Nominee: Professor Sir Robert Lechler

**Email**:

**Telephone**:

**Address**:

**Nominated By**: Mandy MacLean (mandy.maclean@strath.ac.uk) - Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences

**Nomination Category**: Academic Enquiry

Citation

Professor Sir Robert is a world-leading researcher, leader and communicator. As an immunologist, his research on clinical transplantation tolerance is internationally applauded. Amongst his many exemplary leadership roles include Presidency of the Academy of Medical Sciences, Trustee of the British Heart Foundation and serving on the Mayor of London’s Health Board. Robert is currently a Special Advisor to the House of Lords Select Committee for the response to COVID-19.

Evidence

There is no doubt that Robert has a long and exemplary record of research and leadership. In recognition of his leadership and research contributions, Robert became President of the Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS) in 2015. After five years of excellent leadership, Robert handed over the Presidency in December 2020. At the handover, some of the comments about Robert reflect his key qualities: ‘Charming and rather persuasive’ ‘Passionate about policy’ ‘Calm wisdom’ (Sir Patrick Vallance). ‘Inspirational leader’ (Dame Anne Johnson).’Astonishing contribution to clinical medicine’ (Professor Irene Higginson). Robert has demonstrated international excellence in research into transplantation tolerance and in particular, preconditioning the immune system to “tolerate” the foreign organ while retaining full capability to fight off infections and cancer. His distinguished career in immunology began in the Department of Immunology at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London in 1979. A Wellcome Trust Travelling Fellowship took Robert to the Laboratory of Immunology, NIH, Bethesda, USA. Moving back to the UK and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Robert was promoted up the academic ranks and became Professor of Molecular Immunology in 1992. Robert has been an Honorary Consultant in Medicine at Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust since 1986, and Professor and Director of Immunology in the Division of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, at Imperial College London since 1994. In 2001 he was made the Dean of the Hammersmith Campus, and became Head of the Division of Medicine of Imperial College London’s Faculty of Medicine in 2003. In 2004, Robert became Dean of King’s College School of Medicine and the following year he became Vice-Principal in charge of the five Health Schools of King’s. Robert is a BHF Trustee, chaired the Expert Advisory Group on novel biological agents for the Committee for Safety of Medicines from 2007- 2013, is an External Assessor for the Medical Devices Agency and a member of the Mayor’s London Health Board. He is a member of the Governments Council for Science and Technology. It is not surprising that, in 2012, Robert was awarded a Knighthood "for services to Academic Medicine". During 2020 his expertise in immunology, ability to communicate and leadership skills meant that he was at the forefront of research and understanding of COVID-19. He was appointed Special Advisor to the House of Lords Select Committee for the response to COVID-19. Robert led the impactful publication ‘Preparing for a challenging winter 2020/21’ to enable COVID prevention and mitigation strategies to be adapted and refined. He continues to contribute with his insights into long-COVID. As a brilliant communicator he has regularly contributed advice and knowledge on COVID to the public. He has also provided invaluable advice and support to academics at all stages of their careers. Hence, it is clear that Robert has contributed ‘Service to academic inquiry and the advancement of learning’ at several levels and well worth of an Honorary Degree.

Awards

Robert has received many awards including: Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (FRCP) (1990), Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists (FRCPath) (1996), Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences (FMedSci) (2000). Queen's Birthday Honours, Knight Bachelor "for services to Academic Medicine" (2012), Novartis Established Investigator Award by the American Transplant Society, Manchester Outstanding Alumni Awards (2014), British Pharmacological Society Honorary Fellowship (2016), Kings’ College award (2018), Honorary Degree from Queen’s University, Belfast (2020).

Connection

Sir Robert has followed innovative developments in Scotland. Having set up ‘Regional Champions’ for the AMS, he has also contributed to the Scottish medical research landscape through public lectures to AMS regional meetings in Scotland.

Role

Sir Robert has followed innovative developments at Strathclyde. He could provide the University with outstanding insight into the future of medicines, funding and strategy. In his many advisory roles he can enhance the interface between Strathclyde and the dynamic UK medical landscape. He has a great insight into the future of new therapeutics and health care. He would therefore be able to contribute critical advice and horizon scanning for our ‘Health and Care Futures’ initiative.

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