

Keynote and Invited Speakers Profile for 6th NRN Global Health Conference 2026

Keynote Speaker

Prof. Dame Jenny Harries

Current role and institution: Chancellor, University of Chester; former Chief Executive, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

Country: United Kingdom

Email: j.harries@chester.ac.uk

Biography

Professor Dame Jenny Harries is one of the United Kingdom's most recognised public health leaders. A medically trained public health physician, she served as Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England before becoming the founding Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), where she led national and international responses to infectious disease threats, pandemic preparedness, health security, vaccination programmes and climate-related health challenges. Her career has included leadership roles across government, the NHS and international public health initiatives. She has extensive experience in health protection, evidence-informed policymaking and emergency preparedness, making her a highly respected voice in global health and population wellbeing.



Confirmed Speakers

Prof Eunice Simmons

Current role and institution: Vice-Chancellor, University of Chester

Country: United Kingdom

Email: vc@chester.ac.uk

Biography

Professor Eunice Simmons is Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Chester in the northwest of the UK. She has broad sector experience having previously worked at five diverse institutions: the University of London's Wye and Imperial Colleges, UCLan Lancashire as head of the National School of Forestry, the University of Cumbria and Nottingham Trent University where she was Deputy Vice Chancellor.

An environmentalist by academic background, Prof Simmons has degrees in biology, soil conservation and forest ecology and has contributed to education and sustainability initiatives in Europe, Japan, Malaysia, China and the Caribbean. She has focused on the twin priorities of education and the environment throughout her career, particularly in large-scale knowledge transfer and implementation projects. As a founding member of Defra's Expert Committee on Forest Science and first Chair of the national charity TASO: Transforming Access & Student Outcomes, she has supported research implementation.

Eunice was recognised for sector leadership in education for sustainable development by the Environmental Association of Universities & Colleges and is proud to be the current Chair of Mersey Forest Partnership. This outstanding community forest leads on a UK government 'Trees for Climate' project and works with regional partners to improve the lives of 2.5 million people.

In her current role at Chester, she initiated the strategy of the Citizen Student, enabling students to develop well beyond their course expertise and she is deeply involved in regional and national skills and employability projects to support the 'good growth agenda'. Chester has faced into the challenges and opportunities of AI by revalidating many of its courses, developing new authentic assessments and transforming data handling and business processes to ensure the university's sustainable future.



Prof Paul Bissell

Current role and institution: Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Professor of Public Health, University of Chester

Country: United Kingdom

Email: p.bissell@chester.ac.uk

Biography

Professor Paul Bissell is Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Professor of Public Health at the University of Chester. His research spans public health, health inequalities, medical sociology, behavioural health and health services research. He has led and contributed to a wide range of externally funded research projects and has published extensively on public health policy, social determinants of health and healthcare systems. Professor Bissell has supervised numerous doctoral researchers and has held senior leadership positions at the Universities of Chester, Huddersfield and Sheffield. His work is recognised internationally for its contribution to applied public health research and evidence-informed policy development.



Prof Padam Simkhada

Chair of the Scientific Committee for the Sixth Global Health Conference 2026.

Current role and institution: Professor of Global Health and Dean of Global Impact and Research, University of Chester.

Country: United Kingdom / Nepal

Email: p.simkhada@chester.ac.uk

Biography

Professor Padam Simkhada is an internationally recognised global health academic, researcher and research leader with extensive experience in public health, health systems strengthening, migration and migrant health, maternal and child health, global health policy and international development. As Dean of Global Impact and Research at the University of Chester, he leads the University's research, innovation and international impact agenda. He has worked extensively across Asia, Africa and Europe, developing international partnerships and leading collaborative research programmes that have informed policy and practice. His work focuses on addressing health inequalities, strengthening healthcare systems, NCDs prevention, building research capacity and promoting evidence-informed policymaking to improve population health outcomes globally.



Dr Kirstie Simpson

Current role and institution: Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise, University of Chester.

Country: United Kingdom

k.simpson@chester.ac.uk

Biography

Dr Kirstie Simpson is Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise at the University of Chester, providing strategic leadership across the Chester Business School, School of Natural Sciences, and School of Computer and Engineering Sciences. As a member of the University's Senior Leadership Team, she plays a key role in advancing academic excellence, student success, research, innovation, internationalisation and external engagement. She has extensive experience in higher education leadership, curriculum development, business and enterprise education, and fostering partnerships with industry and professional bodies. Her work focuses on preparing graduates for a rapidly changing global environment while promoting innovation, sustainability and enterprise-led solutions to contemporary challenges.

