

Citation – Professor Stephen Garton AM

Tuesday, 5 May 2026 – 2.30pm

Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you Professor Stephen Garton AM, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) as one of Australia's most accomplished university leaders and historians, distinguished by a career that has shaped both the scholarly study of history and the strategic direction of the University of Sydney.

Stephen graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney and went on to complete his PhD at UNSW. His research expertise is in Australian history, although he has also published in American, British and British Dominion history, in areas such as the history of psychiatry, crime, social policy, eugenics, masculinity, higher education and war veterans.

Appointed as a Lecturer in History here at the University of Sydney in 1987, Stephen rose to Professor of History in 2000 and served as Challis Professor from 2004–2009. Over more than three decades, he held an unparalleled suite of senior leadership roles including Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and ultimately Vice-Chancellor and Principal - guiding the University through major academic restructures, financial reform, and the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. His leadership revitalised the Faculty of Arts and elevated its global standing. Later he was instrumental in delivering transformative initiatives such as the Sydney Student Project rescue, the establishment of the University's Suzhou Centre, overseeing the modern slavery and sustainability strategies, reform of the University's faculty structure, and the relocation of the Sydney College of the Arts to the Camperdown campus.

Highly respected across the sector, Stephen is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the Royal Australian Historical Society, and the Royal Society of NSW. His scholarly contributions are extensive: seven books and more than ninety articles, chapters and essays spanning Australian, British, and American social and cultural history.

His leadership roles in national bodies, including the Editorial Board of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, the Australian Historical Association Executive, the Council of the Royal Society of NSW and the Research Workforce Strategy Reference Group, demonstrate his impact on the humanities beyond the University. Currently he is President of the Australian Academy of Humanities, an elect body of over 700 of the leading researchers in the humanities and creative arts in Australia, committed to advancing the work of these areas and ensuring the input of these disciplines in shaping broader policies in the national interest.

Recognised with the Centenary Medal in 2003 and appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2020, Stephen has combined intellectual rigour with exceptional institutional stewardship. His tenure as Vice-Chancellor saw the launch of the University's Indigenous Strategy and the Gadigal Student Centre and steady leadership during the pandemic. Today, as Principal Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor, he continues to guide major strategic and operational projects. Stephen's career exemplifies service, scholarship, and visionary leadership, making him profoundly deserving of recognition through this honorary award.

Chancellor, as we stand in this place devoted to Leadership for Good, I present to you Professor Stephen Garton AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.