ANNE SILK

My Lord and Chancellor,

Anne Silk is a former clinician who developed an international contact lens consultancy. Since her retirement she has made a second career in neuroscience and the environment, producing a wide range of research outputs and supporting innovative scientific research.

Anne showed exceptional ability as a child, but circumstances ruled out a university education. Following a family tradition, she went into advertising and worked for Selfridges. This, she says, was ‘fun - but not a lifelong career’. So she trained and practised in optics, but here also, in her own words, Anne became 'bored to death with specs' and turned to contact lenses. These were a new and very exclusive development at the time: only four companies were dispensing them, and Anne soon became a director of one of these. In the mid-1970s she set up her own practice with an international clientele and consulting rooms in London's Wimpole Street.

And here the scientific enquiries began. Anne became absorbed by the study of eye conditions. From here she went on to explore a wide range of health-related external phenomena such as pulsed microwave beams, asking questions that others - at least in the UK – were not. These scientific interests brought her into close contacts and working relationships with government, professional bodies and industry, and became so consuming that Anne retired from her optical practice to pursue her research agenda, which took her from optics, via physics, into neurosciences. In each of these areas she has made a notable international mark through publications and conference papers.

To take one example of Anne's many scientific contributions: many of her patients with atypical myopia turned out to be computer users, in the era of monitors with cathode ray tubes. Anne was in the forefront of research which identified a link between close exposure to cathode ray tubes and certain ocular conditions. She published her findings, which were ignored in the UK. But not so in America, where others were asking similar questions.

Anne's extraordinary second career has also taken her into other health-related fields such as Motor Neurone Disease and epidemiology. These interests brought her into contact, and now a fruitful working relationship, with BU's School of Health and Social Care, and together they are engaged in joint research projects with exciting prospects for the future.

Anne's achievements have been widely honoured. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (a most unusual accolade for a non-medic), was elected President of the Association of Dispensing Opticians, sat on the General Optical Council, is a Member of the Institute of Physics and lately of the US Bioelectromagnetics Society. Among other high-profile national roles she has served as Chair of the NHS Dendron Neuro Research Steering Group at Oxford, and as a member of the Department of Health SAGE II Science Forum. Her contribution in the area of electromagnetism and its

impact on human health led to her being co-opted onto the UK's Health Protection Agency. Anne has also made history as the first woman to become Master of her City Livery Company in 1990. Today we are privileged to celebrate the career of this most remarkable scientist whose work links to increasingly important research at BU.

My Lord and Chancellor, I have the honour to present Anne Silk, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.