

Jim Aitken MBE has been the driving force behind sport at the University of Edinburgh for over 20 years. He has been a powerful champion for the benefits of sport and active health and the ways it can change lives and make world better place..

A former international hockey player, Jim joined the University from sportscotland in 1995, initially as Assistant Director of Sport & Exercise. He was appointed to the post of Director in 2001 becoming the sixth to hold the position since the University formed its 'department of physical education' in 1929.

Throughout his tenure, Jim's vision, drive and leadership have energised generations of students and staff to achieve success at local, national and international level. He was elected the first chair of Scottish University Sport (SUS), setting the foundations for Scottish Student Sport (SSS) as well as playing a similar role in the creation British University College Sport (BUCS).

In 2010 his services to student sport were recognised with an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list, adding to other prestigious accolades he's received for outstanding contribution to HE Sport in the UK, including the AD Munrow Award (2008) and Bernie Ryder Prize (2006).

His passion, sage decision making and strategic vision for student sport have catapulted Edinburgh into one of the best sporting universities in the UK, finishing consistently in the top four in the BUCS year end rankings. The University is now respected among the country's top destinations for talented student athletes seeking to combine their sporting ambitions along-side a world class degree education. Countless numbers of students have benefitted, including Olympic champions Dame Katherine Grainger and Sir Chris Hoy.

Jim's strategic commitment to creating inspiring facilities, wide-ranging and inclusive programmes, pioneering services, collaborative partnerships, staff development and student centred focus have resulted in sector leading levels of physical activity, sporting participation and performance. This was marked in 2019 when Sport & Exercise was voted the Best UK Facility (Education) at the National Fitness Awards, as well as becoming the first university department to achieve Investors in People's top-level Platinum accreditation.

Jim retired from the University in 2023 and there is no more fitting an accolade to mark his transformational contribution to University sport than with induction into the Sports Hall of Fame.