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Principal announces intention to stand down in September 2017

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea, has announced his intention to step down from his role next year.

Professor O'Shea took up the post in 2002 and has presided over a significant period of expansion and internationalisation for the University – Scotland's largest.

During his time in office, the University has regularly been ranked as one of the top 25 universities in the world. It has also cemented its place as one of the UK's foremost research intensive universities, ranked fourth in Britain for the quality and breadth of its research, according to the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) survey.

Professor O'Shea has ensured that Edinburgh has been a pioneer in distance and e-learning in Higher Education. Edinburgh became the first University in the UK to introduce MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses – which have opened up the University's areas of expertise to audiences around the world in the form of free computer-based learning, attracting 2.5 million online learners.

He has also been a passionate advocate of social inclusion and widening access to the institution, while encouraging a spirit of entrepreneurship around the University's many research breakthroughs. Between 2010 and 2015, the University was responsible for the formation of 184 new companies, with 44 created in 2015 alone.

“It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh and I am extremely proud of what we as an institution have achieved over recent years,” said Professor O'Shea.

“The success and growth that we have enjoyed have only been possible thanks to our very gifted students and highly talented staff, as well as the tremendous backing we've received from our alumni, supporters and friends across Scotland, the wider UK and the world. I have every confidence that the University will continue to go from strength to strength in the years to come.”

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, said: “The quality of Scottish universities is crucially important to perceptions of Scotland around the world. Under Sir Tim's leadership, the University of Edinburgh, has built on its reputation as one of the world's great universities and is widely regarded as a powerhouse of ideas and innovation across the breadth of academic endeavour, bringing distinction and talent to Scotland.”

Professor O'Shea will formally step down as Principal and Vice-Chancellor in September 2017. The University will shortly begin the recruitment process for his successor.

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Note to editors: Professor O'Shea is not currently available for interviews but will be open to interviews for profile pieces/features at a later stage.

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