



# School of Education LEARNING STRANDS

ISSUE 6 AUTUMN/WINTER 2021

## Welcome

to the 6th School of Education newsletter. COP26 in Glasgow has come and gone. However, its legacy is still to be written: by lawmakers; by industry, and by environmentalists, to name but a few. We, too, have agency in this arena as ones who will help write what will become our histories. With COP26 in mind, this edition of Learning Strands focuses upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The School of Education makes a varied contribution to the SDGs. On p.2, you can read about the Advance HE award-winning Quality Education (SDG 4) work of the Teaching Qualification for Further Education (TQFE) and BA Professional Development teams. On p.3 (and p.5), there are details of Education's focus upon international sustainable development.



Other SDGs feature throughout, such as a research project around the UNCRC (p.5); high-social impact research on school uniform (p.5); pet therapy and Early Years (p.4); food activism (p.6); researching in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Bangladesh during Covid-19 (p.7), linked to SDGs one (No Poverty) and four (Quality Education).

Beyond these snapshots of some of the ways in which Education makes a difference, you will learn more about our school community life and wider activity (pp.8-14).

Wherever you are reading this, my good wishes for 2022 on behalf of the staff and students of the University of Aberdeen's School of Education.

**Professor David Smith**  
Head of School of Education



This newsletter was created by the School Communication Team. We would like to extend our thanks to all our contributors.

If you would like to contribute to our next issue or have any questions, please contact: Rosemond Cochrane,  
✉ [educationcomms@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:educationcomms@abdn.ac.uk)

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AdvanceHE

## TQFE/BAPD Team Wins Prestigious AdvanceHE CATE Award for Collaboration and Teaching Excellence

The TQFE/BAPD team recently won an AdvanceHE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), becoming the first ever team from the University of Aberdeen to do so. This prestigious award recognises collaborative work that has had a demonstrable impact on teaching and learning and highlights the key role of teamwork in higher education.

The TQFE/BAPD team provide educators in Scotland's Colleges and related contexts with accessible, inclusive and flexible learning opportunities and work at the boundaries between multiple learning communities; between educators, disciplines, Colleges and Universities in the UK, Europe and beyond.

The collaborative work that underpins this activity is extensive, both among team members and with students and other institutions in Scotland and beyond. This has proved particularly effective in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, where the team has drawn upon its long experience of networked collaboration to ensure the best possible experience for students.

To secure the award, the team had to demonstrate evidence of excellent collaboration and the reach, value and impact of partnership working. This required a range of evidence including External Examiners' and GTCS accreditation reports, student feedback and testimonies from College managers and other partners, to show the impact that BAPD and TQFE have on those working in the college sector and beyond.

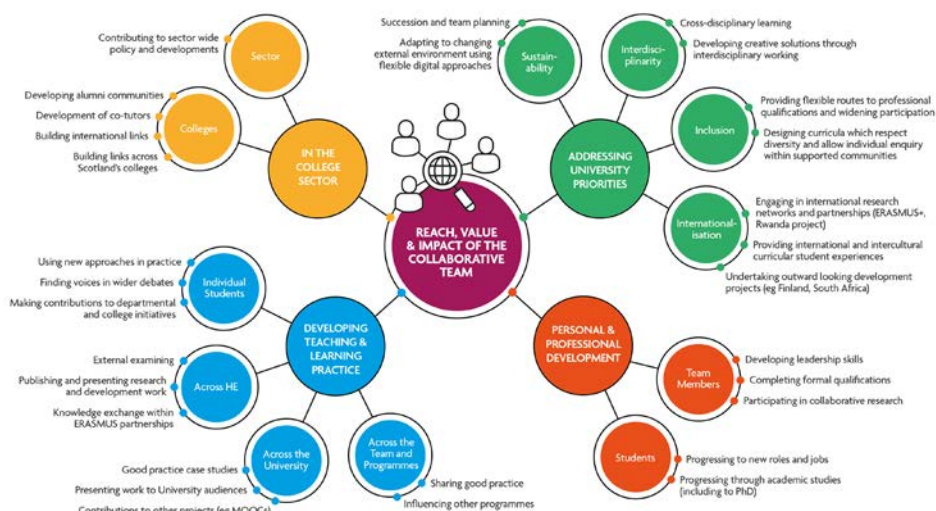


Diagram representing the reach, value and impact of the TQFE/BAPD team

“Contributing to these networks will allow knowledge exchange to support change for the better within our own institution, across the sector and beyond.”

The TQFE/BAPD Team

The application process was facilitated by colleagues in the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) who were able to connect the team with previous award winners in other Scottish institutions. These contacts acted as ‘critical friends’ during the application drafting process and helped the team to present the range of evidence they had collected as clearly and strongly as possible.

Putting together an application proved a rewarding opportunity for reflection on the team’s philosophy and approach, as well as outcomes. It highlighted the diversity within the team and how this is a strength for designing and delivering multi-disciplinary programmes such as TQFE and BAPD where the student participants are also from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Another area of focus was international collaboration and the team were able to show the links between recent research and ERASMUS+ projects and the development of the BAPD and TQFE programmes. Both these areas were highly commended by the reviewers.

The team, which included Aileen Ackland, Chris Aldred, Yvonne Bain, Sarah Cornelius, Rachel Shanks, Mary Stephen and Stephanie Thomson from the School of Education and Christine Calder from Dundee and Angus College, are now part of the Scottish CATE network and wider national networks of CATE and National Teaching Fellow award winners. Contributing to these networks will allow knowledge exchange to support change for the better within our own institution, across the sector and beyond.

### THE CATE AWARDS

[www.advance-he.ac.uk/awards/teaching-excellence-awards/collaborative-award-for-teaching-excellence](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/awards/teaching-excellence-awards/collaborative-award-for-teaching-excellence)

### VIEW OUR ‘WINNERS PROFILE’

[www.advance-he.ac.uk/cate-team/tqfebapd-team](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/cate-team/tqfebapd-team)



TQFE/BAPD Team - Top (L-R): Dr Rachel Shanks, Dr Aileen Ackland, Dr Stephanie Thomson, Christine Calder. Bottom (L-R): Sarah Cornelius, Chris Aldred, Mary Stephen, Professor Yvonne Bain.

This work links to the following SDGs:



# School News

## Sustainable International Development

### Sixth Century Course

Peter Mtika | Course Coordinator



The School of Education and its affiliate, the Centre for Global Development, have been delivering an interdisciplinary Sustainable International Development (SID) Elective course to level 1 and 2 students for almost a decade.

Before 2015, the course focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in connection with social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainable development. After the United Nations (UN) adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the course was redesigned to mirror these urgent global goals.

SDGs are ambitious statements of intent 'agreed' by world leaders to advance sustainable development globally. SDGs emphasise inclusive development within and between countries. It is underpinned by the principle of 'leaving no one behind', and that sustainable development must be based on human rights and equity. Each SDG has targets and pathways to achieving the targets by 2030. SDG targets, pathways to progress and indicators of success provide an academic basis for our interdisciplinary SID.

It is tempting for a course on sustainable development to be construed as proselytising in its posture, given that sustainability appears universally virtuous. On the contrary, on this course staff and students take a critical view of what sustainability means from social, cultural, economic and environmental perspectives.

Specifically, the course explores sustainable development by focusing on how development is conceptualised and advanced through the SDGs, which are championed by the UN and other agencies and national governments.

The course starts by framing and critiquing the concepts of development and sustainability. The course argues for the pursuit of ethical sustainable development, which is by no means unproblematic! We assess an overemphasis on economic growth as a measure of progress, given the negative impacts that economic growth can have on other aspects of development. We work with students to explore and analyse selected SDGs by using various case studies and SDGs Interactive map from different countries.

Case studies illustrate the SDGs in action, the potential for success and barriers to progress. In this way, the students draw from both familiar and unfamiliar contexts to develop their critical and applied skills in relation to sustainable development around the SDG related issues of development, ethics of sustainability, poverty & hunger, health & well-being, equitable quality education, social inclusion & gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, climate action, governance, peace & justice.

Students on the course experience a variety of teaching approaches including lectures, TED Talk videos, academic and policy literature and group discussions. The main intended learning outcome is to develop students who will become critical thinkers and agentic in sustainable development in general and SDGs more specifically.

The course connects more directly with the University of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes of Academic Excellence, Critical Thinking & Effective Communication, Learning & Personal Development and Active Citizenship.



"The course was originally developed by the Centre for Global Development as an interdisciplinary course to raise students' awareness of global inequality and injustice focusing on the poorest and most disadvantaged countries in the Global South. Over the years the academics associated with the Centre have been able to share with students the findings from their exciting and groundbreaking research in countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa, Cambodia and Bangladesh. We encourage students to think about what people's daily lives are like, what problems they face and how they lives can be transformed."

Professor Abbott reflecting on the course over the years

The core team for the Sustainable International Development course is made up of Professor Pamela Abbott, Director for Centre for Global Development; Dr Nigel Dower, Honorary Senior Lecturer in Philosophy; Dr Peter Mtika, Senior Lecturer in Education and Course Coordinator; and Ms Joyce Michie, the course administrator.

The course has a history of attracting students from across disciplines and nationalities, and both the staff and the students value this diversity. On average, over 65 students complete the course each year.

This course links to the following SDG's:



# School News

## Using a Pet to Support Social and Emotional Well-being in the Early Years

Iona Watt | March 2021

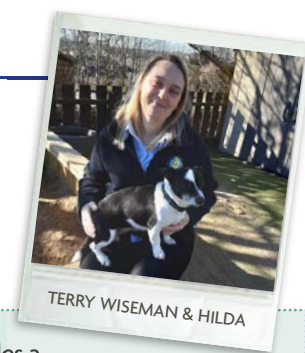
### Might the dog be the best friend of teacher and learner?

At a time when care for mental health is high on the agenda throughout society, it was interesting to have the opportunity to support Terry Wiseman with her research into this aspect in the Early Years, as part of her final course in the BA Childhood Practice degree.

One of the privileges of working with students undertaking this work-based degree programme is that they offer insight into their own well-developed areas of practice and expertise. From Terry's research project, I was able to learn about her experience using animals in Early Learning and Childcare settings to promote social and emotional well-being. Terry was keen to gather evidence that might strengthen her belief and understanding that introducing Hilda – a Jack Russell – would be an effective strategy.

Terry has had a long interest in 'Pet Therapy', having spotted its value in her own daughter's personal and social development. Terry's daughter was nonverbal but engaged well with animals. Terry explains that this experience imprinted on her personal beliefs and impacted on her approaches as an ELC Practitioner. With support and guidance from The Care Inspectorate's 'Animal Magic' policy, she introduced her pet, Hilda to the ELC setting she leads.

I asked Terry about the aims of her investigation and how the introduction of Tilda had gone. "Children can have a fear or an affinity with animals. Some childhood fears can, with adult support be overcome, enhancing later life experiences. If a child has an affinity with animals, we can use this to enhance learning opportunities and social and emotional well-being, hopefully impacting upon later life. The Early Years form the foundations. What we can imprint, guide, support, buffer and enhance can make those foundations stronger, steadier and more robust. I like to view that as my role in the ELC setting."



"Hilda offers a way for the children to reach out. She provides a talking point for families. Outwith the setting they can access photos of Hilda and family members can ask how Hilda is. This helps to open a conversation about nursery at home. Hilda is an aid to support and nurture the children whilst providing them with opportunity and responsibility to reciprocate. I was hoping that introducing Hilda would provide companionship and emotional security. I feel this has been particularly important and beneficial within the current context of COVID-19."

Terry Wiseman, BA Childhood Practice Student

Although Terry found Hilda to be a source of nurture and support within the nursery during the context of a global pandemic, this also meant that stakeholders were cautious about increased risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Terry explained that she was already aware that introducing an animal to a setting involved strict adherence to health and safety guidance and infection control requirements. Hilda had a separate collar, lead, bedding, toys and bowls which remained in the nursery and were cleaned regularly. The children quickly adapted to the routine of washing their hands after interacting with Hilda and became good at reminding each other.

Reflecting on the whole process and experience, Terry commented that she expected to find more barriers than she did with regards to infection control and animal welfare. It appears that it was Terry's experience and passion for animals that enabled her to make Hilda's introduction to the ELC run smoothly.

Hilda's welfare and needs were also carefully considered. Terry and Hilda have a very strong bond, so Terry understands Hilda well. If Hilda is feeling restless, she will find Terry and sit between her feet. This is a signal that Hilda needs a break. Clear boundaries are set. For example, the children understand that if Hilda is in her bed she is resting, and they can sit near her but are not to disturb her.

Terry's research and own small-scale study enabled her to strengthen her belief and

understanding of how a pet in the ELC can support well-being. She also identified that the success of her project came from her careful planning and confidence in implementing the change. This prepared her to share her aims and methods with her Management and with parents and carers of the children in the ELC.

Terry's worthwhile research and findings should perhaps not surprise us. This unprecedented time of restricted social interaction and increased social distancing throughout society has led to a phenomenal increase in dog-owning (even among our colleagues in the SoEd).

Surveys suggest that lockdown has brought people to feel closer relationships with their pets. BBC news has reported that most pet owners believe that their pet supported their well-being whilst dealing with COVID-19 curbs. Perhaps we do not need to look too far in validating Terry's findings.

It is worth noting (by our bosses) that owning a dog is likely to boost your productivity as a result of the boost to your mental and physical well-being.

Time to introduce (paid) breaks for walkies, with dog crèches on campus and in schools?

This research links to the following SDGs:



# School News

## Write Right About Me (WRAM) Project

**Dorothea Scherer, BA Childhood Practice Programme Director tells us about her current research project; Write Right About Me (WRAM)....**

WRAM is Aberdeen's multi-agency Records Improvement Project with a variety of services involved: NHS, Social Care, Police Scotland, several Universities and Councils. It is embedded in the **United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and explores the way professionals write with and for the children, young people and families they support.

As part of this work baseline information is gathered about how students and professionals in training think, feel and

carry out the writing they will do for the children, young people and vulnerable adults they will support.

A planned survey will help to assess what guidance, support and learning students and professionals in training need generally across the agencies involved to prepare them for the writing they will do when they go into their professions.

All the responses will be collated and added to quantitative data. This will help to understand the work which needs to be done as well as the ongoing impact of this improvement project on the way professionals write about the children, young people and vulnerable adults they support (**Adult with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000**).

The project discusses subjects like how to draw attention to the impact of language, the limited value of emotive language in formal/academic writing, the value of professional language, the issue of 'labelling', how to leave a positive imprint with language and how students and other professionals might use their own professional voice in writing. It also assesses the importance of including the voice of all participants, especially of those ones who are being written about.

**This research links to the following SDG's:**



## Research on Affordability & Sustainability of School Uniform

Dr Rachel Shanks was recently awarded pump prime funding by the University for interdisciplinary research to investigate the impact of school uniform banks in relation to the affordability and sustainability of school uniforms.

The research was closely aligned with the University's 2040 Sustainability theme and it has the potential to show how more sustainable and more affordable school uniforms could be developed.

The SDGs directly addressed by this pilot project are Goal 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within

and among countries. Other SDGs indirectly addressed are Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**The research questions addressed in the pilot study were:**

- How do uniform banks address the affordability and sustainability of school uniforms?
- How can these two functions of school uniform banks be measured?

The pilot project work was undertaken by research assistant Ainsley Carnarvon who

is a PhD student in the School of Education in June and July 2021. Rachel and Ainsley are writing up the project report and a funding application based on this initial work is being prepared.

**This research links to the following SDG's:**



## Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities

After a 2 year pause this 6th Century course is running again. The course celebrates 6 centuries of studying at the UoA and is cross-disciplinary. It asks students to consider different approaches to knowledge and enquiry while studying issues affecting the world today. The 6th Century courses are designed to help students develop a deeper understanding of their chosen area

of study. The course does this by involving experts from across the UoA and investigating: What is sustainability?; Energy Solutions, Ecology & Conservation, Ethics, Science & Sustainability, Agriculture & Food Systems, Sustainable Development & the law, Cuba as a case study of sustainability, Climate emergency in Scotland and the Politics of sustainability.

Students complete an online quiz, create a digital story and write an essay focusing on one of the 17 SDGs. Their essay focuses on the challenges and opportunities of sustainability presented by one particular SDG at both the local and global level.

**To find out more please contact Dr Peter Mtika e: p.mtika@abdn.ac.uk**

# School News

## Food Activism in the Schoolyard Project

Professor Donald Gray &  
Dr Kirsten Darling-McQuistan

The project was designed to respond to the 'call for action' mandated by UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a particular focus on growing food in school gardens. The project was conceived to address SDG 1, 'no poverty'; SDG 10, 'reduced inequalities'; and SDG 13, 'climate action' as well as SDG 4, Quality Education. This seemingly simple response to complex and multi-dimensional global issues built on the expertise and research interests of the project team\* to support the wellbeing, informed activism and democratic participation of young people across educational sectors.

### Why food?

Food is a chemical compound which makes the stuff of our bodies; and so it is central to human survival, society and culture. Food is the product of the intimate relationships between humans and the Earth.

Growing concerns about food production, food waste, food quality and food access bring the fragility of human survival sharply into focus. Food and food growing practices are therefore a matter of immediate concern, which children and young people have the right to understand, question and challenge.

### Where did we start?

We hosted three workshops (two in-person, one online) to establish a participatory methodology which would enable us to engage with and capture a range of perspectives and lived experiences in relation to food as a global sustainability issue.

One in-person workshop involved adults and the other involved children who were invited to participate in some food related activities and engage in philosophical discussion. The conversations that unfolded across these workshops and the final online event, highlighted the complexity of food sustainability and the contested notion of children as food activists.



Food Activism in the Schoolyard is a Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) funded project, involving a team of nine people across four higher education institutions, a local authority, a third sector organisation and a UN Regional Centre of Expertise, Learning for Sustainability Scotland.

### What next?

Building on the careful analysis of the multi-modal data created through the workshops, three main principles were identified: social justice, inquiry and learning. From these principles the research team built a 'Learning for Sustainability' Framework to support practitioners when planning across the curriculum.



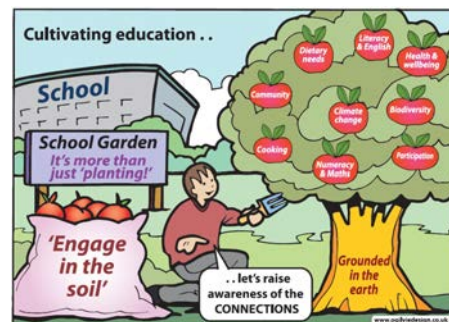
### learning for sustainability framework

The Learning for Sustainability Framework has been designed supportive tool for practitioners, rather than a prescriptive guide. It therefore aims to embrace the complexity of learning for sustainability by asking critical questions based on the three principles; including questions relating to ethics, relationships, diversity and power.

The Food Activism Framework was derived as a worked-out example of an inquiry into the sustainability of our food systems. It provides 5 dimensions: food quality, food equity, food production & disposal, food sovereignty and food sustainability.

These dimensions can be used by practitioners to support them to map out and explore food systems. Importantly, however, an inquiry into food is not value-neutral. Hence a food activist inquiry is supported by the use of the Learning for Sustainability framework which can be applied to each of the five dimensions of food activism.

By using the frameworks together in this way, practitioner will be able to problematise common topics, such as importance of eating fresh food and vegetables, by raising important questions:



who makes these decisions? Are children's perspectives taken into account? In what ways is the narrative of 'healthy eating' discounting other cultural and social experiences?

### Where next?

Both the Learning and Sustainability and Food Activism Frameworks have now been delivered to all schools in Scotland. As a team we are keen to undertake further research in order to better understand how we might use these frameworks in ITE across Scotland, so we can support our students to meet the newly revised GTCS Standards for Registration, which places greater emphasis on sustainability.

### PROJECT WEBSITE

[www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/FoodActivism.aspx](http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/UNGlobalGoals/FoodActivism.aspx)

\* **Project Team:** Dr Laura Colucci-Gray (University of Edinburgh), Dr Claire Cassidy (University of Strathclyde), Prof Donald Gray (University of Aberdeen), Dr Laura Nisbet (City of Edinburgh Council), Dr Stephen Day (University of West of Scotland), Kirsten Leask (Learning for Sustainability Scotland), Bob Donald (One Seed Forward), Dr Sharon Hunter (University of Strathclyde), Dr Kirsten Darling-McQuistan (University of Aberdeen).

### This project links to the following SDG's:



# School News

## The Challenges and Rewards of Researching in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic

Professor Pamela Abbott

My research focuses on issues related to socioeconomic development and transformation in countries in the Global South. I am currently involved in seven research projects in four countries with the projects covering a range of topics including two projects on governance and democratisation (Ethiopia and Tunisia), socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Rwanda, reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care work in Rwanda, increasing literacies to improve quality of life in Rwanda, the impact of COVID-19 on children's mental wellbeing in Rwanda and Ethiopia, and the impact of the COVID-19 on the readymade garment industry in Bangladesh.

I work on these projects with colleagues from the Schools of Education, Social Sciences, Law, Medicine, and the Business School. External partners include the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-Rwanda, the University of Rwanda, the University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda, Adis Abba University, Ethiopia, Tradecraft Exchange UK, and colleagues from Dhaka University.

As a result of COVID we have had to modify what we planned to do, think creatively about how we can implement activities and ensure that all members of the team are safeguarding their wellbeing.

A lockdown in Rwanda meant that we had to suspend adult literacy classes from March to December 2020. The field research to explore the experiences of learners and tutors had to be suspended two-thirds of the way through because the Government suspended our permit to do fieldwork. We have had to restructure the budget to be able to purchase COVID-19 mitigation supplies, masks, soap and sanitizers.

Our partners in Rwanda have continued to deliver the project always following the requirements of the Rwandan government and WHO guidelines. Preliminary findings



1. Making learning resources using locally available materials; 2. Community Adult Literacies Tutor (Left) being Congratulated by Professor Wenceslas Nzabirwa Co-Principal Investigator on Completing the Training Programme; 3. Tutor talking to adult literacies tutors during a class; 4. Learning materials and COVID-19 mitigation supplies being delivered to a literacy centre; 5. Interviewing a Readymade Garment Worker in the Slums where she lives.

from the qualitative research have found that as well as learning reading, writing and numeracy skills students have used the knowledge they gained in the classroom to improve their quality of life and wellbeing.

We have also completed the project on the impact of COVID-19 on women workers in the readymade garment industry in Bangladesh. Our initial findings show that the exploitation of women workers in the readymade garment industry has intensified under COVID-19.

Owners used the imposition of the first lockdown to terminate the contracts of pregnant women and older women and replaced them with younger women. Sexual harassment and violence by line supervisors has increased as the workers are set unachievable production targets and are forced to do unpaid overtime.

We were able to complete fieldwork in Tunisia which was mainly carried out face to face. The research used cognitive interviews to find out more about what people have in mind when they answer

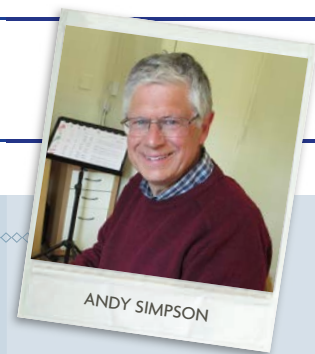
questions on democracy and human rights in public opinion polls. Initial findings showed that most respondents thought that democracy was the best form of government and far fewer thought that a democratic government was suitable for their country.

I am left with one ethical dilemma: we and the funders have expected our partners to carry on doing fieldwork even though the University has not been able to permit us to, in line with the Scottish government requirements. We have not required our partners to do face-to-face working during the pandemic and have always stated that they follow their own government requirements. However, we are aware that our partners rely on the funding to provide for themselves and their families.

This research links to the following SDGs:



# Staff Spotlight



## Andy Simpson

### VISITING TUTOR

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a Visiting Tutor, is observing students starting their journey in teaching. Two thoughts often strike me as I watch students developing their classroom skills. My mind returns to my own days as a student teacher - and I am glad that the initial teacher training now provides so much more support and challenge. Secondly, I often speculate how each student will use their skills as their careers unfold. Who will have a lifetime as a dedicated classroom practitioner?

These thoughts have led me to reflect on my own career. The education system I entered in 1980 was very different from that which saw my retirement and into which our students are now entering. Yet the skills I learned over forty years ago equipped me well to adapt to changing situations.

My own educational journey started with delivering Religious, Moral and Philosophical Education at Turriff Academy, followed by time as Adviser with Grampian Region. This led me into senior management, first at Mintlaw Academy, then Keith Grammar School and finally as Head Teacher at Elgin High School. In parallel, other highlights included time as Principal Examiner with the Scottish Examinations Board and five trips to Zambia with senior pupils.

Since retiring in 2016, I have been conscious that the skills of a teacher never leave you - for they also equip you to be a “responsible citizen” and an “effective contributor” in the community. Many voluntary groups are delighted to capture a retired teacher as a committee member. As Visiting Tutor, I have learnt about areas of the educational system that were less familiar to me – and gained a great respect for teachers of P1 classes.

Two years ago, I was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Banffshire – one of the first times a former classroom teacher has been asked to take on such a role. I always liked the coffee mug with the slogan “I’m a teacher, what’s your superpower?” As I watch student teachers in the classroom, what better role can I have than to encourage the next generation of superheroes as they equip themselves for their futures.

## Dr Carol Hickman

### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

I have been working in my current role in the School of Education since August 2016, having moved across from the College of Physical Sciences, where I had been the interim College Registrar, and Assistant College Registrar for Research. As School Administration Manager, I am involved in a wide range of operational activities within the School and have responsibility for ensuring the day-to-day administrative operations within a busy School are delivered by the experienced and hard-working administration team.

I am a proud Suffolk lass and I grew up enjoying the beautiful Suffolk coast and scenery, before moving to Aberdeen in 2009, to take up a position at the Macaulay Research Institute, now known as The James Hutton Institute, where I worked for 5 years.

The photo was taken at Pompeii – it had always been on my bucket list of places to visit, as it was reading about the eruption of Mount Vesuvius which kick started my return to academic studies as a mature student; initially studying geology, before going on to achieve volcanology related PhD in 2007. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as PGR student, doing fieldwork; on the lava flows on Nisyros and Nea Kameni (Santorini), and working in the volcanology lab, running experiments in a stimulated magma chamber.

Before Covid, I travelled a lot with my husband, exploring as much of a country as possible, and I am now an expert at packing just a small backpack for 3 week excursions! We also enjoy long distance walking and in June we completed the first half of the Thames River Path starting at the source near Kemble, Gloucestershire. Our 6 month old puppy, Bailey, is in training to join us on these walks in future.





# Staff Spotlight

## *My Other Life...*

**CATRIONA McDONALD | (Interim) Head of Early Childhood Education and Care**

My 'other life' is music. I sing in a choir; nothing remarkable about that but, the choir is the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. What makes this a 'different' choir is that it is an auditioned choir with re-auditions every three years and which performs at a professional level with visiting international orchestras, conductors and soloists appearing at the Edinburgh International Festival each August. Recently (pre-Covid) I have performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Orchestre de Paris and all the leading Scottish orchestras.

EFC members are recruited from across the whole of Scotland. The first audition is easy as you have no idea what you are auditioning for, but being able to continue assumes a much greater importance as the years roll on! I did have a period of many years of not singing when living in Sweden and that was definitely when I became aware of the status and quality of the EFC.

One question I am often asked is whether I regret not making music my career choice and the answer is 'no'. It has, however, provided me with wonderful opportunities as a hobby, as well as lifelong friends from a wide variety of backgrounds. I have never aspired to be 'the soloist' and am never happier than when getting to grips with the alto part in some complicated tangle of a Beethoven fugue, or Mahler harmony. It has always been about being the team player yet being aware of the importance of the individual contribution in delivering the highest standard of performance overall.



Covid has of course caused all sorts of problems for the performing arts, and singing in particular, but the EIF did stage a three-week programme of concerts in August 2021, under very strict guidelines. I was delighted to be invited to take part in a group of twelve singers, in two performances of Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with the RSNCO, conducted by Thomas Søndergård.

The performances took place in an enormous open-sided polytunnel construction, yet even so, with two metre distancing, it was not possible to fit the singers and the orchestra on the stage simultaneously, so the EFC contribution had to be relayed from the backstage tent! We did get an orchestrated curtain call though – with umbrellas provided!

The chorus contribution in that piece is not a huge undertaking, but after being silenced for eighteen months, it was an extremely emotional experience to be allowed to perform again with an orchestra and for a live audience.

### **What does the future hold?**

We cannot know for certain but in-person rehearsals are scheduled to recommence in Edinburgh on Tuesday evenings within the next few weeks for the 2022 Edinburgh International Festival.

# Events

As we moved from the start of the new academic year towards a more 'normal' type of working pattern, we were able to spend time on campus working both virtually and in-person. Here are a few snippets of what has been going on in and around the MacRobert Building...



## Virtual Afternoon Tea

We enjoyed tea and cakes virtually at the start of spring, courtesy of the fantastic Campus Services!

Such a lovely treat...



## Lighthouses

Over the summer months many of us were out and about in Aberdeen on the trail of the lighthouses that were situated all over the city!

This one was taken at Seaton Park!

## Christmas Time!

The Aberdeen campus Christmas tree is up and looking very twinkly!

It has certainly made us all feel festive!



**Cuppa Catch ups!** After working from home it has been so nice to be able to catch up face to face

*Meet the latest SoEd Pawsome pup!*



# School Award Winners



## ANNE MACKIE MEMORIAL PRIZE Hemalatha Kesavan | PG (Primary) Year 1

This prize is awarded for excellence in School Experience and consists of a commissioned piece of artwork/crystal, together with a plaque on which recipients and year of award is engraved, plus a £50 book prize.



## JESS CUTT PRIZE Emma Pim | Primary School Teaching

This prize is awarded in recognition of the effort and commitment of a 1st Year Primary School Teaching student, in their course of studies.

## STEPH SMITH AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL VALUES & COMMITMENT

Sadiqah Rahman | MA Year 4

Awarded to an MA Year 4 student, who is nominated by student peers and tutors as displaying - throughout their student life, learning and work - a level of excellence in their: value and commitment to social justice, inclusion, protecting and caring for children, young people, peers and colleagues; value in themselves as growing professionals, taking responsibility for their professional learning and development; value, respect and commitment to the communities in which they learn, live and work.



## A.L ROGER PRIZE Georgie Smith | MA Year 1

Awarded to the MA Year 1 student who submits the best piece of academic work.

## MacGREGOR MEMORIAL PRIZE Heather A Buchan

Awarded to the most exceptional student on placement across years 1-4 of the MA programme.

## MacIVER PRIZE Lynn S Noble

This prize is awarded to the graduating BA Childhood Practice Student who has submitted an exceptional piece of research and enquiry. The student awarded this prize will have shown a level of excellence in terms of engagement and progression throughout the programme and in their final submission. They will have clearly and consistently demonstrated how they meet the required Standard for their professional qualification. The winner will be identified by the Programme management team and agreed by the Exam Board, through nominations from tutors, and will receive a £100 prize.



## KAY PRIZE Yvonne Lindie | MA Final Year

Founded in 1899, under the will of David Kay (alumnus, Marishal College, (1944-46), Blairs. Awarded to the candidate who gains the highest distinction in Education, as determined by the results either of the class examinations alone or of the class examinations combined with an examination on such additional work as the Head of School/Discipline of Education may prescribe for this purpose. Candidates must be regular students proceeding to a degree and must state in writing that they intend on graduating to follow teaching as a profession.

## RICHARD A GREIG PGDE PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AWARD Stuart Murphy | Academic Year 2020-2021

Awarded annually where commitment to social justice and professional is deemed outstanding. The winner receives a £100 prize.



# Alumni Spotlight

BEd Primary Teaching graduate Gavin Oattes, told us why he chose to study at Aberdeen and what he has been up to since graduating!

## Why did you choose to study at Aberdeen?

I was keen to move away from home and try somewhere new. I had grown up in a tiny little town in the South West of Scotland. Whilst Aberdeen was far away, it didn't feel too big a jump. I loved the vibe of the city and the people are tremendous.

## Why did you choose your course?

I always wanted to teach and the reputation of the course in Aberdeen was first class.

## What did you most enjoy about your time at Aberdeen? Did you have any particularly memorable student experiences?

Being a part of the Student Union and organising Freshers' Week!

## Did you hold any student leadership roles, e.g. Class Rep, Club Treasurer, Social Convenor?

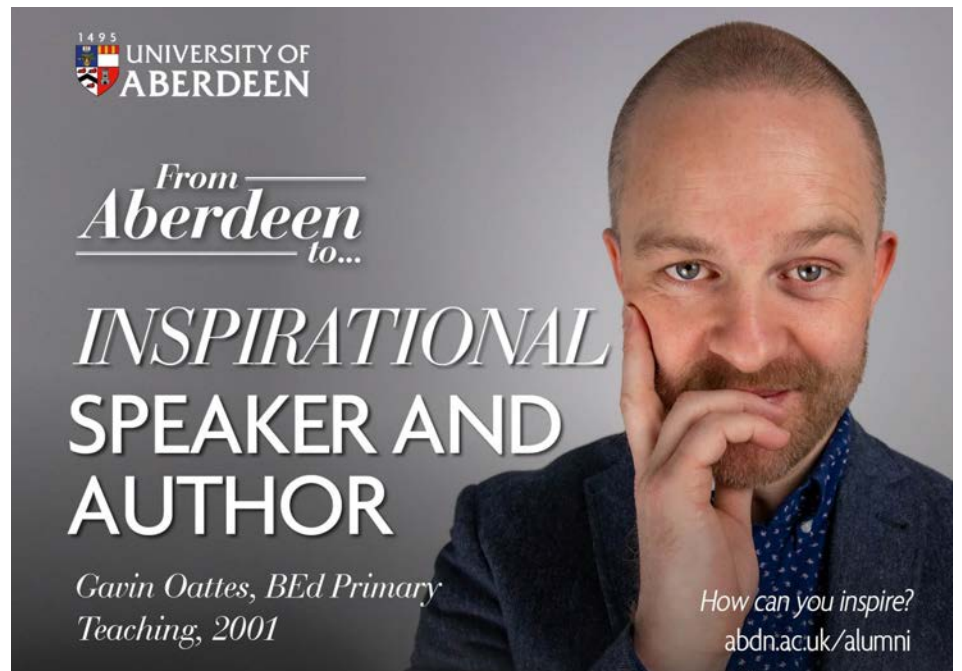
President!

## If talking to a group of prospective students, what advice would you give them to help them make the most of their time at the University of Aberdeen?

Get stuck in and give it your all, but not to the point of burnout. Be sure to look after yourself, always.

## What was the title of your first job after graduating from Aberdeen?

Primary Teacher.



## What did your first role involve?

I had my own P7 class.

## What is your current job title?

International Keynote Speaker & Author.

## What is your current role?

I speak professionally at events around the world.

## Please briefly describe the journey from your first job after graduating to where you are now.

All through my time at university I became more and more involved with performing stand-up comedy. By the time I had graduated I realised that my primary teaching degree had given me a huge amount of time and experience in front of an audience. After teaching

for a short time I decided to pursue comedy full time. It took me all over the world and many Fringes later I now run my own speaking business. We create all sorts of bespoke experiences for schools, colleges and businesses the world over. Through this I was lucky enough to earn a publishing contract. I now have four books with two more on the way.

**One Top Tip** - Your energy introduces you before you do. Do less and be more!

Gavin's work links to the following SDG's:



## A very warm welcome...

### TO OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER ANDREW CRAWFORD

I am a Social Subjects Teacher (specialising in Geography) with ten years of teaching experience.

I have also been Probationary Teacher Mentor at Fraserburgh Academy for five years.

I am now 0.5FTE at the School of Education and retain a 0.5FTE teaching and mentoring remit at Fraserburgh Academy.

I am extremely excited to bring together expertise from each of my roles to give the best possible learning and teaching experiences to students at the University of Aberdeen.



# Research Award

## Journal Edited by Dr Rachel Shanks Wins a Prestigious New Award

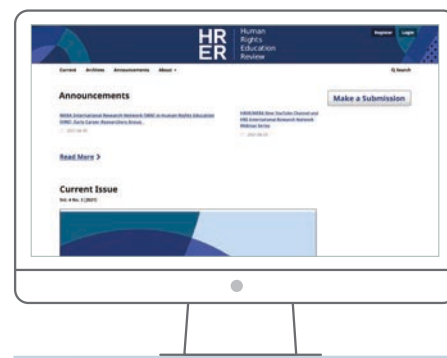
Dr Rachel Shanks is an editor of the journal **Human Rights Education Review** which has recently been awarded a prestigious new award.

Amnesty International USA University and College Consortium for Human Rights Education (UCCHRE) has selected Human Rights Education Review as a co-recipient of the first UCCHRE Human Rights in Higher Education Award.

They recognised the 'significant contribution' to human rights education in the higher education sector that the open access journal Human Rights Education Review is making.

You can find out more about the journal, access all its articles and find out about its YouTube webinar recordings at <https://humanrer.org>

This journal links to the following SDG's:



# Research Publications

Lucia D'Ambruoso, I., **Abbott, P.**, and Binagwaho, A. (2021) Building back fairer in public health policy requires collective action with and for the most vulnerable in society. *BMJ Global health* (3) e005555  
DOI: 10.1136/bmjgh-2021-005555.

Amie Tsinda, A., **Abbott, P.**, Chenoweth, J & Mucyo, S. (2021). Understanding the political economy dynamics of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) sector in Rwanda. *The International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*. 13(2): 265-278 with 10.1080/19463138.2021.1881787.

Teti, A., Gervasio, G., **Abbott, P.** (2021). Perceptions of the EU: Activists and public opinion in the Middle East (2021)., in, Dimitris Bouris, Daniela Huber and Michelle Pace (eds.) *Handbook of EU-Middle East Relations*, London: Routledge.

Pendergast, D., Ronksley-Pavia, M., & **Dewhurst, Y.** (2020). A systematic quantitative literature review of pre-service teachers' sense of belonging during school-based experience. *International Journal of Home Economics*, 13(2), 59-79.

**Foy, K.** (2021). Digital Games Based Learning for History—Problem Solving or Problematic? *Education in the North*, 28 (2), pp. 115-133.

**Gray, D.**, Colucci-Gray, L., and Robertson, L. (2021). Cultivating primary creatives in STEAM gardens', in Burnard, P. and Loughrey, M. (eds.) *Sculpting New Creatives in Primary Education*, Routledge, Chapter 9.

**Mynott, J.** (2021). 'Managing the Unexpected' in Snape, R. (ed.). *The Head Teacher's Handbook*. Bloomsbury, pp. 235-239.

**Mynott, J.** & Zimatore, M. (2021). 'Pracademic Productive Friction: Boundary Crossing and Pressure Points' *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-11-2020-0093>

**Mynott, J.** (2021). 'Sustainable Professional Learning: A development of Lesson Study.' *IMPACT*, Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching, 13. pp. 25-28.

Kennedy, A., Beck, A. and **Shanks, R.** (2021). Developing a context-appropriate framework for measuring quality in initial teacher education, *Scottish Educational Review*, 53 (1), pp. 3-25.

Friedrich, J. and **Shanks, R.** (2021). The prison of the body': school uniforms between discipline and governmentality, *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2021.1931813

**Johnston, D.H., Foy, K., Mulligan, A. and Shanks, R.** (2021). Teaching in a third space during national COVID-19 lockdowns: in loco magister?, *Irish Educational Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2021.1916563

# Additional Research Activity

## Conference/Event Digest

### 6 MAY 2021

**Graham, A., Robson, D., Mtika, P.** and **MacDougall, L.** An Asset-based Exploration of Probationer Teachers' Lived Experiences of Enacting an Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Schools Located in High Poverty Environments. Scottish Educational Research Association, SERA Connects Webinar, *Flourishing and Belonging - Self-care, connection and agency among early career teachers (Online)*

### 28 MAY 2021

**Gray, D.** Keynote lecture "From Fragmented Nature to Holistic Science at the Interface of Knowledge" at the conference of the International Society for the Advancement of Steam. Korea, ICAS—online. [http://isas2020.net/Spring\\_2021](http://isas2020.net/Spring_2021)

### 1 JUNE 2021

**Nixon, G.** Aberdeen City Lift Off event for senior pupils. Mindfulness – an Introduction (*Presentation*)

### 2 JUNE 2021

**Graham, A., Robson, D., Mtika, P., MacDougall, L.** and **Stelfox, K.** Exploring Student and Beginner Teachers' enactment of the concept of Pupil Differences in Schools Located in High Poverty Environments. Scottish Educational Research Association, SERA Connects Webinar, *Social Justice – agency and respect (Online)*

### 22 JUNE & 9 NOVEMBER 2021

**Nixon, G.** RMPS research dissemination at RMPS National CLPL group.

### 25 AUGUST 2021

**Shanks, R.** and **Carver, M.** New teachers' professional development needs in response to emergency remote teaching in Scotland, 19th Biennial EARLI Conference, *Education and Citizenship: Learning and Instruction and the Shaping of Futures (Online)*

### 6 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

ECER (European Conference on Educational Research) 2021, Geneva (online) *Education and Society: expectations, prescriptions, reconciliations.*

- **Shanks, R.**, "Blogposts as an Authentic Assessment Task" (6 September)
- **Thomson, S.** and **Velthuis, S.** "Keeping track of complex youth transitions and outcomes: New Perspectives on the Impact of Local and Regional Variations in England" (6 September)
- **Graham, A., Robson, D., Mtika, P.** and **MacDougall, L.** "Enacting inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments: Learning from beginner teachers" (7 September)
- **Gray, D.**, **Colucci-Gray, L.** and **Hancock, J.** "Closing the Gap? Reconceptualising the politics of attainment and wellbeing through garden activism" (7 September)
- **Shanks, R.**, **Cross, B.**, and **Mannion, G.** "Between and Beyond Pupil Councils: Lessons on Breaking New Ground in Participation Practice across Scottish Schools" (8 September)

### 9 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Mynott, J., Foy, K., Hendry, F.** and **Stewart L.** "Virtual Observations: A technological response to placement assessment during a pandemic". Association of Teacher Educators Europe (ATEE).

**Nixon, G.** University of Edinburgh conference on the future(s) of Theology and Religious Studies. Invited panellist to discuss Theology and Religious Studies in schools.

### 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Darling-McQuistan, K.** Symposium: "Overcoming borders to promote sustainability: Lessons learned from 'Food activism in the schoolyard'". Contemporary Childhood Conference: Borders and Boundaries, University of Strathclyde.

### 13 TO 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

British Educational Research Association Conference (virtual conference).

- **Gray, D., Darling-McQuistan, K., Colucci-Gray, L., Day, S., Hancock, J.** and **Conrad, S.J.** BERA symposium: "What opportunities are there for introducing a food activism lens within the current educational system?"

- **Shanks, R.** and **Carver, M.** "Coping, substitution, and redefinition: new teachers' responses to emergency remote teaching in Scotland"
- **Shanks, R.** "Cost and affordability of secondary school uniform in Scotland: Levelling the playing field"
- **Thomson, S., Lupton, R., Velthuis, S.** and **Unwin, L.** "Local variability in post-16 options: Navigating the marketplace of 'opportunities'" Symposium paper
- **Lupton, R., Thomson, S., Unwin, L.** and **Velthuis, S.** "Local variability in post-16 options: labour market fit or postcode lottery?" Symposium paper

### 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Ravet, J.** and **Mtika, P.** "A decolonial perspective on intercultural research: A case study of educational inclusion in rural Cambodia". UKFIET Conference- Research Methods: *Building Back Better in International Education & Development Research.*

### 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Shanks, R., Mulligan, A., Foy, K.** and **Johnston, D.** "Teaching in a Third Space during COVID-19 lockdowns". Hibernia College, Dublin, Research Seminar Series (online)

### 11 TO 17 OCTOBER 2021

**Shanks, R.** "Poverty and school uniform in Scotland". Challenge Poverty Week, presentation for the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland.

### 28 OCTOBER 2021

**Thomson, S., Huber, S., Cornelius, S., Schwartz, M.** and **Beaton, M.** "Digital dilemmas: using vignettes to explore design issues for inclusive digital learning" - ATEE spring conference 2020 (postponed to November 2021).

### 2 NOVEMBER 2021

**Nixon, G., Smith, D.** and **Fraser-Pearce, J.** "Researching the (ir)religious beliefs of RE teachers". Philosophy, Religion and Education Research Group, University of Oxford.



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School of Education, University of Aberdeen, MacRobert Building,  
King's College, Aberdeen, Scotland AB24 5UA