

“People in this country have had enough of experts.” So said Michael Gove, the former education secretary, in a now-infamous intervention in the run-up to the Brexit vote in 2016.

For many in higher education, the outcome of the referendum seemed to support this point of view. Politics and academia, the narrative goes, do not mix.

Which is why John Curtice, winner of the 2017 Lord Dearing Lifetime Achievement Award, is such an important figure this year of all years.

The professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde has, through the brilliant application and communication of academic expertise, become one of the most respected scholars in his field and a star in the public consciousness.

Professor Curtice is, of course, the man behind the exit polls that often take the nation’s breath away on election night, and always get it right – most dramatically during this year’s shock result.

As ever, this expertise is built on decades of research that underpin his political commentary as well as the polling work for which he is best known.

A specialist in voting patterns, voter intentions and social attitudes, he is a superb example of how to engage and translate academic expertise for a non-specialist audience, informing debate and public opinion.

Based at Strathclyde since 1989, and a contributor to the BBC’s election night coverage since 1979, he is living proof that expertise retains a central role in national life.