

The one that started it all: Edinburgh Science Festival announces its new Director



Hassun El-Zafar

18th April 2024

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World's first and still one of Europe's biggest, Edinburgh Science Festival drew its 35th anniversary edition to a close last weekend and now announces its new Director, Hassun El-Zafar, and dates for the 2025 Festival.

As its new Director, Hassun El-Zafar will lead the Edinburgh Science education charity, known for its annual Science Festival, its education work in and with schools through Generation Science and Careers Hive and an extensive programme of climate and sustainability focused events. Hassun succeeds Dr Simon Gage OBE who is stepping down at the end of May after 34 years with Edinburgh Science, with 29 of them as Director and CEO.

Hassun El-Zafar said: "I am thrilled to step into the role of Director at Edinburgh Science. Since its inception in 1989, the Edinburgh Science Foundation has stood as a trailblazer, notably the driving force behind the world's first Science Festival. Our mission, centred on igniting curiosity and nurturing creative engagement with science across diverse communities, deeply resonates with my professional journey. Looking ahead, I am eager to uphold our distinguished tradition of excellence, harnessing the UK's dynamic intellectual, industrial, and cultural landscape to foster an even deeper appreciation for scientific dialogue, engagement, and inquiry."

Drawing from his expertise in science education, Hassun has embarked on a global journey, contributing to various engagement and educational endeavours in the UK and beyond. His work spans the creation of multi-disciplinary public engagement programs that delve into the realms of science, culture, community, and technology.

Since 2019, Hassun has shaped public engagement initiatives for esteemed institutions, including the **Royal Society of Chemistry** and the **United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI)**. His achievements include **pioneering educational collaborations with platforms like TikTok** and delivering acclaimed STEM campaigns, notably the **International Year of The Periodic Table** in 2019.

In addition to his prolific independent pursuits in production, writing, and artistry, Hassun El-Zafar currently serves as the Senior Producer for Public Programmes at the **Royal Institution of Great Britain**. This revered charity is dedicated to nurturing widespread scientific literacy and engagement. Furthermore, Hassun serves as a non-executive director for the **Union of Justice**, a European organisation led by people of colour (POC), committed to advancing both racial and climate justice.

Edinburgh Science's Chair of the Board, Brendan Dick, said: "Hassun El-Zafar brings a wealth of experience in science engagement that will be key for Edinburgh Science in the coming years. The Edinburgh Science Board is delighted that Hassun El-Zafar is joining us to continue Simon Gage's legacy of leading the organisation in its critical role of societal science engagement."

35th anniversary Edinburgh Science Festival drew to a close on Sunday, 14 April, having engaged thousands of Edinburgh residents and visitors in science events, workshops, talks and exhibitions around the city.

The Festival team is now proud to announce that **the 2025 Edinburgh Science Festival will run from Saturday 5 to Sunday 20 April and will explore the challenges of living on a planet with finite resources, through the lenses of science fiction and space exploration, with the theme Spaceship Earth.**

'Live like an astronaut' in the battle cry of a new movement that urges us to learn from the constraints of living on a space station, or a distant planet, where resources are impossibly constrained and every gram of material and watt of energy is precious. Transferring these principles to life on Earth would radically reduce the pressures we place on natural resources.

Drawing inspiration from a collision between science fiction and science fact, the Festival will consider the mundane – how to keep the lights on for the next million years; and the exotic – self-diagnosed and administered healthcare with 'cyborg' technologies.