


Interviewee:	Dave Alexander	
Dates:	23 rd April	
Role(s):	Director of Housing Administration Unit; Lecturer in Housing Studies	

Interview summary:

<i>Summary of content; with time (min:secs)</i>
Start – 0.22
0.28 - Description of arrival at Stirling University; part time from 1980 until 1982 when he replaced first department head two years after conception. Initial short contract caused job uncertainty.
02.36 - Discusses previous jobs including 'Shelter Scotland' and part-time teaching on other courses. Highlights lack of research experience.
03.27 - Describes previous study; undergraduate degree in geography from Aberdeen and urban studies from Birmingham, where Alexander encountered housing studies.
04.02 - Describes impact of formal qualification in housing. Claims Stirling was keen to establish department and need qualified professionals. Suggests lack of academic skills was a weakness but not problematic.
05.27 - Discussion of perceived lack of importance of academic skills in role.
07.00 - First impressions of Stirling; environment focused on learning, encouraged by individuals and equipment. Highlights lack of job security as reason for not moving to Stirling initially.
08.50 - Discussion of staff aims at Stirling, to continue future of housing studies by training future specialists. Personal goals included promotion of housing issues and policy making.
10.53 - Describes small class; highlights relationship with Scottish Education Department (Scottish Office) and bursaries given for post-graduates. Suggests financial support was crucial for engaging students.
12.20 - Claims focus on external contributors was not popular with Stirling Uni; suggests they wanted academic focus (conflicting priorities).
13.43 - Discusses how strong supporters allowed collaboration with external organisations like the Scottish Education Department and Chartered Institute of Housing, who donated to the university overall and the housing department.
16.34 - Description of contract change to 'rolling'.
18.09 - Discussion of relationship with wider faculty, feeling out of place with heads of bigger departments with differing academic emphasis. Highlights similarity with Social Work and Sociology departments; emphasises being categorised differently to mainstream courses.

23.39 - Discussion of unsuccessful attempts to use other departments (i.e., economics department). Highlights preference to seek external advice.
24.35 - Discussion of input from Falkirk College of Technology; describes reluctance to teach women and sexist remarks leading to contract termination. Replaced by input from professional architect.
26.31 - Outlining course; students given academic and practical skills to become professionals, involving study of sociology, law, finance, and policy. Use of practical placement alongside academic study.
28.22 - Discussion of practical assignments being critical pieces and transferable to workplaces.
30.18 - Discussion of introduction of research council RAE and impact on course. Found impact of external funding led to more external students and PhD students.
32.36 - Attempts to make course effective aided only by external organisations; university more interested in academic achievement.
34.01 - Discussion of contribution to housing conferences and training senior professionals. Seen as important in gaining funding. External activities not liked by university.
35.44 - Description of lack of early housing research journals. Glasgow Uni held more weight in academic circles, Stirling couldn't compete.
39.22 - Description of heads of department meetings. Recalls diversity of roles and difficulty relating to academic professors' arguments. Describes arguing for less academic focus, supported by new business department, arguing about relevance of research.
44.28 - Discussion of student relations, notes isolation from other students. Small staff in charge of students' welfare, career advice, studies etc. Claims small class was advantage.
47.43 - Discussion of downsides of small classes.
48.48 - Discusses life in Stirling, downsides of commuting, lack of social opportunities but good campus. Highlights lack of supportive environment, led to less social engagement within uni.
51.31 - States no support given to develop teaching abilities. Claims appraisals not conducted until end of his university career and were focused only on academic achievement.
53.37 - Discussion of reasons for leaving Stirling; poor appraisal technique and focus on academic research in late 80s outlined. Acknowledges pull factors of other careers.
55.53 - Describes impact of newness and small scale of Stirling Uni, briefly mentions 'Queen's Visit Incident'. University aimed to grow and diversify quickly, hence creation of Housing Department.
58.14 - Describes highlights in university career; working with small classes and being staff, i.e., teaching, preparing and learning.
1.00.45 - Description of worst parts of university career; lack of training led to rare conflict with students and lack of support from academics within uni.
1.02.25 - Discussion of things he would do differently, including handling less co-operative students. Claims better training would've increased value of teaching.
1.04.18 - Describes pride in stabilizing and growing the course, serving on external exam boards and collaboration with Herriot Watt University, in Edinburgh.
1.10.01 - Suggests Stirling was better for formats more dedicated to academic research.
Ends 1.12.07

Interview No:	SURSA OH / 110	<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:	23 rd April		
Summary completed by:	Violet Cooke		
Date:	12 th February 2025		