



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of History, Classics
and Archaeology

**Being a
student at
Edinburgh**

History



Welcome

from a **History** student

My name is Ruby and I'm studying for a MA (Hons) History.



I've been here for a few years now, but I still remember how scary and exciting it is picking what university you want to attend. We hope this leaflet will make that choice a bit easier, by giving you an insight into what it's like to be a student here at Edinburgh.

I only became sure that I wanted to attend university quite close to the application deadline – I thought for a while I might want to go to art school – so I had to decide on my university choices in a bit of rush. I had been to Edinburgh once and a quick Google search confirmed it was as beautiful and historic as I remembered, which was enough to encourage me to book a place on an Open Day.

After I had received all my offers my final decision was between Edinburgh and an English university. However, Edinburgh eventually won, as I knew that living within walking distance of national museums and libraries would be incredibly useful for a history degree. I was also excited by the prospect of picking outside courses – meaning I didn't have to give up my love of art. In comparison to the three year degrees offered by most English universities, studying for four years did seem a bit daunting, but I've found it's absolutely flown by.

I'm now one of the School's Student Ambassadors - one of a team of students here to answer any of your questions about being a student at Edinburgh. If you have any questions please contact us by email at hca-student-ambassadors@ed.ac.uk



Becoming a History student at Edinburgh

Pre-arrival information

The University will be in touch before you begin to let you know all the things you'll need to do before you arrive and those things you need to do when you get here. It's an exciting time! The University will have people available to answer any questions you may have.

Welcome Week

Welcome Week is the week prior to the first teaching week. You will get your first taste of the University environment and matriculate as a student.

Shortly before you arrive the School of History, Classics and Archaeology will be in touch to tell you about the key School Welcome Meeting, where you will hear from lecturers and current students, and other useful events.

What support is available when I get here?

All undergraduate students have a 'personal tutor' while at Edinburgh: you will be assigned a personal tutor by the beginning of Welcome Week. Your personal tutor will be a member of the teaching staff who provides academic guidance and support.

The School also has a dedicated Undergraduate Student Support office which is your first point of contact within the School for advice and support. Peer support is also available where you can speak to fellow students.

A feeling of wellbeing and good health during your academic life is very important for your studies and safety. You will have access to a wide range of services provided by the University, throughout Edinburgh and through self-help. These include the health centre, sport and exercise facilities, the Disability Service, Counselling Service and the Chaplaincy.

Choosing your courses

In your first year you will meet with your personal tutor in Welcome Week to choose your courses. Visit their office early to sign up for a meeting. For your second, third and fourth year courses you will submit your preferences in advance of the start of the year.



How will I be taught?

The format of your teaching changes as your degree progresses. First-year History students typically attend a mixture of lectures and tutorials every week. Lectures offer a 50-minute introduction to big concepts and key issues, while tutorials allow you to discuss sources, texts, or historical problems with a small group of fellow students and your tutor. In this way, your teaching will help you to master both the big picture and the details of historical study.

As your studies progress, the kinds of teaching that you will encounter will change. You will have less need for lectures to introduce you to the big themes and, increasingly, you will be taught in seminars that facilitate more intensive discussion of the material under study. Finally, in your fourth-year dissertation, you will conduct independent historical research, under the guidance of a supervisor who works in a related field.

What work will I have to do?

The work which you will do during your studies will be as varied as the teaching that you receive. Preparatory reading for your various lectures and classes forms the foundation of your studies each week. But you will also be submitting a range of work for assessment and receiving feedback that is designed to develop your academic skills and historical understanding.

The ability to articulate your ideas about the past in the form of coherent, convincing, and nuanced writing is a key part of historical work, and a highly desirable skill that can also be applied to other fields. A range of written assignments therefore forms an important part of your coursework and allows you to develop these historical skills. These assignments might take the form of essays which tackle important historical problems, or focused analyses of particular sources from the past, or critical evaluations of challenging theories and scholarly debates. As well as requiring you to tackle

an increasingly wide and varied body of sources and scholarship, these written assignments will encourage you to marshal evidence, assess rival theories, and arrive at your own informed opinions about the past.

Written assignments of this kind comprise an important part of the work which you will be asked to produce during your studies. But historical study takes other forms too, and your assessments will reflect this. You might be asked to give a presentation on a given historical topic or issue, testing your ability to communicate effectively and engagingly to a broader audience than your tutor alone. You might also be assessed on your willingness to contribute to class discussions more generally, as well as your individual assignments. You might find that you are asked to engage with more varied media through which history is now regularly communicated. This might be in the form of blog posts, in which you need to convey information concisely; or through podcasts or other sorts of non-written media that pose different sorts of challenges and opportunities for historical discourse. And of course, timed examinations remain a part of your assessments for many courses, testing your ability to deploy your knowledge clearly, concisely, and convincingly in response to specific historical questions.

Whatever work you submit, you can expect to receive helpful and constructive feedback from your tutors and examiners, identifying what worked well and what needed improvement. Engaging with all their feedback is as important a part of your work as the reading and planning of any assignment. Your tutors and lecturers hold regular office hours, in which you can consult them when you are preparing your work or reflect on their comments and suggestions after your work is returned to you. Therefore your studies go beyond the scheduled classes of any course to include opportunities for feedback, reflection, discussion and self-improvement, ultimately developing your skills as a student of History.

Sample timetable

The following is a sample Year 1 timetable for semester 1 of a student studying MA (Hons) History in 2018/19. The student has chosen Archaeology 1A as their outside course. Please note that your timetable may be different.

	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00
Mon		Medieval Worlds Lecture			Medieval Worlds Tutorial		Archaeology 1A Lecture			
Tue			Office hour with Personal Tutor	Archaeology 1A Tutorial			Archaeology 1A Lecture			
Wed	Historian's Toolkit Lecture	Medieval Worlds Lecture		Office hour with Medieval Worlds Lecturer		History Society football training	History Society football training			
Thur					Peer Support session					History Society Ceilidh
Fri	Historian's Toolkit Lecture		Historian's Toolkit Lecture							

■ Lectures ■ Tutorials ■ Optional / society events

Want the inside scoop?

Read what real students have to say

Ellie Parker is a fourth-year History student recently returned from a year of living, adventuring and studying in Oslo, Norway. She's involved in freshair.org.uk (the University's radio station) and enjoys frequenting the great tea and cake spots in Edinburgh.

What attracted you to study at Edinburgh?

I loved how wide, diverse and exciting the options for the History courses were and how enthusiastic students at Edinburgh appeared on the Open Day. I was also attracted to the idea of studying one outside course a semester in the first two years, which allowed me to study Politics, Italian and Architectural History alongside my core History courses.

What do you wish you'd worried about less?

I wish I had worried less about my grades in the first two years. Obviously studying is the most important component of university life, but the first two years are there for you to mess up and make mistakes so that you can get the best feedback necessary for you to improve in the future. Do not over-pressurise yourself to get perfect results every time.

Tell us a Student Secret!

Make sure you sign up to the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library. Not only can you get useful books from the National Library and keep up the leisure time reading with books from Central Library, but they also provide a change of scene for studying. I also love working in the National Museum of Scotland – it is open from 10am to 5pm and they don't mind if you sit in the café and plug in your laptop for the entire day, where the lighting is incredible.

Saskia Hamilton-Bowker is a member of the History Netball Squad and lists the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, climbing Arthur's Seat, walking in the Pentland Hills and falafel wraps among her favourite things about Edinburgh.

What do you wish you'd worried about less?

That I would have far less of a support system than I did at school. However, the School of History, Classics and Archaeology is so supportive and efficient that if you have a problem there are always people you can speak to and who will happily help you no matter how silly or small you think your question is.

Tell us a Student Secret!

The David Hume Tower building has really quiet and spacious study classrooms up on the top floor. I recommend it if you're not scared of heights!

What would you say to someone thinking about studying at the University of Edinburgh?

Come and visit the city. It doesn't even have to be on an Open Day if you can't make them. Visiting Edinburgh and experiencing the friendly atmosphere here will sell it to you.

Contact us

For further information about studying History at Edinburgh, email: HCA-prospective-UG@ed.ac.uk

For further information about admissions, email: CAHSS.UGAdmissions@ed.ac.uk

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This document is available in alternative formats upon request such as large print, please email HCA-prospective-UG@ed.ac.uk

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