

## Academic Staff Member Election 2020

### Professor Peter Higgins

I am a first-generation graduate, the only member of my family ever to benefit from higher education; yet, here I am, working in one of the world's great universities! Little wonder I am passionate about education and the role of the University in fulfilling its broader mission. The desire to support the University, specifically with regard to student learning and sustainability is at the heart of my application. I see myself as a member of a University-wide 'learning community' supporting scholarship and learning, and whilst our scale, campus and diversity, make such a 'community' difficult to sustain, it is important we value this in decision-making, as it is essential for the collective well-being of all staff and students. These are three areas which are central to 'who we are' and would be my priorities as a member of Court. My profile below should give an indication of 'who I am'.

**Teaching and learning:** My deep commitment over 25 years of concerted effort is evident through the award of a *Personal Chair* for contributions to teaching and research (2006), *HEA Principal Fellowship* (2015), and the University's *Chancellor's Teaching Award* (2018).

My work has focussed on two main areas – 'Learning for Sustainability' (LfS), which seeks to find educational responses to arguably the most significant and urgent issue we face today, and interdisciplinary academic and practical 'education outdoors'. I was *Programme Director* for several MSc and UG programmes for many years and am currently Course Organiser for a range of academic courses, field trips on the River Spey and Isle of Rum, and a University-wide on-line course in sustainability (which I co-wrote). I am regularly nominated for all four teaching categories of the *EUSA Awards*, and was 2014 runner-up for Best Feedback. I was the first CAHSS *Dean of Students* (2012-17), supporting Senior Tutors, Personal Tutors, Student Support Teams etc., in enhancing student learning experiences.

**Broader UofE roles:** My roles in 'sustainability' include that of Director of the Global Environment and Society Academy, and the UN University Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development (Scotland); and providing sustainability/environmental education support to Scottish Government. I work with SRS Department embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in curricula, and projects to ensure the University meets its 'Zero by 2040' CO2 emissions targets.

**Research:** I have published over 160 articles and books in a diverse range of topics: experiential, environmental and sustainability education; highland land-ownership; environmental/sustainability implications of diet and food waste; skill-acquisition and freshwater ecology (my original area of research). This has included 20 PhD graduates and about £5M external joint research/consultancy/CPD funding.

**Knowledge exchange and community:** None of the above could have been achieved without the support of my direct colleagues, my School and wider University community. Much of our work has focussed on supporting Scotland's teaching profession to ensure young-people have opportunities to learn about

sustainability; and in, through, about and for the natural world. This has been recognised by recent Scottish Government and UNESCO nominations for international awards.

**Profile:** <https://www.ed.ac.uk/profile/peter-higgins>