


Interviewee:	Alan Ferguson	
Dates:	16 th May 2018	
Role(s):	Lecturer in Housing Policy and Practice	

Interview summary:

<i>Summary of content; with time (min:secs)</i>
Start – 0.35
0.36 - Describes how he came to Stirling Uni. Completed Housing course at Glasgow University, had contact with academics at other institutions, e.g. Dave Alexander at Stirling. Worked previously as policy officer and social housing worker but had interest in teaching and experience in writing.
02.13 - Discusses lack of encouragement from previous manager at the Housing Institute; likely related to movement to academic field. Claims growing interest in housing drove him to opportunity at Stirling in 1990.
05.33 - Describes first impressions of Stirling University after getting job. Describes buildings as brutalist and easy to get lost in. Recalls feeling overwhelmed and unprepared at task of teaching 'housing careers, but claims experience in human geography and social applications got him the job.
08.36 - Discussion of unusual aspects of Stirling Uni compared to Glasgow, Paisley and Dundee (previous studied at); outlines small number of students, new buildings and working with other staff, i.e. supervision and appraisal. Highlights lack of support and direction from above, but claims support came from colleagues in department. Collaboration with colleagues monitored marking, teaching and overall reputation of the course.
13.22 - Describes teaching of social policy, policy processes, urban sociology/sociology of housing, tenant participation courses in the first year of post-graduate students. Claims students were mainly post-graduate and full or part-time. Rarely taught under-graduates.
15.35 - Describes aims; wanting to give good teaching experiences, to be up to date with current issues (apparently causing problems with the uni, as his focus seemed elsewhere). Claims colleagues helped improve teaching capabilities; Ferguson developed teaching style involving student-led discussions particularly with part-time students who were learning on the job simultaneously.
19.51 - Discussion of problems achieving aims, including problems balancing administration and researching, and lack of teaching enthusiasm from other staff (in and outside of Stirling). Claims too much pressure to get funding for research, for example Scottish Housing; lack of emphasis on learning for students too.
21.54 - Description of pressures previously mentioned, e.g. teaching without guidance from institution, marking and administration, and conducting research. Ferguson admits research was not a strength of his.

Claims keeping on top of teaching, admin and research, and external organisation involvements (e.g. Scottish Local Government Unit) was difficult, work taken home every night. Claims he felt guilty when this work wasn't done, but admits he enjoyed the work.
25.25 - Describes his departments' (the 'Housing Policy and Practice Unit) place in wider university, including department of 'Social Science' and 'Social Work' unit. Admits less contact with other departments.
26.52 - Discusses resources available, including rooms for teaching and studying, but concedes admin staff had more involvement. Describes department as self-contained, self-supporting, e.g. colleagues working together, infrequent disagreements.
28.41 - Discusses department meetings, including staff at Heriot Watt, Edinburgh, where teaching was split part-time. Describes meetings as overall positive, thanks to shared goal of good teaching experience for students. Mostly discussed money, admin, course running, engaging students, funding, teaching and work placements for students.
32.36 - Describes relationship with students as positive, involving time and effort into personal problem solving and improving teaching experiences. Admits trouble with marking and deadlines being achieved.
34.40 - Discusses pastoral care at university. Claims tutors and lecturers took responsibility for welfare, with no clear pastoral carer within uni. Different departments would recommend others for help (e.g. recommending finance department for money issues).
35.40 - Discusses significant figures in university career, including lecturers in housing course, in social policy and social work, colleague lecturers at Heriot Watt, but not from higher governance at Stirling uni; claims relationship was good but contact was minimal. Concedes lack of interference was a positive.
38.08 - Describes personal life at uni; lived at Lenzie, balanced career with 3 young children but concedes work took up most time. Suggests more time taken preparing classes and placements than tutors in other departments. Admits extra-curriculars, keeping up to date with housing policy for example, took up time too but contributed to future career in Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).
42.10 - Describes being friends with colleagues in Stirling and Heriot Watt but not staying in contact. Claims few places on campus for staff to socialise, for example the MacRobert Centre. Suggests family priorities and commute meant socialising was not as important. Also cites short period at Stirling meant friendships were not well established.
45.34 - Discussion of university's place in Stirling city; disconnect for staff and students that didn't live in Stirling itself, including commuters.
47.45 - Discussion of proud moments at Stirling, including praise from students. Claims he didn't want to leave so soon but cites over-emphasis on research as reason for leaving.
50.58 - Discusses things he would've done differently; putting more into teaching, being on top of work, working more with students. Describes career as overall positive.
52.58 - Describes work with uni's housing department after leaving, including involvement with course validating board for a short period before conflict of interests occurred, having worked at Stirling. Also suggests a lack of interest in teaching from board headquarters in Coventry.
56.21 - Describes time at Stirling overall positive and a good personal learning experience.
Ends 57.26

Interview No:	SURSA OH / - 114	<p>SURSA University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA</p> <p>info@sursa.org.uk www.sursa.org.uk</p>	<p>SURSA</p>  <p>Oral History</p>
Interviewed by:	Mary Taylor		
Date of interview:	16 th May 2018		
Summary completed by:	Violet Cooke		
Date:	19 th February 2025		