

## **BU Honorary Graduate Citation - Poppy Cleall**

Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor,

Poppy Cleall is a Rugby Union player who has won 64 caps for England, two silver medals at successive World Cups and who is cited as the Premiership's leading try-scorer of all time.

Born to sporty parents, Poppy played rugby from the age of six, joining after-school clubs along with her twin sister and brother. Growing up in Dorset, she went on to play for Ellingham and Ringwood and Wimborne rugby clubs before progressing to Bristol Ladies while studying forensic computing at the University of West England. Poppy aspired to build a career as a professional player from an early age. Her ambition became a reality in 2017 when she was part of the first women's rugby squad to gain professional status ahead of the World Cup. Today, as well as representing her country, Poppy plays for Saracens Women where she has helped the team to win four Premiership titles.

The highs and lows of a sporting career have given Poppy an in-built ability to bounce back from disappointment. She recalls initially missing out on selection for the 2017 World Cup due to injury, but getting a call a day before the team left for the tournament asking her to step in for another injured teammate. Then, at the 2022 World Cup, the team narrowly missed out on victory in the final against New Zealand at a tournament they were expected to win. Poppy refers to herself as the 'world's worst loser' and accepts that she needs a day to wallow before using the experience to drive her forward. Her career highlights so far include opportunities to captain the England team, where she has learnt the importance of adapting communication styles to motivate different personalities.

An active campaigner for gender diversity in sport, Poppy has launched the Women's Rugby Agency to co-ordinate coaching sessions and player appearances for schools and charities. Having grown up with a lack of visible female role models, Poppy hopes the agency's work can help to inspire more young girls into the sport.

Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Poppy Cleall and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.