

# **Dame Prue Leith will step down from QMU**

**Dame Prue Leith CBE, known for her expertise as a cookery expert, will step down from her position as Chancellor of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh (QMU) later this year.**

She has been the University's Chancellor since her installation in July 2017, and will preside over her last graduation ceremonies, in Edinburgh's Usher Hall, on 1 and 2 July, before officially concluding her term as Chancellor of QMU at the end of this calendar year.

Known for her appearances as a judge in the Channel 4 TV series, 'The Great British Bake-off' and BBC 2 culinary show 'Great British Menu', Prue Leith has become a household name in recent years, with numerous appearances on foodie programmes and other TV shows. Her most recent TV programme, 'Prue Leith's Cotswold Kitchen' on ITV, was filmed in her own kitchen where she, and husband John Playfair, celebrate food, friendship and fun with easy-to-cook recipes for every occasion.

Aside from her wealth of experience as a TV presenter and contributor, it was Prue's impressive track record as an entrepreneur, restaurateur, cook and writer, which made her an excellent fit for Queen Margaret University.

In her position as Chancellor, she has not only taken part in

graduation ceremonies and many other events, she has been a passionate supporter of QMU students. She has always taken time to meet and talk to students, often providing them with a great insight into her career successes and challenges, and encouraging and advising them on their own career paths. She has been particularly active in supporting the University's entrepreneurial opportunities for students. More widely, she always takes a keen interest in QMU's work in cultivating entrepreneurialism on campus, and in its ambitions to support businesses and economic development through the creation of the Edinburgh Innovation Hub, which is currently being constructed on land around the campus.

With a history in food and nutrition dating back to 1875, Queen Margaret University continues to have a strong focus on food education and commercialisation. Prue's wealth of experience as a food entrepreneur ensured her knowledge and experience was of great benefit to students and the University. Having successfully built a business from scratch in the 1960s which grew to become Leith's Good Food, the party and event caterer, Prue opened Leith's, her famous Michelin starred restaurant, in 1969.

In 1975, she founded Leith's School of Food and Wine, which trains professional chefs and amateur cooks. The group, employing 500 people, reached a turnover of £15m in 1993. She went on to sell her empire in the mid 1990's.

She has also held numerous public appointments, and was appointed an OBE in 1989, CBE in 2010, and Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2021 for her services to food, broadcasting and charity.

Prue has always spoken up for the issues that she believes in, and she doesn't shy away from difficult topics. She is a campaigner for assisted dying, having witnessed her brother's unnecessary suffering in hospital at the end of his life. She believes that more work needs to be done to improve end of

life care and to provide choice for those who are dying.

She shone a light on this sensitive topic in 2023 when she and her son, former Conservative MP Danny Kruger, explored the issue in a Channel 4 TV programme 'Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip'. The investigation and conversation involved a trip across Canada, where assisted dying is legal. Both Danny, who has opposing views to his mother and is against assisted dying, and Prue spoke to doctors and others affected by the service. Once the one-hour special was aired, Prue was praised for her sensitive handling of this important and often divisive subject.

Sir Paul Grice, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Queen Margaret University, said: "It has been a great privilege to have Dame Prue Leith as our Chancellor. She had a hard act to follow, taking over the role from our Founding Chancellor, Sir Tom Farmer in 2017, and she has been a true asset to the University. She has shown incredible dedication to our students, always making herself available to meet and discuss developments with staff and students, and supporting University events.

"Prue's career and background resonates deeply with the values and ethos of Queen Margaret University, as well as with our specialist areas in health and rehabilitation; the creative and cultural industries; education; and sustainable business. She has been particularly supportive of our recent and significant developments in teacher education – always keen to learn about our work in developing the next generation of teachers in home economics, primary education, religious studies and business. And her insights and experience into business development have been invaluable, and have helped support our culture of entrepreneurship.

"However, it is Prue's high energy, positive attitude and zest for life which have really inspired our students and staff. She sets a great example to the QMU community – bringing

positivity to everything she does, making the most of every opportunity, speaking out to make a difference to people's lives, and always developing and learning in order to be the best version of herself. Her boundless energy is infectious, and she has a star quality and magic about her which makes people believe that anything is possible. What more could you ask of a university chancellor?"

Dame Prue Leith will continue her role as Chancellor of the University until December 2024.



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Bake-Off judge installed as university chancellor and Hollywood film producer awarded honorary degree.

PICTURED Prue Leith, novelist, businesswoman, food writer, restaurateur, campaigner and TV presenter, takes over the role of Chancellor of the University from entrepreneur Sir Tom Farmer, who served as Founding Chancellor of QMU from 2007 to 2016.

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