

Honorary Community newsletter

BUILT FOR LIFE

Welcome to UCEM's latest update to our Honorary Awards community - UCEM's Honorary and Associate Fellows, Honorary Degree recipients, Property Award winners and current/former Trustees - our community of loyal and supportive friends of UCEM. This edition brings you up to speed on all things UCEM this Winter and as ever, we welcome your feedback and comments so we can continue to evolve the newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support to this great institution! We wish you all a healthy and happy festive season from everyone at UCEM and a very happy New Year!



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Highlights in this edition

UCEM's application to become University of the Built Environment



An update

As you will recall, on 11 July 2024, UCEM's Board of Trustees passed a milestone Resolution for the evolution of this institution. The Board resolved to apply to the Office for Students to change its name to **University of the Built Environment (UBE)** and the application to do so was duly submitted to the OfS shortly afterwards. We are delighted to announce that a closed consultation process is now underway and will conclude on 8 January 2025.

We very much hope to announce our new name and branding during 2025 and thank you all for your support to date for this important strategic initiative for UCEM. At a time where there is a real skills shortage within property and construction, UCEM is committed to fulfilling its vision and working with employers, students and professional bodies to reduce the shortfall. We remain confident that the proposed new name aligns with our vision to be 'the Centre of Excellence for Built Environment Education'.



UCEM update



Sr Samuel LEUNG, Tim Bennett, Stephen Bartle, Ashley Wheaton, Sr Francis LAM and Sr Chi Kwong LAU

It is incredible to think how just how quickly 2024 has passed by. It has been a year of immense activity across UCEM that continued apace through the autumn.

External influence and recognition

It has been a busy period in terms of our external engagement activities and our strategic aim to **influence** the built environment sector. Ashley Wheaton took part in a **Westminster Higher Education Forum** virtual conference as part of a panel of sector leaders, to discuss the UK university sector's looming financial sustainability crisis. Ashley highlighted how universities can adapt to financial challenges by focusing on internal financial analysis, sector collaboration and the leveraging of technology. He also called for systemic reforms, including increased apprenticeship funding to ensure universities can continue to deliver value to students and the wider economy. UCEM also took part in a **Skills England** roundtable on built environment skills which brought together key stakeholders to discuss how to address workforce shortages and skills gaps in the sector. UCEM highlighted concerns about funding and regulatory challenges that impact education providers and the need for flexible and sustainable funding models for higher-level apprenticeships and degree programmes in order to deliver occupationally competent professionals for the built environment. The event also discussed the potential for a new Growth and Skills Levy. These opportunities followed on from UCEM's evidence to the House of Lords inquiry into **Skills for the future: Apprenticeships and Training** being referenced in

the House of Lords report, in which UCEM argued for the liberalisation of apprenticeship levy funding to allow for shorter-form learning that can be more responsive to sector demands, and our attendance at a **Ministerial Roundtable on skills**, particularly those required to meet housebuilding targets, at which we argued that education providers are hampered by financial and regulatory burdens to help deliver the skilled workforce the UK needs.

We are delighted to announce that our own Senior Lecturer, David Hourihan, was successfully re-elected to the **RICS Governing Council** for the next three years in a contest that saw some 230 candidates vying for just 11 seats. This is the highest governing body within RICS and it sets the organisation's global strategy. David was delighted to be given the opportunity to continue his work in supporting apprenticeship students, tackling sustainability in the built environment and attracting a bigger and more diverse pool of talent to the industry. Congratulations David!

We were delighted to welcome a contingent from the **Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors** (HKIS) to the UCEM offices in Reading on 18 September 2024. Sr Francis LAM (President of HKIS), Sr Chi Kwong LAU (Chairman of the Land Survey Division) and Sr Samuel LEUNG (RICS Assessor, University of Portsmouth) met with Ashley Wheaton, Stephen Bartle and Tim Bennett. The visit was part of the President's itinerary to visit key stakeholders in the UK to strengthen long standing relationships and build deeper academic cooperation.

Sustainability

In sustainability news, UCEM published its first ever **Annual Sustainability Report 2023-24** in December. The report provides an overview of the successes and outcomes of UCEM's Globe programme during 2022-23 and 2023-24 and is a real testament to the institution's commitment to this agenda and the progress it has made. One of our most recent achievements was to have removed all the **Scope 1 emissions** from our office site that are in our control - this was achieved primarily through two key milestones - the change of UCEM vehicle to an electric van and the removal of gas in our Horizons

building. This means all our heating, cooling and hot water supply is now coming from 100% renewable (REGO certified) electricity. We were also delighted to retain our **ISO 14001 accreditation** for the Horizons building and our approach to environmental management back in September. UCEM received no areas of non-conformance and just ten opportunities for improvement. This all follows hot on the heels of our SOS-UK Responsible Futures re-accreditation success in the summer with a score of 301 out of a possible 355!

Institutional update

We closed out the 2023-24 academic year with our strongest ever **financial performance**, having exceeded £20M in income for the first time in the institution's history and recorded a healthy surplus to invest back into the future strategic aims of the institution - congratulations to all UCEM staff for this incredible performance. Work to deliver our new CX9 targets for the current year commenced in earnest in August as we recruited 1,023 new students to the autumn semester. This fantastic achievement not only exceeded our target but is reassuringly positive for the future given the overall fiscal challenges facing the UK higher education sector at this time.

We have maintained and, in many cases, enhanced our student **module success** rates, and will be focussing this year on programme outcomes and success through a number of retention initiatives. Our new **MSc Urban Planning** programme secured RICS accreditation this autumn and we held our latest INSPIRE event, **Collaborative Futures: Competence, Capability and Capacity**. We were pleased to be awarded £100K from the Office for Students for a joint bid with the London School of Architecture to develop a Level 6 Design and Construction Management apprenticeship. It has been a busy start to the 2024-25 year!

At the heart of all we do though are our students and staff and we were delighted to hold the UCEM **Teaching Excellence Awards** again in 2024. These awards recognise UCEM staff who have made an outstanding contribution to teaching and learning.

We had a record 479 nominations from students and staff singing the praises of 87 individuals across the teams eligible to take part in the awards which was fantastic. We made eight awards in total to members of eligible teams and each winner was given access to a monetary fund to support their teaching excellence aspirations. We are very proud and congratulate all our winners - Hazel Lobo, Muhammad Rana, Richard Jordan, Nicola Allen, Matthew Smith, Diane Roberts, Lucy Roper and Ian Elliott.

Finally, congratulations to the UCEM Team (Adam Denton - Student Trustee, Diane Neza, Daniel Ashton and three friends) that entered a 16KM **Tough Mudder** obstacle race in September 2024 to raise money for our nominated charity **No 5** in support of young people's mental health. They raised a fantastic £810!



UCEM update

Hong Kong



The Vice Chancellor travelled to Hong Kong in the summer and attended a **105th anniversary** of UCEM event, marking this landmark occasion with many of our Honorary and Associate Fellows in the region, alongside key stakeholders from industry and professional bodies, employers, students and alumni. HKICM Chair Sr Terence Mang attended as our honoured guest. The celebration focused on the theme of sustainability and highlighted the need for innovation and a deep commitment to environmental stewardship in construction projects. Attendees reflected on UCEM's 45-year dedication to Hong Kong and praised the institution's commitment to education and professional development in the region. Ashley Wheaton commented that 'the celebration was an opportunity to share how UCEM wants to grow its position in Hong Kong and the wider region, ensuring that our portfolio of programmes remain relevant and appropriate to the region's needs.'

UCEM also held its first-ever **Hong Kong Symposium** in November 2024, organised by the UCEM Online Academy and our Hong Kong-based team. We had over 100 attendees, including esteemed industry leaders from the region and many of our Honorary Community, who provided a unique platform for

critical discussions on Sustainability in the Built Environment. With insights from ten expert speakers, it was an inspiring day of knowledge sharing and networking, reinforcing UCEM and the wider sector's commitment to shaping a more sustainable built environment in the future.



UCEM update

Changes to the UCEM Board of Trustees



standing Trustees this year. Professor Kenny Miller left us after an incredible 9 years on the Board, Misa von Tunzelman left us after six years, as did Chris Turley - they are all very much missed around the Board table. Professor Nick Morton of Birmingham City University ended his term on Academic Review after serving Committee after serving as External Representative for six years. We are truly grateful for the time and expertise they all gave to the institution through their roles on the Board.

We have had significant turnover on our Board of Trustees once again this year and a full overview of **who now sits on the Board is available on our website**. This year we welcomed Jyotveer Gill, Nick Hughes, Peter McCrea OBE, and Jules Quinn to the Board as Independent Trustees, Charlotte Thackeray as Staff Trustee and Ben McManus as Student Trustee. They will shortly also be joined by Dr Liz Marr as an Independent Trustee in early 2025. We were delighted to appoint Professor Alison Cotgrave from Liverpool John Moores University to the Academic Review Committee as External Representative and Emma Shipp of Russell Cooke law firm as External Representative on the Audit Committee. We were very sad to say goodbye to some long-

We will continue to have some further Trustee turnover throughout early 2025, commencing with recruitment of a new Chair of the Board as Amanda Clack looks to step down in early 2025. We should be able to announce the successful candidate early in the New Year.

Ashley Wheaton joins the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors

Following hot on the heels of his award of Honorary RICS membership in 2023, Ashley Wheaton was invited earlier this year to join the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors of the City of London following an initial nomination by David Larkin and Simon Kolesar, UCEM Honorary Fellows. This continues a long tradition of UCEM Principals (now Vice Chancellors) being Liverymen. Ashley was presented with his certificate on 2nd July 2024 at Apothecaries' Hall in London.



Ashley with his awards of Honorary RICS Membership and Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors

Meet the UCEM team



Pete Stone

Head of Learning Technology



Pete heads up the Learning Technology Team at UCEM which is responsible for maintaining and developing all the systems that deliver UCEM's programmes to its students.

What is your role for UCEM?

I'm the Head of Learning Technology at UCEM. Essentially, I look after the systems that deliver our programmes to students - the VLE, Zoom, Turnitin, Padlet etc.

How long have you worked for UCEM?

20 years - I started in June 2004. It was the day after England lost to France 2-1 in the opening Euro 2004 group game!

How did you come to be in this role and why did you join UCEM?

I've come to the current role at UCEM through several promotions. As for joining UCEM, that's a slightly longer story (but I'll try and keep it brief). In 2004, I had returned to the UK from after 6 months of travelling with the then girlfriend (now wife - Emma). Having exhausted funds, it was time to get a job. I applied to positions that related to my background

(Chemistry Degree, PhD and 3.5 years Post Doc) in addition to those that were a change of career path. The role at UCEM sat in the latter category. I ended up accepting the role at UCEM (then CEM) for 3 main reasons - It was a new challenge; the CEM staff that I knew through various contacts were a friendly bunch so I reckoned it would be a good place to work; and relocation or extensive travelling would have been required for a science related role. 20 years on and I'm glad I made that decision.

What is your favourite part of your job and what motivates you every day?

I'm afraid this is going to be a somewhat cliched response, but it has to be the people that work here - they really do make the difference. I'm motivated to perform an excellent job to ensure our students receive a great experience when they are studying with us and achieve the outcomes that they want.

Meet the team



There is also the personal motivation to do the best job I can.

What is your greatest professional achievement at UCEM so far?

I could list a number of projects that I've been instrumental in delivering over the years, but I think the greatest achievement is being here for 20 years. Let me elaborate on that as this is meant as a positive. There has been a lot of change over that time and facilitating successful change requires adaptability, resilience, resourcefulness, and a drive to continually improve. If I hadn't displayed these traits, I don't think I'd still be here.

What do you find challenging about your work?

I'd say the most significant challenge comes from the level of position that I hold - the Head of. In this role you need a firm grasp on BAU activities alongside being able input into the strategic direction.

Both elements are fine but require a different focus - it is switching between the two that is the challenge.

What's one thing that has surprised you about working for UCEM?

I'd say the richness of history. For an institution that has been going for over 100 years this shouldn't be a surprise but even after 20 years there is always something that I can learn about the rich and varied story of UCEM.

What's next for you at UCEM?

As a result of a recent team member leaving, I've adjusted the team structure. In the new structure there are 3 different roles in the team with all 7 members of the team reporting directly to me. Currently there are 2 vacant positions to recruit. I'm looking forward to working directly with all members of the team and supporting them to enhance their knowledge and experience.

What three words sum up UCEM for you?

I'm going to cheat slightly on this and use 3 words in a phrase. **PUNCHING ABOVE** its **WEIGHT**. For an institution of our size and resources, I'm firmly of the opinion that we are doing a great job. Of course, we can and will continue to improve but we are already performing well.

Tell us a surprising or fun fact about you!

A topic close to my heart - beer. I like beer, specifically real ale. During 2015 (when I turned 40) I decided to see how many different real ales I could drink in the year. The final total was 534.

UCEM Online

Catch up on these key stories and events if you missed them

Don't forget to visit the [Honorary Community webpage](#)



Property Awards Luncheon - 10 October 2024

We were delighted to award this year's Property Award to **Chris Grigg CBE**, Chair of UK Infrastructure Bank and Evelyn Partners . Alongside this we presented the Alumni Award to **Annabel Huffer** and the Student Academic Excellence Award to **James Wheeler**. For more information on the award winners in 2024 and images from the day [visit the website](#).



Responsible Futures Accreditation

UCEM secured its fourth consecutive Responsible Futures accreditation – a prestigious accreditation highlights UCEM's commitment to embedding sustainability across its educational offerings, operations and partnerships, [read more](#).



Be Sustainable Podcast

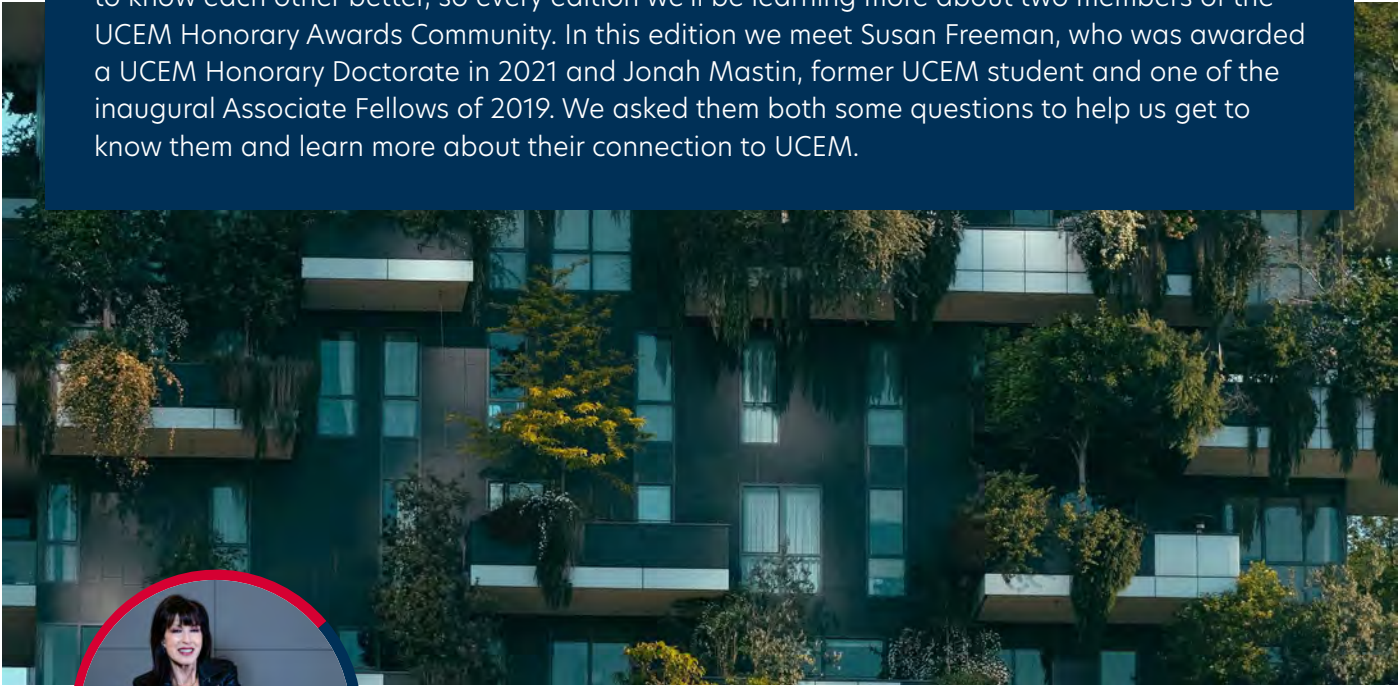
Our **Be Sustainable** podcast is available from our website and now features six episodes which seek to bridge the knowledge gap between the concept and the application of sustainability with insightful discussions led by industry experts, navigating critical and topical challenges within the built environment.

For other news articles from UCEM see [whats-happening/news](#)

For other interesting and thought provoking articles on built environment themes, such a smart buildings and biophilic architecture, see our [content corner](#).

The Honorary Awards Community

It is important to UCEM to grow the community of Honorary Award recipients and help you get to know each other better, so every edition we'll be learning more about two members of the UCEM Honorary Awards Community. In this edition we meet Susan Freeman, who was awarded a UCEM Honorary Doctorate in 2021 and Jonah Mastin, former UCEM student and one of the inaugural Associate Fellows of 2019. We asked them both some questions to help us get to know them and learn more about their connection to UCEM.



Susan Freeman

How were you connected to UCEM?

I was absolutely delighted to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate by UCEM in 2021 and have since learnt about the amazing work the university does and have been involved in a number of events which bring together supporters of UCEM.

What are you doing now?

I am a real estate partner at London law firm Mishcon de Reya. I also chair the newly formed London Chamber of Commerce Property and Construction Forum. I am on the Board of the Central District Alliance Business

Improvement District (Holborn, Clerkenwell) and Chair their Property Group. I also host the highly ranked PropertyShe podcast series which has back catalogue of 100+ top influencers in the world of real estate, proptech and the built environment.

What's the biggest challenge you faced in your career?

Deciding to make the move to Mishcon de Reya some 25 years ago to work with other partners in building our full-service real estate group which now has 45 partners and 130 lawyers.

What is your greatest professional achievement so far?

Being awarded an Honorary Doctorate by UCEM was a totally unexpected and much appreciated professional achievement. I was also proud to complete the MBA Sloan Programme at London Business School

which was an incredibly intensive and challenging one year MBA course. The sheer volume of information which has to be absorbed in a very short period has led to the Sloan Programme being described as 'like trying to sip water from a fire hydrant'!

What three words sum up UCEM for you?

Professional, dedicated, innovative

If you could have done any other job for just one day what would it have been?

A TV chat show presenter which is a natural progression from my podcast presenter role.

The Honorary Awards Community

If you could meet anyone in the world, dead or alive who would it be and why?

The Late Queen. Sadly, I never met her but have heard from people who did that she had a very special aura about her.

What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?

A state-of-the-art podcast recording studio!



Jonah Mastin

BSc (Hons), MSc.CM

How are you connected to UCEM?

My association with UCEM goes back to 2006, when I started out for a BSc in Building Surveying; I graduated with first class honours in 2010, and thoroughly enjoyed the academic experience. The workload was hefty, and more paper based at the time - I recall the box of files, textbooks and resources that used to arrive before the first semester each year, doubting I'd be able to assimilate even a fraction of the contents.

I came back for more in 2016, enrolling on the MSc Construction Management course. I wanted to gain a further qualification as a construction professional, but equally wished to challenge myself further

and to conduct research into a pet interest: the peculiarities of SME level building practice, set against the wider backdrop of an industry strongly urged - and striving - to move forward. The MSc course wouldn't have been viable for me at the time, but for the CIOB; I applied for grant funding in 2015, under the Tony Gage Scholarship programme, and was very fortunate to be awarded grant monies that made the MSc possible.

On the MSc I was fortunate enough to earn a distinction, which alone was immensely rewarding; I was yet more privileged to be nominated for, and to win, the inaugural Peter Goodacre Award - the first of a limited number to be bestowed - for outstanding academic performance. I've 'dined out' on that for many years now.

Throughout those years, I've been very grateful to UCEM. They've challenged me to be better, opened doors for me, and given me some wonderful memories and experiences. I thought that was over when submitting my MSc dissertation, but no: in 2019 I was thrilled to be made an Associate Fellow, as someone with a deeper connection to UCEM and a willing outward facing ambassador.

What are you doing now?

I work as a building design consultant, having started in the industry as trainee in a family run architectural practice. After 17 years it's just me now, however work is busy and the industry is in flux: it's an interesting time for us all, what with the Building Safety Act 2022 having such a far-reaching impact on project delivery, the intensifying drive towards sustainability, a well-recognised skills shortage across construction

disciplines plus the disruptive nature of new technology. It's difficult to predict what my personal role will look like, or the sector more widely, in ten years' time. That's quite exciting, really.

What's the biggest challenge you faced in your career?

There have been a few; complex projects, sometimes difficult clients, work / life balance and of course the challenge of managing part time study alongside full time work.

However, the greatest challenge has probably been a single project, which involved the delivery of timber-framed homes on a small developer's site, which was completed in the last 18 months. As a task, there were difficult issues that you might anticipate - such as unforeseen ground conditions that evaded a geotechnical investigation, onerous drainage requirements, busy A road conditions that delayed the civils package and so on. It was a tough job, on its face.

This became all the more challenging though, professionally and personally, when our site manager - a partner in the development firm - passed away suddenly. This obviously affected delivery on the ground, but more importantly it affected the entire project team as friends and indeed family; there was a mental health aspect to these events, too, which is something I've read about often but perhaps not taken as seriously as I should have.

Losing our colleague on a live and complex project, suddenly, was uniquely challenging. That was a significant trial for all involved, and it'll continue long after close-out.

The Honorary Awards Community

It's made me reconsider the salience of mental health messaging for the construction industry, and what I might do differently in the future.

What is your greatest professional achievement so far?

Sorry, I don't think I can offer you one ... working in an SME context there are fewer opportunities to spearhead something novel, or to work on a groundbreaking or high value scheme. That suits me, as I don't enjoy the limelight.

To offer a broader equivalent of pride in one achievement: I try to do right by people, and provide a service that is based on honesty, diligence and helpfulness. Construction isn't a simple process, and it can be highly stressful. I like to think that I'm a kind and trustworthy voice for my clients, amidst that chaos. My family and I have been kindly invited to celebrate at a client's home, newly extended and refurbished, for just before Christmas. That sort of response makes it all worthwhile.

On reflection, maybe that's just a cop-out answer for someone who's less ambitious in career terms. My family are the most important thing for me, my wife and my son. Perhaps the greatest achievement is simply supporting them, as best I can, whilst working hard for my clients. I don't know, you've got me thinking now...

What is your best memory of UCEM?

There are many, I remember both under and post-graduate courses fondly. Pauline Makepeace's law lectures at the end-of-year seminars in Reading were always very funny, combined with the nuanced and



sometimes wacky cases of the subject itself. It was lovely, on those same seminar trips, to finally sit down and talk with fellow students (usually over a beer), peers that we'd mixed with online across the year but hadn't seen in person for months, if ever. Some modules were fascinating in themselves - principles of building structure was a favourite - whilst others were more compelling because of the teaching, or fellow students who went through it with you.

I remember the MSc dissertation period warmly, too; that's unusual maybe, as the module is demanding and set under pressure. That MSc research though is perhaps the piece of work that I'm most proud of, across my entire time in construction. As the research process unfolded, the subject felt more and more appropriate - like we were really drilling down into something that matters. Obviously, our efforts in study all matter, but primarily that significance is to ourselves, to our individual careers. The MSc research module was a link, for me, into something of national significance. Just for context, the title of the piece was: 'The innovation gap: An investigation into the strategic drift of small construction firms, in the UK'

What three words sum up UCEM for you?

'BUILDING' because ultimately, UCEM is a leading institution for built environment education. I couldn't use the word construction there, as so many of our colleagues will work with existing structures and stock. **'BUILDING'** covers it well, although it's not very eloquent!

For an abstract twist, I'll also say **'REAL'** The courses that you offer, the research behind the scenes, and the deep connections with our industry, make UCEM seem more tangible than other educational avenues. The learning content is very real indeed, there's a practical application to all of it. UCEM's alumni change the world, in big ways and small. I really appreciate that.

The Honorary Awards Community



Finally, let me indulge in a loophole by opting for two words (ha!) - **'FORWARD-LOOKING'**. Over my two courses, spanning a few years, there have been considerable changes in how you educate students, and support them. The emphasis that you place on sustainability is laudable, with a view to the future of our industry, but more broadly the future of our planet.

You've even changed name, and continue to evolve.

If you could have done any other job for just one day what would it have been?

I might have said veterinarian years ago. It's what I wanted to be as a boy, but the euthanasia side put me off as I love animals. These days though, I'm drawn to open spaces, the wilderness, and enjoy working with my hands. Maybe some sort of national park ranger? As I write this, it has been snowing; I took my border collie out across farmland whilst it was coming down. That may sound horrid to some, but it was just perfect for us.



Jonah at the 2019 Associate Fellow's certificate presentation event

If you could meet anyone in the world, dead or alive who would it be and why?

Christopher Hitchens, the journalist and author. He was witty, sophisticated, erudite and pugnacious with it. There's something compelling about a person with deeply considered opinions, but those opinions you can't predict until the topic comes up. In my view he was an intellectual giant, and sadly gone too soon (he died from cancer at 62).

Debates he took part in, speeches he made and his writing are well worth looking up, even if you disagree with his stance.

The world needs more conversation about hard topics, not less.

What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?

A music room set-up, which might involve a larger house to have a room spare in the first place!! I'm an enthusiastic music fan and collector, although not accomplished enough to actually play anything. The joy for me is in the listening, and (in true Luddite fashion) to hold a record, consider the artwork, read the liner notes. My lottery gains would go straight towards a room with great acoustics, top-of-the-range speakers, the best hi-fi that money can buy... there wouldn't be much else in there. Maybe a solitary oil painting. Is that pretentious? Probably!

Forthcoming occasions and events



Graduation

30 and 31 January 2025

Town Hall Reading



The Built Environment Apprenticeship Awards

13 February 2025

London



Fifth INSPIRE series event Place Building

19 March 2025



Honorary Community Luncheon 2025

8 May 2025

Ironmongers Hall, London

Save the date



Property Award 2025

Thursday 9 October 2025

Institute of Directors in Central London
Invites to follow in January

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If you have any suggestions for the UCEM Honorary Community newsletter, or would like to contribute please email Lyndsay Hughes at l.hughes@ucem.ac.uk.