



DR KEN CUNNINGHAM CBE

Background:

Working life in education, including schools, SQA and government task and steering groups.

Role:

ICAS Foundation
Trustee

Thinking Point:

“The Foundation is ICAS’ charity – we hold it in trust for the future. Now is the time for ICAS members to step up and help take it forward.”

I was brought up in a working-class family and my parents saved hard so I could become the first in my family to attend university. After my first year though, I decided I didn’t want to study the sciences anymore. I was offered an opportunity in a local junior high school, teaching pupils who weren’t expected to progress further. This experience made me value the support I had received and, having loved that first teaching experience, I decided to return to university so I could make it my career.

I was asked to join the Foundation’s Board of Trustees by a previous ICAS Chief Executive, who knew that I was passionate about supporting young people to achieve their goals. I value the Foundation’s objectives, and I understand what difference its support can make to a young person. Progressing to university can change a student’s life, but beyond this, it can also enhance the lives of their family and friends.

My work with schools, as well as my own personal experience, allows me to contribute to the Board in a variety of ways. I have worked in schools in areas of high deprivation, and I understand the effort and determination involved for students from these areas to achieve good exam grades. I have seen first-hand the struggles young people face to get through life, and I know that the Foundation’s work will have a long-term impact.

When I was at university, I did not consider myself poor, but I would have valued additional financial support to make studying a little easier. I would have welcomed someone who could mentor me, as university was such a different experience from anything I had known before. I know that most of the students supported by the ICAS Foundation are in great financial need, and I know how much they appreciate the assistance provided by the CAs who volunteer as mentors to support them.

The ICAS Foundation has helped the accountancy profession immensely so far, with students from diverse backgrounds progressing into CA training, and CAs benefiting from their mentoring experience. We need to continue to build on that success for the future, looking at how we can bring in additional funding to support more students in different locations, while still maintaining the quality of our current programme.

Supporting the Foundation is not just about supporting the individual students on this programme. I believe that, through the ICAS Foundation, the accountancy profession has an opportunity to lead the way in making society a better place for the future.

The ICAS Foundation is a registered Scottish charity, no. SC034836. Visit www.icasfoundation.org.uk to find out more.