission.

His journey is a testament to the power of vision, determination, and compassion. His unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others has left an indelible mark on the community and beyond. Through his efforts, countless children have flourished and developed into disciplined, well-educated, and employable young people.

Today, we honour Mr. Patel with the University of Manchester Medal of Honour, the highest non-degree award bestowed by the University, for his exceptional service and dedication. Mr. Patel, your achievements are not just personal milestones; they are beacons of hope and inspiration for all who follow in your footsteps. Your legacy of service and generosity will continue to uplift and inspire generations to come.