

The University of Manchester Medal of Honour 2026

Citation for Katherine Leopold

Distinguished guests,

It's with great pleasure that I present Katherine Leopold.

During her 9 years as Chair of the University's Alumni Association, Katherine made an exceptional contribution to our University and to our global community of over half a million alumni.

These alumni have a fundamental role to play in Manchester's success, from inspiring the next generation of students to study with us, to ensuring that our graduates get the best start in their careers.

Through her leadership, Katherine has strengthened the bond with our graduates—helping to shape a community that is more connected, more inclusive, and more impactful.

And importantly, she has laid the groundwork for the successful launch of the University's first ever fundraising and volunteering campaign, Challenge Accepted.

In writing this citation I invited the reflections of colleagues who have worked with Katherine, and they all remarked on

- the energy that she has brought;
- on her ability to inspire others to get involved and
- her flair for communicating the importance and potential of an alumni community.

Her leadership is defined by three enduring qualities: wisdom, knowledge, and humanity.

With wisdom, she has been a visible and inspiring ambassador for our alumni at the highest levels of University life, playing a key role in governance through contributing to

selection panels for the University's Board and General Assembly, and leading alumni gatherings in London and Manchester, including our University's flagship Cockcroft Rutherford Lecture.

With knowledge, Katherine has brought deep expertise from her professional life. Through a combination of employer insight and educational practice, she has helped shape alumni programmes that equip students and recent graduates for the realities of the job market—ensuring they are confident, capable, and ready to succeed in their careers.

And with humanity, Katherine has demonstrated a profound commitment to widening opportunity for students through engaging alumni. Her mentoring of both students and colleagues in the alumni team has provided encouragement, practical guidance and raised aspirations.

Throughout, she's balanced this significant voluntary commitment alongside a demanding professional career whilst studying for a PhD, giving her time with generosity, dedication, and unwavering belief in what this University and its alumni can achieve together.

So this evening, we honour Katherine with the University of Manchester Medal of Honour, not only her achievements, but the legacy she leaves behind: a stronger, more vibrant, and more engaged global alumni community.

Congratulations Katherine.