Meet Our Actuaries

PROFESSOR ANGUS MACDONALD (FFA, FRSE) was Head of the Department of Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics from 2007 until 2013 and is Director of the Genetics and Insurance Research Centre. He qualified as a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries in 1984 while working for Scottish Amicable, and completed a PhD at Heriot-Watt in 1995. Angus was Honorary Librarian of the Faculty of Actuaries from 1998-2007, was elected an Honorary Member of the Actuarial Society of South Africa in 2005 and elected FRSE in 2006. He is internationally recognised for his research into the impact of genetic information on insurance and has received numerous awards, most notably the David Garrick Halmstad Prize in 2005 and the Finlaison Medal of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries in 2011.

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER MCNEIL (Hon FFA) is Maxwell Professor of Mathematics in the Department of Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics and Director of the Scottish Financial Risk Academy, which was established in April 2010 to promote regular interaction between financial services companies and universities. His research interests lie in the development of mathematical and statistical methodology for integrated financial risk management and include extreme value theory, risk theory, financial time series analysis and the modelling of correlated risks. He has published papers in leading statistics, econometrics, finance and insurance mathematics journals and is a regular speaker at international risk management conferences. He is co-author, with Rüdiger Frey and Paul Embrechts, of the book Quantitative Risk Management: Concepts, Techniques and Tools, published by Princeton University Press.

PROFESSOR ANDREW CAIRNS (FFA) was Head of the Department of Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics from 2004 to 2007. He qualified as an actuary (FFA) in 1993 and is well known in the UK and internationally for his research in financial risk management for pension plans and life insurers. In the field of financial mathematics he has developed a new model for bond-price dynamics, used for measuring and managing long-term interest-rate risks. More recently he has worked on modeling, measuring and pricing longevity risk, and how it can be transferred to the financial markets. In 2008 he was awarded the David Garrick Halmstad Prize. He is the author of the well-known textbook Interest Rate Models: An Introduction, published by Princeton University Press.

DR CATHERINE DONNELLY (FIA) is a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries and an affiliate member of the Riskcenter, University of Barcelona, Spain. Catherine spent several years working in the pensions industry before pursuing further studies in the UK and Canada. Following a research position at the RiskLab, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, she joined the Department of Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics in 2011. The overall theme of her research is the quantification of risk in problems of actuarial interest.
We were established in 1972 and are the oldest such department in the UK. We have since grown to become a world-leading centre of teaching and research in actuarial and financial mathematics, risk management and probability and statistics. We were the first in the UK to offer a specialised programme in actuarial mathematics and all of our actuarial programmes are fully accredited by the UK Actuarial Profession. We form part of the Maxwell Institute for Mathematical Sciences, pooling research and postgraduate activity with the University of Edinburgh, and are home to the Scottish Financial Risk Academy.

70% of courses on our MSc in Actuarial Management and 50% on our MSc in Actuarial Science are taught by fully qualified actuaries.

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GAVIN REID (FFA) graduated from Heriot-Watt in 2001 with a degree in Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics. He then started work with Standard Life as an Actuarial Trainee, where he qualified as a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries two years later. He worked in the Valuation, Operations and Pricing areas, before choosing to make the transition into teaching, joining the staff of Heriot-Watt in 2011. He is a member of the Scottish Board of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, leading a workstream to help raise the profile of the actuarial profession.

PETER RIDGES (FIA) graduated from Cambridge University with an M.A. in Mathematics. He then trained as an actuary with Bacon & Woodrow (now part of Aon Hewitt) and Mercer, and qualified as a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries in 1991. After many years working in pensions, he came to Heriot-Watt in 2010. He is Programme Director of the MSc in Actuarial Science.

ANDREW STOTT (FFA) qualified as a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries during his term as an actuarial trainee at Standard Life, after studying Theoretical Physics at the University of Edinburgh. He has worked in investment, marketing, valuation and reinsurance departments and joined the staff at Heriot-Watt in 2010.

ANDREA SNEDDON (FIAA, FFA) qualified as a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries in Australia in 1996, and became a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries in 2006. She worked as a pensions and superannuation consultant with Mercer in Australia and the UK, as well as for insurance companies (AMP, Friends Provident and Standard Life) in both countries before joining Heriot-Watt in 2005. She was Programme Director of the MSc in Actuarial Science from 2006 to 2009 and managed the Department’s actuarial exemption and accreditation arrangements from 2005 to 2009.