

**Transcript of speech by Vice Chancellor Adrian Thomas at the Faculty of Arts Graduation Ceremony, 20 June, held in O'Reilly Hall, St John's University.**

Dear colleagues, friends, parents and graduands.

It's my pleasure to welcome you to this wonderful hall to celebrate the achievement of our students, graduating after three years of hard work in the Arts Faculty of our university. It's a significant year for us at St John's of course, celebrating our seventy fifth anniversary. There have been a number of events to mark the occasion, as many of you will know, and this graduation ceremony will be one of the most important, giving us an opportunity to reflect and look forward. It would have been a very different ceremony seventy five years ago, when that first small cohort of students graduated.

We may be a small university but our achievements are many, and we have contributed to many different fields of study. Very recently, our Faculty of Science featured on a BBC news item because of the pioneering work done in tracking the spread of the Zika virus in the developing world. The virus has been identified as an international health emergency by the World Health Organisation, and the research completed here has contributed to our understanding of how this virus works. Other disciplines are also well represented. I'm proud to welcome one of our alumni, Mrs Erin Williams, to receive an honorary doctorate for her work in the field of child psychology. She has published several articles on dyslexia, cognitive development and multilingualism and is in demand as a conference speaker around the world. Being a smaller university is no hindrance to success in any field. I would also argue that being a smaller university greatly enhances the undergraduate experience. I was heartened that the National Student Survey ranked St John's as the friendliest of all UK universities. Excellence in academic research goes hand in hand with good teaching and an atmosphere where students are encouraged and supported.

For some of you, this is the culmination and end of three years of study, but many of you will be embarking on post-graduate studies next September. The proportion of graduates staying on to work towards MA, MSc or full doctorate studies at St John's is one of the highest in the UK; at least 20% of graduates have expressed this as their intention this year. This in itself is a reflection of the esteem in which the University is held by its students, and of the dedication of the lecturing staff. I wish you well in your future studies, and for those leaving St John's, I wish you well in your future careers. Thank you, and congratulations once again.

**Trawsieithiad:**