

Vertebrae? We've got your back!

Students on our MSc in Human Osteoarchaeology spend a lot of time looking at bones, funnily enough. But recently, they got the chance to make them... in felt. Why? We're glad you asked!

Felting is an ancient technique which, traditionally, created a textile by matting together wool using only heat, moisture and agitation. Examples of clothing, rugs and decoration have been found in graves, famously in Scythian Iron Age tombs in the Pazyryk Valley and Ukok plateau in the Altai Mountains of Siberia. Most recently, though, its creation has become a popular craft – sometimes called 'fibre art' – using felting needles, a mat and wool.

"I first encountered anatomy felting through 'I've got yer back', a community collaborative art/science project led by Janet Philp (Head of Administration in the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences) and artist Joan Smith." said Dr Linda Fibiger, Programme Co-Director MSc in Human Osteoarchaeology. "I created a C2 vertebrae, right at the top of the spine."

"Joan has, for a number of years, been doing a drawing session with my students, and I thought the felting with Janet would be another, art/craft-science crossover way to approach anatomy, to emphasise to students of Human Osteoarchaeology how important it is to really look at and feel the bone to understand form and function."

Students selected a plastic cast vertebrae from different areas of the spine as a model. Feedback on the session was

very positive, with students commenting that the process really made them look at the structure and different features of the bone casts.

Felting bones, from start to finish



Students working on felting vertebrae.



A vertebrae takes shape.



A felt vertebrae with its model.



Finished felt vertebrae.

Find out more:

- “I’ve got yer back”: A community art and anatomy project
- Article on the “I’ve got your back” project
- MSc Human Osteoarchaeology
- Dr Linda Fibiger’s staff profile

Archaeology Fieldtrip around

East Lothian

Dr Henry (Indiana) Jones Jr once said, "If you wanna be a good archaeologist you gotta get out of the library!", which is exactly what some of our first year archaeology students did recently.

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology is lucky enough to have a wealth of archaeological sites on its doorstep. A group of first year archaeology students led by Dr Guillaume Robin (Archaeology Teaching Director) and Dr Tanja Romankiewicz (Lecturer in Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology) recently toured East Lothian, taking in a range of sites covering thousands of years.

The group first visited Chesters Hill Fort, an Iron Age hill fort, probably built in the first millennium BC, and which was occupied into the Roman occupation of Britain in the early centuries of the first millennium AD. The site has never been excavated but the remains of several houses are still visible.



Professor Ian Ralston (baseball cap at left) describes Doon Hill, to students

Next on the itinerary was Doon Hill, an Early Neolithic settlement site (c. 3700 BC). In the 1960s the site was excavated but was thought to be Early Medieval! Further research and new radiocarbon dating have recently demonstrated

its Neolithic date. A special guest joined the group at Doon Hill, Professor Ian Ralston (Abercromby Emeritus Professor of Archaeology). Professor Ralston – an expert in hillforts – has a history with Doon Hill, having first excavated there a schoolboy and returned to it following his retirement, being instrumental in uncovering the evidence of the true date of the site.



Archaeologists assemble!

And last, but definitely not least, was a trip to Tantallon Castle, a grand Medieval castle built on a sea cliff edge. Built in the mid-14th century, it was besieged several times over the centuries, finally by Oliver's Cromwell's invasion of Scotland in 1651. It's a popular filming location, featuring in everything from sci-fi movie 'Under the Skin', starring Scarlett Johansson, to 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', a Bollywood romantic comedy.

You can find out more about our archaeology degrees, Drs Robin and Romankiewicz, as well as Professor Ralston's work at the links below.

- Undergraduate Archaeology degrees at the University of Edinburgh
 - Dr Guillaume Robin's staff profile
 - Dr Tanja Romankiewicz's staff profile
 - Professor Ian Ralston's staff profile
 - Site visited – Historic Environment Scotland
 - Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland – Ian Ralston
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What is burnout and what does it feel like?

In this blog post, Tessa Warinner, wellbeing adviser at the School of History, Classics, and Archaeology, discusses 'Burnout' – a rising concern in academia. Tessa discusses what it feels like, its prevalence, impact, and signposts helpful resources for managing it. This post belongs to the **Hot Topic theme: Critical insights into contemporary issues in Higher Education.**

I'm sure you've come across the term 'burnout' while scrolling through your social media and news feeds. I've personally noticed an increase in public conversation about it since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Like many psychological terms, the actual meaning of it can get lost in the chatter. The World Health Organisation (WHO) characterises burnout as 'an occupational phenomenon'. They define it as

"a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

They said that the three main dimensions are as follows:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy.

In my experience as a wellbeing adviser, I've frequently had both students and staff tell me they're feeling burnt out. They usually tell me about experiencing symptoms that closely resemble the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which is the go-to questionnaire for measuring if a person is experiencing this phenomenon. Some of the symptoms are:

- **Exhaustion:** feeling emotionally drained, frequently frustrated with your work, feeling at the end of your rope, and feeling like it's too much effort to directly interact with people at work.
- **Depersonalisation (or a loss of empathy for others):** feeling afraid that your job has made you more callous towards others, you are out of patience by the end of the work day, and you feel like you are too tired to get up to face another day at work.
- **Personal achievement:** feeling like you haven't accomplished anything worthwhile, you don't feel you're positively influencing others, and you struggle to create a relaxed work environment for yourself and others.

If any of these resonate with your personal experience, you are far from alone. Mental Health UK released a 2024 report about the YouGov poll they ran about burnout. They found that 91% of workers reported feeling extremely stressed out in the past year. One in five workers reported needing to take time off work for burnout symptoms in the past year. It's safe to say that at least one person in your inner circle has felt burned out at some point in their lives. I guess that means you're in good company, right?

Can students experience burnout?

The current definitions of burnout are worded for people working in jobs. In my experience, I have found that students frequently report burnout symptoms while completing their degree. Going to lectures, working on assessments, and attending exams can involve as much energy as someone working a full-time job. Coupled with the rigorous academic expectations that come with attending the University of Edinburgh, it's natural to feel worn down by it. Academic burnout appears to be under-studied, but a 2023 study found that out of the 22,983 students they included in the sample, over half of them were currently experiencing it. They also found that certain factors such as being male, having higher marks than the class average, and smoking cigarettes led to higher levels of academic burnout.

This study highlights the importance of understanding how burnout does not occur in a vacuum. I tell students (and my co-workers) that it is a very stressful time to work and study. We're collectively doing our best to cope with trying to see our friends and family, exercise, do chores, drink enough water, get eight hours of sleep, keep our screen times low, not get Covid-19, manage our money while we deal with the cost-of-living crisis, and watch our government deal with global geopolitical instability. In my professional opinion, experiencing at least some burnout symptoms is a normal response to these abnormal circumstances.

What can be done if you feel burnt out?

If anything from this post resonates with your experience, it's worth taking this burnout quiz by HealthCentral. This is not a diagnostic tool, but it can help you organise your thoughts around how you're feeling. It can help structure further conversations with medical and mental health professionals. There is also a great book called *Burnout: Solve Your Stress Cycle* by Emily and Amelia Nagoski, which does a deep dive into the phenomenon and has practical tips to help you feel better.

If you are a current University of Edinburgh student and don't know where to start addressing burnout, it's worth referring into Student Wellbeing Services using our referral form. A wellbeing adviser can meet with you to discuss your situation and come up with a bespoke support plan for you. Personally, I usually recommend taking time to rest and getting clinical help to help alleviate burnout. I would put them in touch with their student adviser to discuss the logistics around taking a leave of absence or an authorised interruption of studies, if this is what the student would like. I'm very mindful that students are typically reluctant to take any significant time off as they would like to graduate within four years, so I would usually find ways to build in more time for rest in their busy schedules. I would also help them find ways they can access therapy to talk more about their feelings. This can be through the University Student Counselling Service or external services located around the city.

If you are a staff member, time and clinical help are also the way to go. I would recommend speaking with your line manager first to discuss your current workload and obligations. There is also the University Occupational Health Service if you don't feel comfortable speaking with them. They will be able to point you in the direction of appropriate services.

All in all, burnout is a very common phenomenon that at least one person in your inner circle has experienced. Having it is no reflection on your character, or your ability to withstand stressful circumstances. No matter what, you're going to get through it. You're going to be okay.



Tessa Warinner

Tessa Warinner is a wellbeing adviser aligned with the University of Edinburgh's School of History, Classics, and Archaeology.

Five low-cost activities to do in Edinburgh...

...by Lena / from Germany / studying Intellectual History (MSc)

Edinburgh, with its rich history, stunning architecture, and vibrant culture, is a city that captivates the hearts of many. Being a student here is truly amazing, and you will certainly never run out of things to do. However, with it being such a wonderful (and hence touristy) place, the prices of many activities, as well as of food and drink, have been going up more and more. But just because you live on a smaller student budget, it does not mean that you don't get to enjoy Edinburgh as much as anybody else. I've compiled five low-cost activities that you can do in Edinburgh that are just as fun as the more expensive treats.

1. Join a free walking tour

Almost every big city nowadays offers free walking tours, and Edinburgh is certainly no exception. Several local companies provide free guided walking tours through the city where knowledgeable locals share fascinating stories about the city's history, taking you through iconic landmarks such as the Royal Mile, Edinburgh Castle, and Holyrood Palace. This is an excellent idea if you've just arrived in Edinburgh and want to get a general feel for the city.

2. Visit the National Museum of Scotland and the National Galleries of Scotland

Both the National Museum of Scotland and the National Galleries of Scotland are free to enter, and they have such extensive collections and temporary exhibitions (that you sometimes have to pay for) that you could easily spend days in them. This activity is ideal for when Edinburgh has one of its long, rainy autumn/winter days, and you just want to take shelter from the wind and the rain for at least a little bit.

3. Stroll around the Royal Botanic Gardens

With Edinburgh's Botanic Gardens, you have one of the largest plant collections in the United Kingdom and worldwide at your doorstep. They are a lovely idea for a good day out, particularly when the weather is a bit nicer. Consider taking a book, or take a friend and just wander around the gardens for as long as you please. They also make for stunning pictures, so don't forget your camera!

4. Browse the charity shops

Edinburgh has an incredible variety of so many charity shops. You can hardly walk down a street without passing one. So why not make a whole day out of it? If you are on a tighter budget, stick to window shopping, but if you're in the mood to spend a bit, you'll be able to find plenty of bargains and unique home wear and clothing pieces.

5. Take a walk along Portobello Beach

A bit further out of the city centre but easily reachable by bus, pack your swimming costume (if you are brave enough), snacks and a thermos filled with your favourite hot drink and get yourself down to Edinburgh's beautiful beach. While it might be nicer (and less windy) in the summer months, even a lovely winter walk along the water can calm you down and give you a much-needed break from academic work that we all need

sometimes.

Edinburgh's allure extends beyond its well-known attractions, and you don't need to drain your wallet to experience the city's magic. By trying out some of these low-cost activities, you can immerse yourself in the culture, history, and natural beauty that Edinburgh has to offer, creating memories that will last a lifetime without putting a dent in your budget. So, lace up your walking shoes and get ready to explore this captivating city without breaking the bank.

Originally published on the Student Stories blog

Want to find out more?

Chat with Lena

What makes HCA so special?

Tanvi shares her experience of being an international student, and the supportive community of School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

Student life in Edinburgh is colourful and multifaceted, and this is something that the University has continued to provide throughout my time as a student here. My experience at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) started during Covid so my entire first year was online. I found that as an international student this eased the transition from home to university for me, somewhat. However, at the same time it sometimes made engagement difficult. I found, though, that the University – and especially HCA – strived to remedy this lack of in-person learning. And now, as a third-year student studying full-time in person, I find that the same opinion of

student life here holds up.

Academic rigour



The School of History, Classics, and Archaeology provides not only a large variety of degree options, but also an allowance for flexibility and diversity

within those degrees. In addition to a wide range of course options, HCA implements a balanced but academically challenging environment – something that is put in place from day one.

From my personal experience as a student from the USA, schools don't have an A-level system and the courses offered are general and broad, with no opportunity for Classics or Archaeology backgrounds. I found that even with no prior knowledge of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History – although I was surrounded by peers who had the opportunity to take a Classics A-level – HCA has ensured an all-round and in-depth introduction to the subject. Overall, the class structure, assessment style, and myriad of course opportunities have allowed me to garner the same proficiency in my chosen degree as someone who had prior knowledge of some of the course material. I have found that other international students with a similar background have shared this experience in other degrees.

In addition to literal content, HCA implements an academic

system with additional external support from faculty and such tools as the HCA writing centre and peer mentors that result in a higher output of quality of academic work. Three years at HCA have taught me – besides academic content – the professional qualities associated with research, writing, and presentation in regard to my academic work and external projects.

Faculty

The academic opportunities that University of Edinburgh students have are a product of the faculty. The School ensures a broad panel of faculty spanning multiple historical, classical, and archaeological specialties. This not only allows the greater variety of choice for incoming and prospective students in pre-honours, it also allows honours students to choose from a large pool of academics to determine their postgraduate pathways and dissertation topics/guidance. In this way, the HCA faculty pushes students to explore various topics that allow them to experience a very varied subject area.

Societies



By far some of the most influential engagement among students in HCA comes from the History, Classics and Archaeology societies. As a member of the Archaeology Society, I have

found myself not only meeting other students in my course subject, but also other HCA students in HCA through joint society events. By meeting other people in the same subject as me my academic life has improved, which encourages me in my studies. And by gaining access to the wider HCA student network, this has created and sustained an even more warm and welcoming environment in the School.

In addition to the social aspect of the society programs, the academic and professional opportunities awarded to members and attendees is immensely helpful. Through opportunities like conferences and lectures by experts in various fields, the students of HCA have a wonderful chance to widen their academic horizons while also networking amongst academic professionals. And it allows them to browse and gain familiarity with future career opportunities. The Archaeology Fieldwork Fair instituted by the Archaeology Society provides multiple career and fieldwork opportunities annually in addition to other opportunities offered within HCA. The University also has a number of heritage and collections internship positions for students in the relevant fields, providing valuable experience for the future.

The wider University community

The resources and support available in HCA are supplemented by the environment of the rest of the University, and its faculty and students. The multicultural and diverse surroundings of the University and the wider Edinburgh area is truly something that not only influenced my decision to attend the University, but has deeply affected my current experience here as a student. As an international student, and a person of colour, the University of Edinburgh has created a central community in which students of all backgrounds, interests, and identities can collectively explore the beauty that the city has to offer.

In with the bricks, or how a building can make a difference

Lockdown taught us that you don't really need to be somewhere physically to get the work done, right? History student Olivia might disagree.

When I started university, I didn't really spend much time in the William Robertson Wing – the home of the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, or HCA as it's usually known. In the beginning I got lost one too many times, and gave up on it because the Undergraduate Common Room intimidated me, and the lift was out of service when I wanted to go to the research room and didn't want to climb the stairs. So I found myself mostly in the main library feeling entirely anonymous. But now, almost all my time is spent in the HCA building, and I see and interact with the same people every day. A degree as large as history can be a little daunting, but the HCA building provides a small, tight-knit community within the larger University community which makes that a little easier.

A typical day, untypical places

I usually start my days early. I wake up around 6 or 6:30am and go for a run around the Meadows or around Holyrood Park (though in reality, it's pretty stop and go because there are lots of very friendly dogs out in the morning and I miss my dog at home a lot). When I get back, I take a quick shower, get myself ready for the day, eat some breakfast, and head off to HCA where I will inevitably realise I'd left a book I

needed for class in the ever-growing pile of books on my desk at my flat. C'est la vie!

I usually get to HCA around 9am and head to the Student Research Room on the third floor for the first part of my day. When I get there, I wave at my friend Josh, and get settled in at my favourite desk (second from the door on the left). I usually



like to make a list on Monday of everything that I need to get done for the week and then set in on everything that I have to do. Inevitably, I will have a lot of thoughts and feelings about whatever it is that I'm reading for whichever seminar, and I will drag Josh into the hallway to gesticulate wildly about female poets in the *Gàidhealtachd* (an article by Anne Frater), or about a Medieval Islamic medical case study (an article by Cristina Alvarez-Millan), or Lidl being out of my favourite pasta shape (it can be a very hard life).

At around 1pm, unless I've had a seminar, I'll head down to the common room which is usually just picking up as everyone else comes down for their lunch break as well. I'll generally set my things down at the best desk in the common room (in front of the window second from the left) and settle in for about an hour with a group of my friends. Generally, I don't get into the lunch debate that plagues every University of Edinburgh student, but sometimes I dabble and will get a wrap from Nile Valley (not African Wrap because they don't marinate their aubergines the same way). I usually take about an hour for lunch, but my friend Ellie and I often have some kind of shenanigan going on that we loop the other in on (and very often get complained about on The Tab).



After lunch, I bid my friends in the common room farewell and I put my headphones on and face the window. I'll usually do my more intense work in the morning in the quiet of the research room and save my less intense work for the common room, so I often end up writing my dissertation in the afternoons or catching up on some work.

In the evenings, I try to take it easy. I generally leave HCA around 5 or 6pm, and I usually spend the evening making dinner and watching something dumb on television or reading. But on Mondays I have History Society meetings (a society I've been involved with since my first year and which has really helped me get to know my peers), once a month I have 'girls night' with my neighbours (who I only got the chance to meet because they're also in the History Society), and every so often I'll stay late in the building to finish my dissertation work (with the help of friends who are actually largely distracting though there's no one I'd rather be distracted by).

The HCA Community



Being an HCA student and having these spaces reserved specifically for HCA people is really special and I cannot imagine my university experience without it. With the amount of time I spend in the building, I've gotten to know my degree much more intimately than I think I would have had I not spent so much time here. I've been able to make lasting connections with faculty because I am just always around. Whether it's been that I often ride the lift up with the same people, or I'm closer to office hours, I have really valued my time hanging out with lecturers and getting to know them more personally than we really get to in seminars.

I have also made lasting friendships through HCA. There is a definite group of us who spend every day at HCA doing the same things with the same people, and by virtue of proximity, we've been able to build these connections that have lasted years. It is a lovely thing to know that your space is a space you can share with your friends and with people who are just as excited about their degrees as you are about yours.

Being in HCA and being part of the little HCA community who spends all their time in the HCA building means that I know my friends are perfectly willing to have me gesticulate wildly at them about whatever I'm currently reading, and be frustrated alongside me that a text I need isn't available in English,

and stay late with me in the common room for moral support while I struggle through my dissertation. Having access to the HCA building has made my degree feel much smaller, despite being a huge programme, and it has made me feel much more at home in the space I spend so much of my time in.

How to prevent burnout as a postgraduate student

Embarking on a postgraduate journey is undoubtedly an exciting and intellectually rewarding endeavour, but it does require a significant amount of time, effort and dedication. How can you get the most out of your studies, without experiencing burnout? MSc Intellectual History student Lena offers her thoughts.

Taking the decision to study at a postgraduate level is a big decision so it's normal to feel overwhelmed and stressed out at times, but in the worst-case scenario – when academia takes over your life a little bit too much, and you cannot seem to catch a breath – it can lead to burnout, adversely affecting your mental and physical wellbeing. To prevent getting to a state like that, I've put together a – hopefully – helpful guide with some simple and practical strategies which have helped me safeguard my mental and physical health throughout my academic journey. You should truly enjoy your time at University, rather than just constantly wishing for all the deadlines and stress to finally disappear.

Understanding Burnout



Before delving into the advice on how to prevent burnout, it may be helpful to briefly cover what the phrase 'burnout' actually refers to. It's commonly understood as a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, often accompanied by feelings of cynicism and detachment from work or, in the case of students, from studies. Often, burnout is not the result of a brief stressful period but rather a consequence of prolonged exposure to stressors, overwhelming workloads, and a lack of adequate coping mechanisms. A few common signs that are usually understood to indicate burnout (although these can vary from person to person) include persistent fatigue, decreased productivity, increased irritability, diminished enthusiasm, and withdrawal from social activities.

Managing your Studies

The first area to be tackled when attempting to create a sustainable framework for avoiding burnout during your

postgraduate career is probably the most obvious and intuitive – your studies. I'll will begin this section with something that we've all probably heard time and time again in a University and work context – time management. There is a reason why people talk about it so much. Ultimately, it is the tool that will help you stay calm in the first place, no matter how massive the workload may seem.

While an undergraduate degree may have allowed you to be more flexible and do assignments at the last minute, a postgraduate degree is often far more time-consuming. Additionally, you are usually expected to engage far more deeply with the topics you are working on. Frequently your lecturers want to see you really delve into a topic for an essay, which is considerably more difficult to do if you only started looking at the question the night before. So, although it may be a tedious task to do, and you might not want to hear it because you have already heard it a thousand times, before you think about anything else sit yourself down and develop a realistic and efficient time schedule that includes your academic work as well as other personal commitments.

A schedule has helped me to prioritise tasks based on their deadlines and importance and to structure my work days based on three main components – readings for upcoming classes, research for assignments, and writing for assignments – and your schedule may look very different, depending on which programme you do and how your classes and assignments are structured. However, the most important thing is that you create a time management system for yourself. Having a system in place means that you do not have to wake up each morning stressed and panicked at the prospect of all the things you need to do.



One crucial aspect to consider when setting up your daily, weekly, or even monthly schedule is to be honest with yourself regarding whether your short- and long-term goals are realistically achievable. It is probably not ideal to simply put down, 'Write your essay on Friday'. Seeing this when you first open your physical or digital planner will very likely leave you overwhelmed with trying to figure out what to exactly do that day. When proactively planning your day or week, it may be much more helpful to break down all your larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps and, most importantly, celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem, along the way. Did you write one page today? That is already one page closer than yesterday and one step closer to finishing your essay altogether! Please don't forget to give yourself credit for all the work you do on a daily basis since it is often much more than you think. Being proud of yourself for all the tasks you do, no matter how big or small, will not only make you feel better each day but also help you stay motivated in the long run.

Establishing clear boundaries is another important element when attempting to create an achievable and realistic time schedule. Saying no to things you may not have the time for and would not enjoy enough to warrant compromising other aspects of your academic and personal life is crucial. As much

as it may be tempting to 'do it all,' it is essential to recognise that attempting to juggle too many things at once can lead to exhaustion and will ultimately compromise not only the quality of academic work you put out, but also the quality of time spent with friends and family outside of your University life.

Lastly, I would like to remind you that during your time in Edinburgh, you should not hesitate to utilise the available support systems. You don't have to go through everything alone. Making an effort to connect with academic advisors, the student support team at the School of History, Classics, and Archaeology (also known as HCA), and other students can be beneficial for you in many ways. Regular communication with HCA staff and students can provide you with valuable insights and guidance for your academic work, as well as a sense of belonging. It can also help reduce potential feelings of isolation that may be especially strong if you have just recently moved to Edinburgh and have not met many people yet.

Making Self-Care a Priority

As a postgraduate student, it can be quite easy to become completely absorbed in your studies. After all, pursuing a postgraduate degree is expected to push you to your academic limits so that you can potentially join the ranks of those researchers whose work you have always admired. When I first started, I found myself quickly setting aside everything in my life that was not related to my studies so that I could make enough time for reading, researching, and writing. This is only natural, you likely chose to pursue a postgraduate degree because you are incredibly passionate about your field of study, so it is to be expected to want to dedicate all your time and energy to it.

However, if the basics of taking care of yourself physically and mentally start to disappear from your daily routine, your body and your mind will eventually find it increasingly

difficult to deal with the workload and the stress postgraduate degrees can bring. On the other hand, if you get the basics right, you will be able to sit at your desk energised and ready to do your best rather than constantly feeling tired and sluggish.

Simple Steps

Firstly and most obviously, get enough sleep. Sleeping well and enough is essential for your cognitive function (concentration, memory and resilience against



stress) and improves your overall wellbeing. Attempt to establish a consistent sleep routine that works for you personally. If you have never been a morning person, there is no reason (other than a 9am class) for you to force yourself to be up at dawn every day to be productive. If you work better in the evenings, prioritise the evenings as your study time and leave the rest of the day for lighter tasks. The critical thing in this instance is consistency. Find a sleeping routine that works for you and your body and leaves you feeling energised throughout the week.

Eat well and regularly. Cooking may not be the first thing on your agenda, especially during deadline season, but putting a little effort into your nutrition and limiting the takeaways will make you feel much better physically, positively impacting your ability to focus on work. Also, consider

finding a way of moving your body every once in a while, even if it is just a short walk through the Meadows to break up those long library days. If you need an incentive, grab a coffee or a hot chocolate with a friend to get you outside. Even though Edinburgh is not always blessed with the sunniest weather, when the sun does come through, your body will be thanking you for getting some fresh air and a bit of Vitamin D.

Consider trying out some form of mindfulness/relaxation techniques to slow you down during a hectic university day. I will be the first to admit that I have always struggled to understand how people could sit still when the to-do list seemed endless. I was convinced that even sparing 10 minutes for meditation or some light yoga would rob me of valuable time that I could spend being productive. However, over time, I have started to recognise that when you feel overwhelmed with work, it is not always the most helpful to just keep going but rather to stop for a second to breathe and gather yourself again. It ended up helping me immensely to take control over the feelings of panic and stress that often felt not controllable at all. Give a mindfulness activity of your choice a go and see how you feel after. It never hurts to try new things, and it may help you to ground yourself a bit on those days when it all becomes a little bit too overwhelming.

Lastly and most importantly, don't forget to have fun! You are obviously in Edinburgh to study and challenge yourself academically, but don't completely neglect your hobbies and those activities that you know bring you joy and relaxation. Ultimately, engaging in non-academic activities, whether as part of a society or individually, will undoubtedly provide you with a necessary break from the demands of postgraduate life and ultimately help you achieve a better work-life balance. And it can be anything! Maybe try doing something that you loved to do as a child, such as painting and crafting, or try something entirely new to challenge yourself.

Whatever it is, please do not let postgraduate studies keep you from pursuing your hobbies; if anything, it will help your academic performance if you are well-balanced and happy with what you do every day.

There are some of the strategies which have helped me personally with my wellbeing throughout my studies thus far. However, don't forget that if you feel you need help you can reach out to the student support team, who can help you and direct you to appropriate support services if necessary.

So, you've decided to study a joint honours degree ...

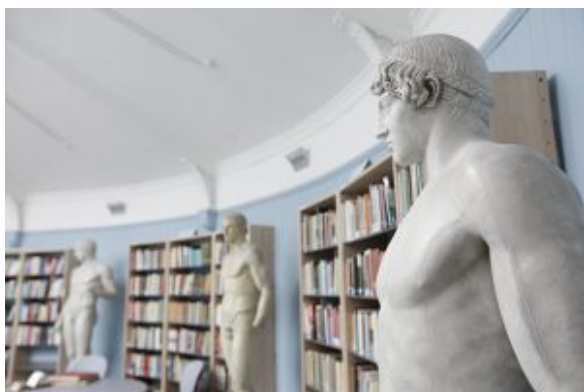
Twice the fun or double the trouble? Student Ambassador Aalish is studying a joint honours degree.

I made the choice to study Chinese and History simply because I love learning a language and history has always had a soft spot in my heart. Studying a language alongside history presents its own unique challenges, not only from each subject itself, but also when they are combined together. But what is it actually like to study a joint honour degree at the University of Edinburgh? I'm going to talk you through what a general day in my life looks like as well as talking about the how your degree could be structured and what your classes could be like!

The practical stuff

Most days my classes start at 10am. It is very rare that I start much later (apart from a Tuesday where for some reason I

have one class at 4pm!). Usually, I have around three or four classes a day, which I like to point out is a lot, but this is because I am studying a non-European language. Generally, at the University of Edinburgh, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic have a lot more contact hours than European languages because they are just so different to English. If you choose to study a European language you will likely have more classes than your peers who study a straight history degree, but not to the extent where you have 15 hours of class a week like me!



The student research rooms.

Starting at 10am I don't usually leave the university campus until 5pm most days. I like to do the majority of my work at University so I can relax at home with my flatmates. My day mainly consists of language classes with the odd history class thrown in. I spend three hours at classes across the campus and for the rest of the time I prefer to study in either the School of Literatures, Languages & Cultures or in the Student Research Rooms in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology. This is a small library that only those who study history, classics or archaeology courses can access and it has little marble Greek statues around it!

Studying history mainly involves a lot of reading. For each history course you generally get two hours of lecture and a one-hour tutorial. The lectures will have a lot of people in them and you will all be listening to a lecturer talk about the topic you are studying. It goes without saying that you

should be taking notes as the lecturers can say a lot about each of the topics as this is often their area of special interest and study, and so you have to develop the skill of notetaking. This involves actively listening and deciding what is important or relevant information, and generally does not involve copying from the presentation as you will be able to access this information throughout the duration of your course.

Tutorials are smaller groups of about twelve students where you discuss the topics you have been learning about in your lectures. Most tutorials require you to do pre-reading and so you discuss these readings in the tutorials with your peers and instructor (who is usually either a PhD student or a lecturer) alongside discussing any proposed questions that were suggested on the tutorial worksheet. Doing these readings is really important as it is good practice for writing your essays. When it comes to writing an essay, you need to have done a lot of academic reading in order to back up your claims and argument – this means you need to know what is useful and what is not, which you can practice in doing the readings for your tutorials. The most important thing I would like to tell you is to learn to read well – it will really help you in your studies of history!

The good bit

Studying a language is quite different to studying history. First off there is much less reading which can prove to be a nice break from all the reading surrounding history. In Chinese, Russian, Japanese and Arabic you tend to get more classes than the European languages but you will definitely have quite a few classes ranging from grammar, reading and writing to listening to lectures and, of course, oral classes. Oral classes are usually around six people, with a tutor who is a native to the language. These are my personal favourite classes because you get to apply what you know into practicing

speaking with your peers, which I always find fun, plus, often you get to make up fun stories with your classmates!

Generally, I prefer tutorials in either History or in Chinese because I like to have a more of a classroom type setting like you have during high school. Saying this, I have had some really interesting lectures that I wished went on for much longer than their allotted time because it was just so interesting. The most recent one being a lecture on photography and its global influence. It really challenged a lot of my perceptions about the use of photography in history and I thoroughly enjoyed it! At university you get a wide choice in the courses you do so if there is something that interests you, I recommend choosing a course that covers this. But if you think this would be the most boring lecture to ever exist, make sure not to choose a course that covers this! Choose anything you think will really interest you and I am sure you will enjoy most, if not all, of the course.

Perhaps the best part of doing a history degree with a language, though, is the guaranteed year abroad in the country of the language you are studying. This is something I am really looking forward to as a day in my life next year will look a little different when I am studying Chinese and History in China.

All work and no play?



A view of Edinburgh from

Calton Hill at sunset

Now you've probably gathered that I really like my degree and I probably sound like a little bit of a nerd, but I promise I do other things outside of studying! Most evenings, I spend time with my flatmates and friends across the city, sometimes going out into the pubs and clubs of the city, sometimes out to the cinema, or even sometimes on a walk around the city. Don't knock it! Edinburgh is a beautiful city both during the day and the night and one evening I happened to see the northern lights from Calton Hill!

On top of this I am involved in a few societies. The History society is a big society for everyone who studies history or has an interest in history, and through this I play football at the weekend with the Edinburgh Woman's History Football Club. I really love this and it is such a fun way to get to know others who like to play this sport but also study history and also one of the cheapest ways to play football! I am also a committee member on another society and frequently attend other societies such as the salsa society.

If you are thinking about doing joint honours History with a language, I would highly recommend it! Overall, I would say a day in my life can be very busy, but dividing my time between history and Chinese helps to keep me interested and motivated.

Charles III – a thoroughly modern monarchy?

Amidst the excitement of the coronation of King Charles III, Dr Alasdair Raffe – Senior Lecturer in History – takes a look at the story of Scotland in it all.



Scottish Exemplification
(official copy) of the
Treaty of Union of 1707

“Some aspects of the coronation of King Charles III on Saturday 6 May 2023 have been updated to reflect modern tastes – the oil with which the king will be anointed is to contain no animal products, for example – but it will still be a deeply traditional occasion, shaped by centuries of precedents. From a Scottish perspective, the famous Stone of Destiny on which Scottish monarchs were crowned prior to 1296, has been relocated from Edinburgh to Westminster for the day, and yet the coronation will be an essentially Anglican service in continuity with English coronations preceding the creation of the United Kingdom in 1707.

The coronation’s ‘Englishness’ reflects the nature of the union of 1707 – the union tended to add Scots to pre-existing English institutions rather than creating new British structures. One result of this approach to uniting the kingdoms was that the coronations of post-union monarchs –

George I to Elizabeth II – retained Anglican ritual. (The late queen's regnal number ('II') is itself, evidence that monarchs have been regarded as the successors of England's pre-union kings and queens, rather than representatives of a British institution founded in 1707.)

However, there is a further reason why the coronations of the UK's monarchs have been English in character. In the second half of the 17th century the Scottish coronation ritual fell into disuse. The last monarch to receive a Scottish coronation was Charles II, crowned at Scone on 1 January 1651, while his successors James VII and II, William II and III and Anne were crowned in England and none visited Scotland after ascending the throne.

Had separate Scottish coronations been deemed necessary, they might well have taken some years to arrange. After all, Charles I – the first monarch after James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne as James I – was crowned in Scotland a whole eight years after becoming king, but few contemporaries were particularly concerned that the final three pre-union monarchs were not crowned in Scotland.

How can the eclipse of the Scottish coronation explained? Well, in the late 17th century, we might argue, the Scottish coronation oath was disentangled from the ritual of which it was traditionally part. The oath came to be seen as an indispensable promise by the new monarch to rule the kingdom according to its laws, whilst the ceremony of coronation could be quietly abandoned. A coronation entailed a trip to Scotland, whereas a new king or queen could swear the oath without having to leave London.



King James VII

This development occurred thanks to the controversial reign of James VII and II, Britain's last Catholic monarch. Though James underwent an amended version of the Anglican ceremony shortly after becoming king in 1685, he was not crowned in Scotland, nor did he swear the Scottish coronation oath. The oath required monarchs to uphold the Reformed religion, and James regarded such an undertaking as incompatible with his chief political priority – granting acceptance to his Catholic subjects. When James was overthrown in the revolution of 1688-90, the supporters of revolution assembled in the Scottish Convention of Estates thought that the king's failure to swear the coronation oath justified his removal from the throne. According to the convention, James's refusal to promise that he would govern lawfully enabled him to change Scotland from 'a legall limited monarchy' to an 'arbitrary despotick power'.

Because the Catholic James had avoided the oath and abused his power, Scotland's political elite ensured that his protestant successors swore the oath. In 1689, William and Mary, victors of the revolution, were offered the Scottish throne and required to take the coronation oath. After coming to the throne in 1702, one of Queen Anne's first duties was to swear the Scottish coronation oath, tendered to her by members of the Scottish Privy Council then present in London. Not only had the oath been separated from the coronation ceremony, but also it was taken immediately on the monarch's accession to

the throne. Swearing the oath became a precondition for monarchical authority over Scotland.

Those who watched the television coverage of King Charles III's accession council in September may have noticed that the new king also began his reign by swearing an oath relating to Scotland. This was a result of the Act for the Security of the Church of Scotland, adopted by the Scottish parliament alongside the union in 1707. On their accession to the throne, this statute requires, British monarchs promise to uphold the Presbyterian government of the Scottish Church as settled in 1690. The Act for the Security of the Church of Scotland created a new oath, taking the place of the old Scottish coronation oath. The new oath, like its predecessor, has been seen as an essential prerequisite for the exercise of royal power.

In the multi-faith but largely secular Britain of 2023, many will regard the Anglican character of the king's coronation, much like his promise to preserve Scottish Presbyterianism, as anachronistic. Both are legacies of the union of 1707, showing that the political struggles of the late 17th and early 18th centuries not only did much to define the constitutional position and ceremonial trappings of the British monarchy, but continue to do so over 300 years later despite society's assertions that this is a thoroughly 'modern monarchy'."



Find out more about Dr Alasdair Raffe and his work on religion, politics and ideas in early modern Scotland.

[Dr Alasdair Raffe's profile](#)

For media inquiries, please contact press.office@ed.ac.uk

“Forget Hargrove. Read Vere Gordon Childe...”



Vere Gordon Childe

Before Indiana Jones, there was Vere Gordon Childe. The great man – Indiana Jones – recommends him to his students as he skids across a library on the back of a motorbike, but not even he had access to the Vere Gordon Childe Teaching Collection.

The Vere Gordon Childe Teaching Collection is a unique collection. Not only due to the interesting and varied objects

it is composed of but also due to its connection with one of the pre-eminent names in the archaeology of British prehistory, and its use to teach generations of University of Edinburgh students. Recently, a group of seven archaeology students supervised by James Harvie (HCA Ancient History and Classical Archaeology alumnus) worked on the Vere Gordon Childe collection over three weeks, checking condition and doing preventative conservation work on the artefacts.

“We’re continuing in the footsteps of a long line of volunteers in caring for and researching the objects in this fascinating collection,” said James Harvie. “Our goal during our time with the collection is to create condition reports for the objects within the collection, identify any objects in need of conservation treatment, and continue some of the projects started by previous volunteers, such as creating appropriate storage conditions.”

An example of the kind of work undertaken are three Egyptian copper alloy statuettes, attached via wires to an information card (likely done in the early years of the collection). The wires were rubbing against and damaging the copper alloy, as well as preventing the students from giving a complete condition report. The statuettes were carefully removed from their backing, allowing them to complete the condition report, then repacked in a more appropriate manner with acid-free tissue paper and silica gel. As the information card is itself an interesting part of the history of both the collection as a whole and those specific objects, this too was repackaged and placed alongside the statuettes.



A student, wearing latex gloves examines the statuettes.



The statuettes on the original card, the wire ties visible.



Two of the statuettes are removed from the card.

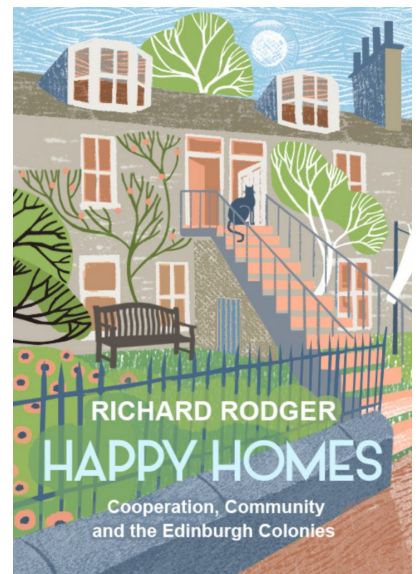
“As a a graduate of the School I knew of and had an interest in this collection, so I got in touch with Dr Guillaume Robin (the current custodian of the collection) to offer my help with its conservation, whilst back in Edinburgh for my summer holidays. This is a great opportunity for myself working with the Vere Gordon Childe Collection, whilst also being able to offer students an insight into the world of conservation. Our thanks go to AOC Archaeology who kindly donated some of the supplies we used in the work.”

You can find out more about the collection and view items with in here – Vere Gordon Childe Collection – and more about his work at the University of Edinburgh here, the tradition of archaeology at Edinburgh.

Edinburgh's Colonies – 'Happy Homes'?

A new book by Professor Richard Rodger – Professor Emeritus of Economic and Social History – looks at the history of one of Edinburgh's most beloved architectural icons, the 'Colony' house.

My book, "Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh 'Colonies'", takes its title from the Reverend James Begg's 1866 publication, "Happy Homes and How to Get Them". Begg was one of several influential Free Church of Scotland ministers who encouraged better housing as an alternative to what they perceived as the ungodly overcrowded and insanitary tenement flats in the Old Town. Begg made a link between housing improvement and the emergence of environmental biology – as contained in Charles Darwin's "Origin of the Species" – and with Samuel Smiles' popular volume "Self Help", since both of these contemporary bestsellers were concerned in their different ways with the moral and physical improvement of the urban poor.



In 1861, in the midst of a long-running strike, the decision by a group of building workers to form and register a Limited Liability Company – one of the earliest in Scotland – and to issue shares, hold meetings, publish accounts, pay dividends, acquire sites and build houses was a truly radical departure. In the first ten years, the Edinburgh Cooperative Building Company (ECBC) obtained and built homes on six different sites, three of them in Leith (Hawthornbank, Ferry Road (Trafalgar Place), Restalrig Park) as well as Stockbridge, Norton Park (Abbeyhill) and Dalry. By 1871, the ECBC had

completed over 750 homes and housed 3125 individuals. One in six of all household heads (16.5%) was a woman, over half of whom were widows. As shareholders and property owners women were also entitled to vote, not just in ECBC meetings but also eventually in municipal elections.

By 1914, half a century after its foundation in 1861, the ECBC had built over 2200 properties housing almost 10,000 people on eleven separate 'Colony' sites. Was there a bigger builder in Edinburgh between these dates?



Stockbridge Colonies
off Glenogle Road

The houses were distinctive in their design – unusually for Scotland these workers' houses were in terraces – each with a separate front door opening on to a small private garden with a shed or coal store. Entry was from both sides – the upper floor by external staircases on one side of the terrace, and the ground floor flat from the other side of the terrace. There were no through roads giving them a sense of safe, self-contained neighbourhoods each with discrete identities. Internally, there was a range for cooking, WC, sink with cold running water and, depending on the date of construction, one or two bedrooms.

'New build' model dwellings for the Edinburgh working classes were a new feature of the 1860s. The names, and indeed the buildings, are still evident in the modern cityscape – Pilrig Buildings, Ashley Buildings, Rosebank Cottages, Chalmers Buildings are just a few identified in "Happy Homes" – but the rents were beyond an unskilled labouring class of workers and, significantly, these model dwellings returned between 5% and 8% on capital invested. Even with 'Begg's Buildings', a block for workers in Brand Place in Abbeyhill, it was not James Begg who invested but Robert Cranston, owner of the Waverley Temperance Hotel on Princes Street, who advanced £6000 for the construction of 72 new homes. His return was 8% – substantially better than government stocks.

"Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh 'Colonies'" is based on a detailed analysis of manuscript census returns, valuation rolls (rental values) and Company records. This reveals much that is new about Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Colonies. The socio-economic composition of residents is explored, ownership patterns are examined, the scale of women's involvement as household heads and property owners is identified, and the subtle variations in the occupational composition of each of the Colonies is revealed, an analysis of the birthplaces of residents produces intriguing patterns and geographical connections between and within Colonies.



Carvings showing trades involved in building the colonies

Perhaps most surprising is the conclusion that it was commonplace for individuals (rentiers) to buy several properties for letting and so the idea that the Colonies were an early example of a property-owning democracy is misplaced.

There were serious errors of ECBC management. This is not to deny the efforts and competency of James Colville during his 30 years as the ECBC Manager, but the ECBC made some dubious decisions. It was slow to recognise the sharp, sustained downturn in the local (and national) housing market after 1905. It acquired the Baird Saughtonhall estate in 1902 but soon after sold land at Balgreen to other house builders. After the Great War, unlike house builders McTaggart & Mickel, Miller and many others, the ECBC did not contemplate an application for the Treasury subsidies to private housebuilders in the 1920s. The ECBC was in terminal decline and before long the salaries of the office staff exceeded those of the building workers.

While there is rightly a degree of admiration at the ambition and scale of ECBC house building, and their remains a strong degree of local affection amongst the public for Edinburgh and

Leith Colony housing in the 21st century, “Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh ‘Colonies’” is a hard-nosed assessment rather than a rose-tinted one.

“Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh ‘Colonies’” is published by The Word Bank (£15) which is a community initiative of the Old Town Development Trust with support from Scotmid, itself a Cooperative Movement successor to St Cuthbert’s Cooperative Society which was formed just a few months before the ECBC.

Re-booting student life after two years of pandemic

How a song and dance helped Hanna connect with the University community after studying remotely.

I came to the University of Edinburgh in September 2020 so was in the first cohort to experience what it is like to start my studies under Covid conditions. Unlike many of my peers, I was lucky to have comparatively many in-person classes. Academically, things went well and I felt sufficiently supported – there was just nothing to do except for studying. But when stricter measurements forced me to study entirely online from my home in Germany in spring 2021, I felt very much detached from the student community.



So, going into my second year I was excited for all the opportunities that would come with being in Edinburgh again but jumping back (or rather, for the first time) into student life in Edinburgh was harder than I expected. After all, I had just spent a year and a half either being chained to my desk studying, or to my bed watching Netflix. Although not consciously, I still had the mentality of staying inside and looking for activities that didn't involve too many other people.

I made sure to join as many societies as my schedule allowed, joined the committee of a society and assumed a job as student ambassador at the University to get fully involved, but something was still missing – I still didn't quite feel at home and part of this great student community. That changed when I attended the first showcase organised by one of my societies at the end of last semester. Being at a place where it's mostly students and seeing something solely student-led come to life was truly exhilarating. I finally felt part of something bigger – something I've recognised again at our second showcase and at two theatre performances by other societies.



Sure, going to pubs, bars and flat parties is a great way to meet more people but I have found that they couldn't give me what being part of or seeing student showcases and performances did. I suppose there is a huge accumulation of sheer talent at Edinburgh University, but that's not to say you have to have the talent yourself or be part of such societies – I for one could never participate in a theatre performance or a dance competition. And regarding theatre and such, we are of course fortunate. Edinburgh, as the venue for the Fringe Festival, is the perfect place for student productions. However, I think it's the experience of what can happen when we all pull in the same direction and what we accomplish as a student community apart from the academics that really made me feel 'welcome'.

Now that restrictions are looser again and that people start to feel safe in a room with many others, it's time to revive real student life. Let's do that by going to performances by people you might not know but are connected to through University. Apart from honouring their/our hard work by going to these, nothing feels more inclusive. Plus, it is a great way to enjoy culture without breaking the bank.

The word on Societies

Retrospect Journal.

One of the tried and tested ways of finding your feet at University is by joining a Society. Tristan – 3rd year MA (Hons) Ancient and Medieval History – started with a journal

and ended up in Crete.

Undoubtedly one of my biggest anxieties about enrolling at the University was whether I would fit in. This was certainly heightened by the fact that I'm a somewhat more mature student, but it is a worry shared by many, regardless of age. Despite my fears, I was determined to find my place and make the most of my time here – something I realised through my involvement with 'Retrospect Journal', a student-led History, Classics and Archaeology publication.

'Retrospect', one of more than 290 societies available to join at the University of Edinburgh, centres on the online and print publication of articles written by a team of columnists and proofed by copy editors. Uploaded weekly, they cover all disciplines relating to History, Classics and Archaeology in the form of academic writing, historical fiction, and reviews, to name just a few. It also publishes several thematic print editions throughout the year. In 2020, they included 'Prejudice and Pandemics', 'Histories of Hope' and 'Race in Retrospective' (in collaboration with RACE.ED), whilst 2021's first offering will be 'Development and Deterioration'. If it wasn't already apparent, we also enjoy alliteration.



The Minoan Palace of Knossos, a day trip whilst in Crete.

Whilst the publication of our journal is the crux of the society, it is also a place where I've had the opportunity to get to know and socialise with those involved. Our common interests and working together to produce engaging literature completely mitigated my worries about fitting in. It has made my student experience one which extends beyond the classroom – although the experience of writing for publication has certainly helped that. Of course, it isn't the only society with links to the School of History, Classics and Archaeology. There are those named for the respective disciplines, all of which offer a huge variety of social and academic events. In February 2020, as part of Flexible Learning Week, I travelled to Crete with the Classics Society; not only a fantastic opportunity for an Ancient History student but through which I've formed close friendships.

If I could give one piece of advice to a prospective student, it would be not to let anxieties hold you back. Through getting involved with societies, whether those affiliated with the School or the University more broadly, you'll not only

have a much more valuable experience, but you'll get to know your peers, many of whom may have a background similar to yourself, in a welcoming environment.

The unexpected perks of bus travel in Edinburgh

Moving to another city can be stressful and frustrating but there can also be unexpected benefits, as Hanna (Classical Studies MA Hons) found.



When I first came to Edinburgh, everyone assured me that there was an “amazing” public transport system here. However, coming from a big city in Germany with a close-knit system of trams, undergrounds and buses, I was rather disappointed. I thought Edinburgh was a capital city but all it has is a tram with a

single line and buses. Since Edinburgh is exceptionally walkable and most of my weekday appointments are a 30-minute walk or less, this didn't bother me too much. Besides, especially in the city centre, walking is just as fast or even faster than taking the bus. However, as my radius slowly expanded as the semester progressed, 45-minute walks in the rain down to the Peffermill Playing Fields, the University's sports complex, or tiring walks back from the supermarket with full bags of my weekly groceries became more and more tiresome. So, I began to cautiously familiarise myself with the bus system.

Contrary to people's assurances, I felt the buses are not always that reliable. Most of the buses don't tell you the names of the stops, which makes the journey very stressful if you're not yet very familiar with the city. And due to roadworks buses can be delayed or need take a different route than the one your phone shows. This always makes me panic and get off at the next possible stop! But there are some benefits to the buses in Edinburgh.

The infamously changeable Scottish weather sometimes made me take the bus anyway, and then the bus is a warm shelter from the wind and rain. And the exceptional friendliness of the bus drivers is just as warm! Coming from a place where no one speaks to the public transport drivers and they never interact with you, the bus drivers in Edinburgh are a wonder to me. They are – I am not exaggerating – the friendliest, most polite, and helpful people. I once took a bus from the airport to my flat and asked the bus driver for directions. He didn't just tell me the stop. No, he stopped at a bus stop, turned off the engine, got out, helped me with my luggage and showed me the next stop I needed to get to and explained in detail which buses I could take.

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de free in Scotland for people under 22 (for many students, this means the entire duration of their degree), I have decided to officially make my peace with buses. Plus, what I have acknowledge only now, buses are one of the best ways to get to know Edinburgh. The architecture of the city is magnificent but you don't really notice it until you look up – and that's often not an option due to the aforementioned changeable weather. But if you sit in the front at the double-decker's big window, you can see the impressive architecture and all the monuments of Edinburgh from a prime perspective. A truly worthwhile experience.

What's more, buses are free not only in Edinburgh, but all over Scotland. This means you can travel to St Andrews, North Berwick or Glasgow for free in no more than two hours. Unfortunatly night buses are not included in the free bus ride which can be annoying when your feet hurt from a night-out at a ceilidh but that doesn't interfere with my

reconciliation with bus travel in Edinburgh. The next time it's pouring rain, my shoulders hurt from grocery bags, and I have the prospect of reading my book on a warm bus, I'll be all appeased again. Buses are now one of the things that make Edinburgh even better for me, and as long as I am not 22 yet, I will definitely make the most of my free bus travel pass.

Lothian Buses cover Edinburgh and the Lothians

Plan your journey with the Lothian Bus journey planner

Applying for Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel

Home is where...

To say the Covid years were tough is, of course, a gross understatement. But what if you're a new international student finding your feet in a foreign country? Olivia is a second year History (MA Hons) student, and this is her story.



View of Edinburgh from Calton Hill at sunset.

I had never been to Scotland before August of 2020 when I moved here for the first time. I honestly don't think I was scared then, but looking back with a year and a half of separation, I don't know how I wasn't terrified. I was definitely anxious about concrete ideas like making new friends, adjusting to learning at a university level, and what if I didn't understand Scottish accents, but as for the physical act of hopping on an airplane and moving to a different country, I wasn't overly concerned about it. It wasn't really until my first week out of isolation that I realised I was in a totally new place living with totally new people, and I had no idea what I was doing. I still don't really have any idea what I'm doing.

I spent my first couple weeks in the city going to the same grocery stores, the same tutorials, the same coffee shop, the same and the same and the same. My world here – whilst bigger than I ever could have imagined in rural Texas – was still incomprehensibly small compared to the Edinburgh I live in now. And for the most part, I didn't think about home. As the semester went on my flatmates and I started to get more comfortable with each other, and the same and the same and the same started to get less familiar. My flatmates and I would stay up late in the kitchen singing ABBA or trying to figure out ceilidh steps or talking about whatever and whatever else. We'd take day trips, go for long walks to nowhere, explore the wynds and closes of Old Town and get completely lost. And

before I knew it, I had finished my first semester of university.

I went home for Christmas, discovered that it was infinitely harder to be the one who leaves than the one who stays, and when I came back, Edinburgh was a different city. The lockdown meant that even the same and the same and the same that I had experienced in the first semester was limited. My flatmates either went home or didn't come back, so I moved to the West End of the city and basically didn't leave my room for the rest of the semester. The concept of making a home here had splintered.



Olivia and her friend, Nikki.

But that semester ended too and I got to go home. I spent most of my summer recovering from living through a global catastrophe functionally alone, so when I came back to Edinburgh this year I didn't know what to expect. I was scared that it was going to be as isolating as it was the previous semester, and I was scared that I would be starting over with friends again. But I didn't have anything to worry about and this past semester has been incredible! The same and the same and the same of my first semester is a distant memory. Edinburgh – which I thought I had a decent grasp on – has gotten so much bigger and I can't possibly imagine that I'll see the whole city before I graduate.

I think that the biggest hurdle to overcome, being both an international student and a pandemic student, is realising that the concept of 'home' takes time. Recently, I went on a trip to St Andrews with one of my very dear friends, and for the first time coming back into the city felt like coming home. After a year and a half, I've made a home and I didn't even know it. My home here is impermanent, but it is beautiful.

A day in the life... Scarlett

Scarlett is a 4th year History and Politics student and she's going to take you through a typical day in her life to give you a taste of what it might be like to study at the University of Edinburgh!

It's Wednesday, February 2nd...

8.00am – Typically when I wake up and the first thing to do is grab a cup of tea and breakfast. I can't say that I'm always waking up this time or getting up right when my alarm goes off at 8.00 but I do have some mid-semester deadlines coming up so its up and at 'em for me!

9.30am – I have arrived at the School's Student Research Rooms, a study space reserved for History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) students. After last year in the midst of a full lockdown it feels amazing to be able to come back on campus and enjoy these beautiful study spaces once again. I'd say we're pretty lucky in HCA to have a study space just for us that is so atmospheric. There's a huge glass ceiling over

the space letting the sun shine through and I see so many familiar faces studying in the space as well. For the next few hours I'll be working on one of my chapters of my dissertation in Medieval history.



The Student Research Rooms.

12.00pm – My friend and I head out to one of our favourite coffee shops next to campus, Thomas J Walls, for some lunch. There are so many great food and coffee spots right on or next to our campus but today I was really feeling their avocado toast (they do it particularly well). As it's so close to our building we run into several members of staff including the head of History and have a quick conversation. One thing I've always loved about the school is how welcoming and positive members of staff are. I feel that over the years I've really been able to cultivate positive relationships and found that they have been so supportive when I reach out for help!



Thomas J Walls hot chocolate
– how good does that look?!

1.00pm – And we're are back in the Research Room! For the next few hours I'll just be doing some readings for my special subject course 'Early Medieval Sexualities c.500-1000'. Our next seminar is discussing Monastic purity and clerical celibacy in about the ninth century in Western Europe. We'll be going over sexual sin in male monasteries and why sexual purity was so important in the cloister. One thing I really appreciate about the structure of the History Degree is the fact that in our final year the classes we take are a year-long. It really allows us to delve into the subject at more length and really niche down on our interests!

4.30pm – In need of a snack break. My friend and I head over to Teviot, the student union, for some hot chocolate. I also really love the cookies that they sell at all of the student union venues so I make sure to grab one.



Me and friends all dressed up at our last History Society Ball.

5.00pm – I have a committee meeting with Edinburgh University History Society. I have been a part of the society since my first year and this year I'm the President! Being involved in the society has been a great way to be able to meet people in my course and stay active in the student community. Now out of the lockdown we're able to resume some of our traditional events from pre-COVID! Last semester we held our annual ceilidh and we are currently in the works for planning our International Trip in the Reading Week (going to Krakow!) and our Annual Ball. This has been a really essential part of my student experience and I recommend everyone get involved in some way.

6.00pm – Look at me heading to the gym (a New Years Resolution). I wouldn't necessarily consider myself an avid gym goer but Pleasance gym is great and has so many free classes for members. You can watch Netflix on the cardio machines and there's a sauna in the locker rooms (I must admit this is my main motivation to go).

7.00pm – I head home and have some leftovers for my dinner before getting ready to go out to drinks with some of my friends. There are so many cool places to explore around Edinburgh and it is such a great city to be in as a student. Tonight, we're headed to the New Town a little bit away from campus. I've genuinely really enjoyed my time here and am so happy with my choice to study here four years ago!

Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 2

In their previous post, Seth gave some advice on what to do before you start university, so this next blog will touch on what to do AFTER you start your studies, and help you get the most out of them.

When meeting your Cohort Lead talk about your disability and how it might impact your studies (if you are comfortable doing so)

Your Cohort Lead will be your point of contact for any questions you have that is not related to a specific course, as such it would be a good idea to let them know about your disability or health condition so that they can help you to

the best of their abilities.

After matriculation, set a meeting with the Student Disability Service ASAP to activate your schedule of adjustments

The Student Disability Service (SDS) needs you to be fully matriculated to be able to make your schedule of adjustments live and share it with the appropriate staff. The beginning of the year is always busy, so be prepared to not be able to have an appointment for at least a couple of weeks, so the earlier you are able to book an appointment, the better.

If you aren't provided one from the get-go, ask your PT to put you in touch with someone from your School's Student Support Office

Your School's Student Support Office (SSO) is there to help as the intermediary between you and others if you need anything specifically linked to the school. For example, room access or adjustments that are only approved at the discretion of a course organiser.

Fill a 'Group Change Request Form' with the Timetabling team as soon as possible if your assigned tutorial isn't going to work for you

The form is the only way to request a change in tutorial groups for all students. If the time you were assigned doesn't fit for any reason due to your disability or health condition, you should make sure to request a change ASAP.

If the rooms assigned to your lectures and or tutorials aren't fully accessible for you, get in touch with your School's SSO

Your contact within the School's SSO will be able to contact the Timetabling team with your accessibility requirements to have your tutorial group or lecture slot changed to a more

accessible room. Make sure to be clear about what your needs are. You can find more information on accessible areas within the University on the AccessAble website.

Make sure you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan set up as soon as possible if you have a physical disability that might affect your ability to use the usual emergency plan

Once your rooms are set, get in touch with your School's SSO to get a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) set up. It makes sure that in case of emergencies you can be evacuated quickly and securely. This should be done at the start of each semester.

If your circumstances change, let your PT, SSO and the SDS know ASAP

Though we always hope they don't, sometimes our conditions worsen or something else comes up. If this happens let everyone know as soon as possible, especially if you need new adjustments set up.

Your course tutors are the people you'll have the most contact with – talk to them

You don't have to mention your disability or health condition if you don't want to, but it might be a good idea to at least make them aware, especially if it affects your ability to come to tutorials or need a bit more support from them.

Don't let FOMO push you to the point of exhaustion

You don't have to make lots of friends, become a member of five societies or go out every other night. Being limited due to a disability or health condition is never fun, but you shouldn't push yourself to the detriment of your health just because you want to be like any other student.

I hope you find this and my previous blog useful and that it will encourage you to give University a go with confidence.

Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 1

Starting university is usually cause for anxiety in and of itself. It can be even more so when you have a disability, health condition or learning difference to consider. Student Ambassador Seth offers some advice on what to do before you start your studies which will, hopefully, make the process less stressful for you.

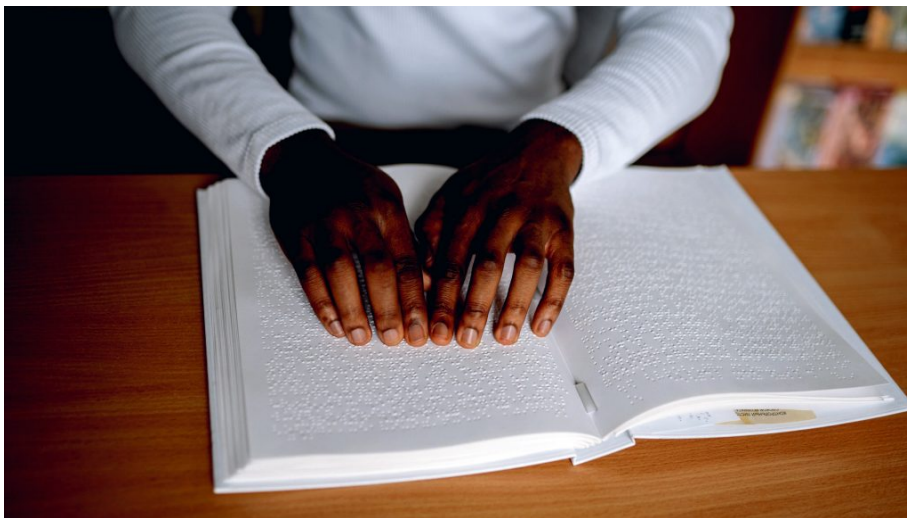
Get in touch with the university's Student Disability Service (SDS) ASAP

It should come as no surprise that this is my first tip. Whether or not you've mentioned your disability in your UCAS application, get in touch with the SDS once you've accepted your offer. Don't wait until the start of the semester, as that is always a busy time and there might not be available appointments until the end of October when classes have already started. The sooner you contact them, the sooner they can work with you to create a schedule of adjustment, get a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) form filled and sent if you need financial support for some of it. It also means that the appointment you'll need to have once you've matriculated will be only to double check that nothing was forgotten or has changed before the schedule agreed on earlier can be

'activated'.

University of Edinburgh Student Disability Service

Get in touch with them even if you haven't been formally diagnosed yet



They will be able to let you know what can be done and possibly offer screening appointments or advice on how to get a diagnosis once you've arrived if that's needed. They'll also let you know what type of documents are needed as proof for them to be able to provide adequate support.

Provide your supporting documents as soon as possible

The SDS website has a page explaining what type of documents are needed depending on what the issue is, read it carefully and when in doubt ask them. Usually, it might be a letter from your doctor confirming diagnosis or the completion of a form by your doctor explaining how the disability or health condition impacts your day-to-day life and as such your studies. This means it might take some time for your doctor to get back to you with these documents, so take that into consideration. The sooner you get the documents back to the SDS, the sooner they can put help in place for you.

When offered help, even if you think you might not use it, take it

It's easier to have help in place, just in case, and not having to use it, instead of having to wait for it to be put in place later when you need it. And if you think something might help, but it wasn't mentioned, say so. They might not be able to put it in place straight away or at all, but they will do their best to at least find a work around to make it work for you.

If using university accommodations, get in touch with them ASAP

If you are going to be in student accommodations and have specific needs due to your disability or health condition, say so as soon as possible. I don't have personal experience with this as I live in a privately rented accommodation, but the university's accommodation team should be able to help.

More from the accommodation service

If from outside Scotland, be prepared for some 'transition' hiccups

What I mean by that is that even if you come from the rest of the UK, things might not be as streamlined as we'd want them to be regarding continuing your current medical treatments, etc. Have letters from your GP and/or specialist explaining your condition and any treatment you need to give to your term-time GP. And if you take medication, have a big enough supply that if there is a hiccup you don't find yourself short.

Hopefully the above tips will help make things go smoothly before you arrive to study in Edinburgh. Stay tuned for part 2 which will deal with tips and tricks for once you've started

your studies.

Give a little, get a lot

Fitting in, finding friends, 'the student experience'. There is no one way to be a student, but 4th year History (MA Hons) student Georgia-Taygeti shares her experience and how volunteering made the difference for her.

In my first year I didn't really feel like I was doing the student thing right. I made my closest friends during a Film Soc screening but they were not studying History and so when I would attend lectures and tutorials, I felt pretty lonely. Every afternoon, I would head off to my part-time job so couldn't attend most Society events. And while it was a great first year, I wanted to make an effort to feel more at home within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA).



When I came back for my 2nd year I joined the Peer Support Group for History and Classics as a volunteer. I hoped that by supporting 1st year students with their own transition into university life, I would find ways to also feel more integrated into the HCA community. And it worked! I still had a part-time job but most of our meetings were during lunch at the Rosalind Mitchison Room, the undergraduate 'common room', so this was finally something I could attend! I got to know the other volunteers – mostly 3rd and 4th years – most of whom I wouldn't have had the chance to meet if I hadn't joined the

group and I was able to learn from their own experiences within HCA. So, in a way, I was the one being peer-supported without realising it but I also made close friends who then made me feel more at home within HCA.

I continued volunteering with Peer Support in my 3rd and 4th year. Now, I get to work with mentees from the years below me, but also spend time with other 4th years that I don't necessarily share seminars with. When I look back on my 1st year, I remember how uncertain I was about the choices I was making, how overwhelming it felt at times to have to balance work, study, adjusting to a new city, making new friends, cooking for myself. When I decided to join Peer Support in my second year I felt that maybe it was 'too late'. It was definitely not. We all come here with different expectations and different responsibilities. I was only able to join Peer Support because it is so flexible in the times we met and I was only able to stay because I was surrounded by people who understood that sometimes I couldn't be there for our events or meetings because I had to be at work.

I'm not at the end of my student experience in Edinburgh and it did not look like what I thought it would when I was a teenager applying to University! I have loved my time here, though, but did it look like a coming-of-age film filled with wild nights out, heartbreak, and fancy balls? Not as much as I expected it to. My university experience has been more about potlucks, Sunday visits to the Stockbridge market, trying to figure out how to budget and pay for gas and electricity, and always missing the family Skype calls (and then getting yelled at by my mum for missing the family skype calls!), but because I volunteer for Peer Support, I feel like I belong to HCA. I recognize faces when I walk to class, I have people to chat to before the seminar starts. I didn't expect this to be such a big part of my student experience in Edinburgh, but it has! And I am really, really glad I joined up.

Find out more about peer support within the School of History,

Navigating undergraduate academia as a mature student

Much of university recruitment is aimed at school-leavers, but what if you are older or have been out of education for some time? Tristan – MA (Hons) Ancient and Medieval History – told us his story.

In 2018, the University of Edinburgh launched its Access Programme as part of its Widening Participating Initiative. As a 26-year-old who had been out of education for four consecutive years, having previously studied Acting and Performance, and later Art and Design, I was eligible to apply. My previous study had ignited a fervent interest in History of Art, and it was with the intention of undertaking undergraduate study in this discipline that I enrolled on the Access course. What it revealed to me, through exploring a wide range of subjects within Humanities and the Social Sciences, was that it was history – particularly of the ancient world – that really engaged me and so, the following year, I began my MA (Hons) in Ancient and Medieval History.

By now a 27-year-old student, it would be fair to say that I was incredibly anxious as to what my experience would be like. Would I find my place in an institution filled primarily with students ten years younger than myself? Would I get as much out of the ‘university experience’ than I would have done had I enrolled immediately after high school? Now, coming to the end of the second year of my degree, I’m confident to answer with a resounding yes to both questions, and I feel that my

experience has been testament to the need to engage adult learners.

I write all of this as a 29-year-old, well aware of the fact that there are students in my cohort who have been outside of institutional education for far longer, but I think any significant gap in study can fill one with a great deal of self-doubt. There's an expectation upon young learners that those who are capable go on to higher education immediately after education, and the six years I spent at high school felt as though I was expected to follow that trajectory. I chose a different path and whilst I have absolutely no regrets for studying the performing and visual arts, I realised that neither really engaged in the way that study ought to. Had I not followed those routes, however, I don't think I would be where I am today (cliché notwithstanding).

On 6 April 2021, I was invited to participate in the Classical Association Annual Conference on a panel entitled, '*Inclusive Classics and pedagogy: teachers, academics and students in conversation*'. What the discussion revealed is the dichotomy between 'the institution' and the individuals within it. Classics has been thrown into the spotlight recently, both in academic terms for the 'dead white men' narrative that pervades it, as well as in news stories surrounding the appropriation of ancient iconography by alt-right groups. Much discussion has been had as to how Classics as a discipline can survive when it seemingly perpetrates elitist ideology, owing to the fact that very few high school students have the opportunity to study it. In fact, I had no idea what 'Classics' even meant until enrolling on the Access Programme in 2018. But I don't feel



that has disadvantaged me in any way, nor has my status as a 'mature student'; rather, I feel that it has allowed me to approach the discipline with eyes that seek interdisciplinary study, that see the Graeco-Roman world as one aspect of a rich and diverse ancient world, and that appreciate the diversity of the student experience.

Recently, I launched an article series, 'Classics in Conversation', through my work with *Retrospect Journal* (for those of you who don't know, *Retrospect* is the School of History, Classics and Archaeology's student-led journal). This series poses questions to students both to encourage critical thinking and to provide a space to consider some of the most pertinent issues in the discipline today. I'm delighted with the response we've had thus far, and I feel as though it has highlighted the need to engage students in wider issues through a platform that elevates their voices. Ultimately, it's my hope that Classics continues to thrive as a discipline, and it is also my hope that more students like myself will feel confident to pursue their ambition.

Read 'Classics in Conversation' on the Retrospect website

Find out more about the University of Edinburgh's Access Programme

The website of the Classical Association

Do the knight thing, or why

you should join a Society

Will I find those “friends for life”? Will I be able to balance my studies with a healthy social life? Will there be societies I want to join? Jack – History and Politics (MA Hons) – answers these very questions.

Some of the biggest worries that Freshers tend to have about coming to university are around becoming part of the student community. It can be daunting at Freshers’ Fairs or Open Days (virtual or otherwise) or even just walking around campus. Everyone seems to have their own passions, niches, groups and extra-curricular goals.

I remember thinking how important it was that I “put myself out there”. Yet, in my experience, it’s never as hard as it seems. At Edinburgh, the sheer variety of opportunities means there really is something for everyone. At the end of the day, once you do put yourself out there once or twice, there’s no looking back. For every interest, hobby, sport or passion, you will find an open, enthusiastic community of students ready to welcome any new members. Be it academic, sporty, musical, campaigning, fundraising – finding your niche, your own wee community, doesn’t have to be the scary task it first appears to be



Student Societies within SHCA.

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology has a thriving student community (made up of various societies and student groups) which continues to organise a diverse array of events and activities. For me, I have benefited immensely from being a member of and now officeholder in the History Society. We are a tight-knit student family of history-lovers. We engage in serious academic discussions and respond in historical ways to important current affairs issues, whilst also having fun and organising exciting socials and trips.

In the past, we have had fascinating academic discussions and speaker events, from “A Journey through Ancient Egypt” to the history of Edinburgh’s HIV/AIDs outbreak to disability history to the slave trade in Scotland. We have hosted incredible speakers, from Professor Sir Geoff Palmer, Scotland’s first black professor, to Holocaust survivor, Tomi Komoly. Our programme has also included high-octane ceilidhs and balls at prestigious Edinburgh venues. We have organised trips to our favourite historical sites, as well as city breaks abroad during our (always productive) reading weeks. Our most recent trip was to Prague, where we visited the famous Castle and Cathedral, went on a Communism tour and even dressed up as kings, queens and knights (see the fabulous photo, above). We

also have karaoke nights and walking tours, pub quizzes and movie screenings. And to think we are just one of many, many societies!

Undoubtedly, at the time of writing, things are different. Covid has massively changed the student experience. Involvement in societies is no exception. Yet, groups across the university are adapting. Whether its baking or Persian or netball or Harry Potter appreciation, societies are refusing to let Covid ruin the fun, the discussions and the memory-making. The History Society is still running plenty of events online and has been a platform for first years to get to know fellow history-lovers, as well as meet older students to get advice and guidance.

I personally have met some of my best friends through the History Society. Sharing a love for a subject and having a laugh at the same time is the perfect way to enhance your university experience. Getting involved in societies also affords you the chance to stand for election as a committee member. I cannot recommend this enough: it has been an opportunity for me to get involved in student representation at university and to really connect with faculty members. It also gives you the chance to organise your own society events and represent your society at official occasions. We even got to meet the Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, last year!

Moving up to university can be worrying at the best of times and Covid has been a huge challenge. Yet getting involved in our societies and becoming part of our HCA community is a fantastic way to break down those barriers. My advice? Don't hold back! Reap the benefits of an active campus life and explore the diverse range of student groups and societies waiting to welcome you.

Darwin Leighton and the Raiders of the Lost Plaque

When History and Archaeology student Tom's outreach project fell foul of Covid, he looked closer to home for inspiration and Footnotes was born.

One day in December I was trawling through reports written by the commercial archaeology firm Oxford Archaeology North about the archaeology that they had found in my local area. Commercial archaeologists survey archaeological remains on behalf of companies and governments, usually to help them make decisions about heritage preservation or building projects. Commercial archaeologists are made to work much quicker than academics, navigating strict deadlines and small budgets. Consequently, their reports are often dry lists of facts with few attempts to make them relevant or exciting to a wider audience. They are often referred to as "grey" literature. Not so that day!

Almost by accident I stumbled onto a description of a plaque dedicated to someone called Darwin Leighton. Intrigued by – if nothing else – his name, I looked him up online. It turned out he lived and died in Bleak House, Kendal. It was then that my obsession began. Why? Because Bleak House is less than 100 metres from where I live, where I am sitting right now. In fact, because my house was a bakery during Darwin's lifetime, it's possible he once stood in the very room I am writing in.

I just had to find the plaque. This would be an ideal story to share for the same reasons it appealed so much to me. It was local and personal, highlighting how archaeology can allow us to explore the lives of humans who lived in the same places we do and – in many ways – lived quite similar lives to us. The problem



was no map was included in the original report, instead just a cryptic reference to another report. The black and white photo of a wall next to some trees was also, to put it mildly, less than illuminating. But I was on the scent and, like Lara Croft or Indiana Jones, I couldn't be stopped. Admittedly – rather than hired guns, intricate booby traps and (sigh) dinosaur infested Aztec ruins – the challenges facing me were local bureaucracy, rain and overgrown bushes. I eventually found the second report and even a vague grid reference for the plaque. Armed with a paper printout, I strode into the woods convinced that determination, guile and grit would find the plaque. They didn't. Hours later, I was stood on the roadside, trying to read my crude map by the light of the setting sun. Then, it struck me and all at once I understood the meaning of the map. The plaque was metres away from me. There were two paths I could take, a long route following footpaths or a much shorter route through some bushes. Seconds later, I had found it! "Archaeologists are a peculiar bunch" I thought to myself, pulling twigs out my hair.



Why was I doing all of this? I was enrolled in the course Geoscience Outreach and Engagement, where each student organises their own outreach project in order to share something about our university course with the public. My original plan, a tour of Edinburgh's archaeology, had been scuppered by the second wave of coronavirus in the UK,

forcing me to return home to Kendal, Cumbria. Instead, I decided to make a series of short videos highlighting the unsung archaeology of my local area to, firstly, teach the people around me about the archaeology of my home town, and to tell stories that are deeply personal about the people who lived here in the past, many of whom were just like me. But I realised that, especially at the moment, not many of the people who watch will be able to visit Kendal so I also strive to teach broader lessons about what archaeology can teach us and how people can make their own discoveries.

Four videos are now on YouTube on the Footnotes channel covering lime kilns, time guns and ridges and furrows. And Darwin Leighton, of course.

You can watch all Tom's videos on the Footnotes channel on YouTube.

LGBT+ History Month

The University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network supports LGBT+ colleagues and allies, one of whom is HCA staff member Emma. We asked her about her role as Ally Representative.

Hi there! I'm Emma, the School of History, Classics and Archaeology's Modern Apprentice who has recently been appointed as Ally Representative in the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (SPN). As it's LGBT+ History Month, I thought I'd let you know how my role works and what you can do to support the community at the University.

Ally reps show constant support to the LGBT+ community in many ways. They familiarise themselves with the language to use when talking with LGBT+ people such as preferred pronouns, they organise and become involved in events, they educate themselves on the history of the movement – LGBT+ History Month is an annual month-long observance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history, and the history of the gay rights and related civil rights movements, founded in 1994, and a great source of information – and last but not least they stand up for what they believe in! As well as an Ally Rep I am also the Meeting Secretary for the Network, and am part of the events team in the committee whilst creating and curating the SPN Instagram account.

I've supported the LGBT+ community fully throughout my life so am determined to put my organising skills to work to create some fun and engaging events and make sure LGBT+ voices are being heard and respected across the School and the wider University with my other fellow ally rep, Tara Spires-Jones. We'll do everything we can to make the UoE a more inclusive place and to encourage other allies to speak out and show their support for the community.

If you are interested in becoming more educated and involved

in the Staff Pride Network, join our lovely group of people in the network to keep making supporting the LGBT+ community possible! If you're at the University and have any questions, or if you have event ideas or important issues regarding LGBT+ staff or students at the UoE for myself and my other ally rep to follow up on, contact me at the School and I'll get back to you!

Further information:

Find out more about University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network

Network events for LGBT+ History Month

LGBT+ Allies

University of Edinburgh staff – join the Network



Dr Molly
Merryman

LGBT+ History Month Event

As part of LGBT+ History Month Dr Molly Merryman gave a lecture, 'Queer Voices from the Pandemic' on 9 February, 2021. You can view a recording of the lecture at [this link](#).

Considering graduate study?

After four years of study, why would you want to do more? One of our Student Ambassadors, Alfie, has some thoughts.

An undergraduate degree at university is a significant commitment. Time, money, not to mention a lot of concerted effort to complete whilst juggling a variety of other elements of life. So, when considering the option to go into another degree after undergraduate, it's natural to be nervous. The prospect of another year – or even longer – of study with all the accompanying costs and issues attached can be a frightening consideration for anyone. So why do it?

It is, of course, worth noting that academic study is not for everyone. If you've got a real knack for academic work and a passion for a specific research topic or want a job in an industry that requires a specific postgraduate qualification, it may be a good choice for you. Having a suitable research direction in mind will likely be important when looking at programmes and for research programmes such as an MRes or MPhil it will be integral to the application process. For taught courses, such as an MSc or an MA, a focus on skills development and personal qualities will take a precedent. Knowing how to market yourself, be it for your passions or your skills, is a key element to any application.

A graduate degree is a fantastic opportunity and can give you the chance to develop new skills for the workplace, academic or otherwise, but it's worth remembering that it will come with additional responsibilities. The workload for a postgraduate degree is significantly higher than the average year of an undergraduate degree, and there are often more complicated matters regarding funding. Loans and scholarships are available, but the former can be costly in the long term and the latter are never guaranteed when you begin your application. Don't let this dissuade you if you're

particularly passionate about a certain topic, just bear in mind that there are more funding processes to apply to, and this kind of research is worth doing at an earlier stage.

The graduate application process itself can be tough. Between rejections, cancelled courses and funding issues, it can feel hard to bounce back. Personally, I found that losing out on my desired graduate course to cancellation was a very hard moment, but I was able to find an alternative that I'm happy with as it allows me to pursue a personal research project. This was all made easier due to my research into graduate schemes starting early in the year, around the summer before classes start. It's around this time that graduate degrees will have requirements updated for the new term, and it's from here that you can make the best of time off from university to begin your search for graduate study options in honest.

So graduate study is a great opportunity for the right candidate that offers a bridge into professional development or further academic growth, and is a very viable choice following an undergraduate course. Just don't feel like it's either a guarantee or a necessity.

If you are considering postgraduate study the School of History, Classics and Archaeology offers scholarships for Masters and Phd programmes – more information

Approaching the dissertation

Dissertation. A big word, and often a scary one. Alfie, a Student Ambassador, looks at ways to make it slightly less intimidating.

Perhaps the culmination of your time at university and

exceptional (circumstances notwithstanding), also the longest piece of academic writing you will have created to date. Sounds like a lot – and let's not mince words, it is a big task and not one to be taken lightly. However, with the right preparation, forethought, and enthusiasm, it is as enjoyable a project as any other. It should represent the sum of your passions and interests that you have cultivated over your time studying, or perhaps afford you a chance to further explore areas you have not yet had the chance to investigate. Simply put, it is a fantastic opportunity to hit your stride as an aspiring academic, or to cap off your university experience.

When it comes to the dissertation, it is never too early to start planning. I'm not suggesting that you should be coming out of your first year lectures and taking an abundance of notes on potential topics and sources to use, rather if something grabs you early on, maybe it could be something worth considering for the future. If a particular topic, method, or concept catches your eye, take notes! Remember it for later, and by the time that third year rolls around and the question is being asked, you'll have some ideas for what you've got planned.

It is worth bearing in mind that third year is an optimal time to start your planning, especially over the summer break. At this point in your studies you will have likely covered a great deal of content and – hopefully – will have found something you enjoy writing about. If this is the case, take notes from any courses you have around the subject area and try to explore them. Consolidate reading lists, discuss material with suitable academics, and read around the subject if you have time. Naturally, this isn't something that you need to have done by the first day of fourth year, but it's something worth preparing if you have the time to spare. In addition, try to identify an appropriate member of academic staff to act as your dissertation supervisor – someone who is ideally familiar with the topic, so that you can discuss ideas

accordingly.

Writing the dissertation is a separate beast and surprisingly manageable if you like to break things down into sections. A dissertation will often have a literature review that examines contemporary academic thought on a topic and is not too dissimilar from discussions of readings done for seminars. This is often a large portion of your dissertation, so be sure you're comfortable doing the reading to follow through. Other key chapters are your introduction where you'll outline your subject, structure, and points for consideration, and your discussion, where you can make a deep dive into the content, highlighting your own ideas and opinions, as supported by or in opposition to existing thought. Be sure to give ample time for the writing of all this, as it can seem quite demanding, but rest assured that you'll be able to intersperse this with meetings with your supervisor who can discuss your progress.

When it comes down to it, the dissertation is quite a big process, but one to (hopefully) be enjoyed. The freedom to pursue your own academic interests and supplement your own research with the aid of university professionals is a great opportunity to develop your own researching capability, perseverance, and self-motivation, all desirable and transferable skills for postgraduate study and beyond. While it is a big challenge, it is one that you're not undertaking alone, as all other undergraduates will be in the same boat as you. So don't worry, do your best, and remember to engage with the stuff you're passionate about – it's all plain sailing from there.

Boost your mood

It's November. It's cold, dark, and very, very grey. The weeks are filled with endless assignments, frustrating group projects, hours of staring at your laptop screen, and most likely a lot of reading. Asha, a final year History student, looks at how to improve your mood when it starts getting dark at 3pm.

Every year without fail, I fall into the same mid/end of semester slump. And this semester, when we are staying inside way more than before and there is less to look forward to, I definitely rely on a lot of ways to boost my mood. Sometimes I just have to resort to lying in my bed, but most of the time these work pretty well for me!

Talk to your friends and laugh

If you're struggling to keep your mood up during the semester, make sure you make time to talk and laugh with people who boost your mood. Try and avoid talking about deadlines or classes and take a bit of time to think about other things that make you smile. This could be playing a game, walking up one of Edinburgh's many hills, or just going for a coffee!

Go for walks in nature or change your surroundings

It's amazing how much getting out of your room and changing your surroundings can affect your mood. If you are stressed or anxious about deadlines, try taking a long walk and stretch your legs. Holyrood park is a great place to do this, and the beautiful views of the city can help clear your head. Just being surrounded by trees can really help me to feel a lot better. If you need a change of workspace try going to a café or a different library that you haven't been to before – this could help you get some new ideas and boost your mood.

Sometimes I find it really easy to get to the end of the day and realise that I've spent most of my day staring at a

screen, whether that be my laptop or phone. Try and take a bit of time away from screens and giving your brain a rest.

Be kind to yourself and take a day off!

When I'm feeling really stressed and I am looking for small ways to boost my mood, treating myself to small things can really help. Taking a day off, or lighting a few candles, or buying yourself some cake can be the little mood booster that you need to regain the will to live.

Cook yourself a tasty and healthy meal

Cooking for yourself and looking after your body are really important parts of self-care and cooking a tasty meal for yourself after a hard day can really boost your mood. For me, this is a chance to have an hour away from my phone or laptop, and either spend some time in my thoughts, or even better, enjoy the company of your flatmates and cook for them! I find cooking really therapeutic, and even if you don't think you're very good at cooking, challenge yourself one day to cook something, it can really transform your mood!

Finally – ask for help!

Whether it's from friends, family, tutors or student support, there are loads of people out there willing to help you. If you're stressed about an assignment, do not hesitate to contact your tutor, and do not forget, it's their job to help you!



Find even more inspiration to keep your mental health and wellbeing healthy

'Let's Talk Mental Health and Wellbeing' runs 9-27 November with events and ideas to support mental and wellbeing. Find out more on the EUSA website, www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/letstalk

The University's Health and wellbeing pages are a great source of information and support, www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing

Keep moving without leaving the room with live streamed exercise classes courtesy of the Sport & Exercise team, www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/live-streaming-exercise-classes

Working as a student

We asked Student Ambassador Alfie for his thoughts on what it's like working whilst studying.

My first piece of advice for any students looking for a job in term-time would be to make sure you read the job advert closely. If you don't, you may end up like me. Not that that's a bad thing. I'll explain.



When it's all gone a bit hands in the air...

I'd been at Edinburgh for almost a year, and was coming up to the start of my second year. The shock of being at university had finally worn off, and I began to realise that my degree left me with some spare time in the week. Now, spare time is a great way to unwind, but for some of us, too much spare time leaves us feeling aimless, and that's certainly the way it is with me. So, I took myself onto the University's MyCareerHub and began to hunt for some part-time work because, hey, everyone needs a hobby, and it hardly hurts if that hobby is paid. There I was, flicking through all kinds of different opportunities – Typist? Too uncoordinated. Childcare? Not quite my speed – when I noticed that the Student's Association were looking for... Security? Sure, that doesn't sound too hard, and the pay seemed good. Bouncer. Stand on the door and scowl. Right?

Eighteen months later, I'm still working that same job. Except

it's not the job I expected. But that's OK, because it's a world away from being a bouncer. The advert emphasised customer service and communication, which, while useful for the job is not the purpose. I now know that the role focuses a lot on managing the expectations of customers and doing your best to make sure everyone is looked after and safe. It's given me a real sense of freedom and skills I know I'll use elsewhere. Finding employment and managing the schedule it brings alongside full-time study is an impressive achievement – one that future employers will look for, and one that demonstrates a great step into maturity. What's more, you can get official recognition for it on your HEAR transcript with an Edinburgh Award.

I have a new income stream alongside my studying, and more focus as I spend less time staring aimlessly at the ceiling. I also have a new group of friends from all kinds of backgrounds, as well as experiences and ambitions that I'd never considered before moving to university, to share an entirely new part of my life.

Some people are fortunate enough to never need to work whilst studying, but for the many of us that have to, Edinburgh is full of opportunities whether it's a Saturday job, something a little more regular, or one of the many full-time positions over the summer. There really is something for everyone, and something to ensure that we can all get a little more money in our pocket.

Being a Student Ambassador

One of our Student Ambassadors, Kate, tells us why she was interested in the role.

New beginnings are some of the most exciting experiences of our lives. For me, the most exciting new beginning was when I uprooted myself from Lancashire in the North West of England and came to Edinburgh alone to begin my university experience. Now, in my fourth year, I am just as excited whenever I return to Edinburgh as I was back then.

When the opportunity arose to become a Student Ambassador, I put myself forward immediately because I knew I wanted to be a part of these new beginnings for other people. Getting to be a part of the excitement of open days and talking to prospective students about Classics has been a way that I can show my appreciation for the School, and my enthusiasm for my subject.

Whilst I have been an Ambassador, I've been presented with many opportunities to get involved with the School. Not just through Open Days, but also through focus groups for bettering employment in SHCA, calling campaigns to prospective students and giving individual tours of the building. All of these things revolved around my own schedule, which means that they never affected my studies.



The Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne unveils a plaque marking 300 years of history being taught at the University of Edinburgh

I think my favourite experience as a Student Ambassador was attending the celebrations for the 300th year of History at Edinburgh. There was the chance to hear some amazing talks by current students and alumni, to engage with many other alumni of the School and I got to meet the Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne. It was amazing and something I will never forget.

All of the things I have done with great friends, who I wouldn't have met otherwise because we're on different courses. This has been one of the best things about being an ambassador.

Anyone who wants to be involved in the School should become a Student Ambassador because you aren't just helping the School out; you're also creating memories and opportunities for yourself.

Top tips for exams

One of our students, Sarah, gives us the lowdown on surviving exams.

As a student, exams are inevitable: some courses only require in-term coursework, but most have a final exam to test your learning through the semester. As a fourth year I've gone through many exams and have developed my ideal system for dealing with them. This is my list of top tips for exams, based on what has helped me through these four years.

Revision

There is no denying that revision is stressful, especially when exams are early or come closely together. What comes

first is figuring out where you can revise best. I personally like to find a good café where there is some background noise and lots of coffee and snacks, however, others might prefer the library, various other university buildings, revising in accommodation, or revising from home. Even if you prefer to move around to revise, I'd recommend finding some reliable spaces where you can work well and sticking with them.

Once you've found your revision space, the work itself is the next step. Over the years, most of my courses have been composed of a number of different and distinct topics, with exam questions relating to these individual topics. It's usually best to revise a few of these topics rather than the entire course, to build greater depth of knowledge in particular areas. Always make sure to ask your lecturer for advice on how to best revise, and how many topics you should learn for the exam.

Relaxation

Revision is important, but you should also allow time to relax and wind down. I have a bad habit of overworking and getting very stressed, particularly with essays and exams, and have had to force myself to stop working after I've done a certain amount or if it's getting too late in the evening. In exam time you have to take care of yourself – eat well, don't overdo the coffee, make sure to get enough sleep (I've found apps like Sleep Stories and Slumber are good for distracting me from overthinking), and try not to overdo it. Make time to talk to your friends and flatmates, as they'll all be feeling the stress too. It's important to get work done, but it's just as important to keep yourself feeling OK, relieve some stress, and remember, especially, to take a break after an exam if you have another soon after. It's good to do well but not if you're sacrificing your physical or mental health to do so.

In the exam

The next step is the exam itself. Always remember to take plenty of pens, a highlighter can be useful, and definitely remember a watch in case your seat doesn't have a clock nearby. Take your time and read the questions carefully (everyone tells you to do this but it's definitely important!), and try to decide on both essay questions early so when you go back to the second your brain has had a chance to come up with an answer. Before writing, it is always useful to sketch out a plan – even just a basic structure for the answer – that you can go back to when you are writing, to help yourself out later. With two hours for two essays, I take five minutes for each essay to plan its structure, then around ten minutes per paragraph, and any spare time to reread my answers. This may not work for some, but it has done well for me so far!

Living in Edinburgh

It's only now that I'm in my last semester of my final year, and I'm having to contemplate moving to a new city, do I realise quite how much I love Edinburgh and the people in it. Having lived here for four years now, and I can honestly say that there is no other place quite like it. It's become my home away from home.

But if you are moving here for the first time it can be daunting, so I've compiled a list of things about living in Edinburgh which might help. Some are things that I wish I'd known before I came here, while others are simply things that I love about the city.

The Weather



At the Botanic Gardens during their Christmas Lights show, wearing the cosy coat my family bought me!

As a naïve 18-year-old from South Wales, I was blissfully unaware of how cold Edinburgh (and Scotland more generally) gets in winter. Little did I know that snow in February is par for the course and how much a biting cold wind can cut you to the bone! From November through to February of that first year, a scarf was permanently attached to me and I had a hot water bottle in bed every night, in a vain attempt to stay warm. Thankfully that Christmas, my family gave me a huge duvet-style coat that has kept me warm every winter since!

The Variety of Things to Do

The city is always full of things to do, so if you're looking for something you can definitely find it! I love going to the theatre as a treat, and the wealth of performance spaces that Edinburgh has makes this really easy. It's also quite straightforward to find tickets for a good price, as most

places offer student rates or sell last-minute tickets at a discounted rate.

Green Spaces



The view of the city and Arthur's Seat from Blackford Hill.

As a country girl, I really appreciate the amount of easily accessible green space there is in the city. First and foremost, there is Arthur's Seat, the ex-volcano in Holyrood Park. However, there's also the Royal Botanic Gardens, Blackford Hill and the Pentland Hills. Indeed, I'd argue that you get a better view of the city (especially at sunset) from Blackford Hill than Arthur's Seat (controversial, I know). If I ever feel homesick, or just want to clear my head, I know I can go for a walk and be surrounded by nature within 30 minutes. This has definitely made city living much easier for me.

A Compact City

Despite there being so much to see and do, Edinburgh is actually a relatively compact city. You can get to most places in both Old and New Town on foot. Because of this, it didn't take long for me to feel comfortable and familiar with the city. However, if you want to go further afield, say to Newhaven or Portobello, Lothian Buses are great.

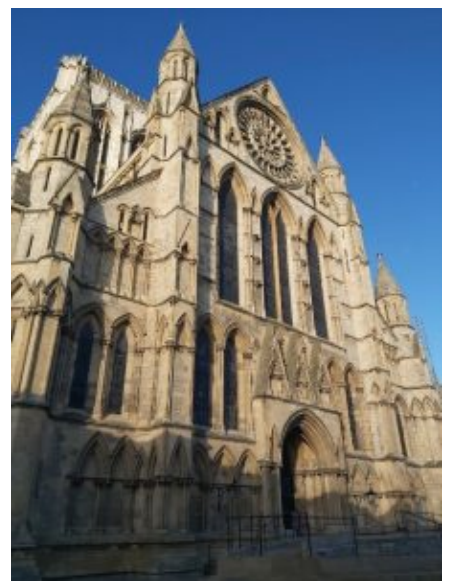


Carys Flew

Presenting a paper

Student Ambassador reports back from presenting her paper.

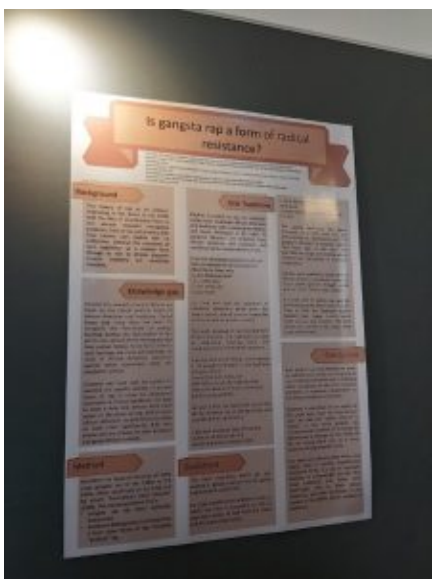
In late February 2020, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to present a paper at 'From Margins to Centre? An Undergraduate Conference on BAME, LGBTQ+, Women's and Disability History' at The University of York. I had never attended a conference before and had no idea how to write and present a paper, so this was a really valuable experience for me to learn a lot of new skills!



York Minster.

I decided to travel to York the day before and stay overnight in a hostel so I could see the city, as I heard that it's very beautiful. The rumours were certainly true! I had a fabulous time at the York Castle Museum, which seemed to go on forever (perfect for a museum enthusiast like me) with exhibitions on the history of the body, life in the trenches during the First World War, and Britain in the 1960s, to name a few. I particularly enjoyed the body exhibition because it reminded me of a course called 'The Making of the Modern Body' which I studied in my second year, and I found the fashion history exhibit very interesting because it showed how ideals of beauty have changed over time.

I arrived at the University of York campus early in the morning to listen to the many panel discussions taking place, which included papers from undergraduate students from all over the UK. Some of the topics presented included the role of West Africans in the French Resistance during the Second World War, attitudes towards the disabled poor in 16th Century Norwich and the problems with the terminology 'Islamic Art' within the field of History of Art.



Lola Moutel-Davesne's poster on 'Is gansta rap a form of radical

resistance?’

The talent of the panellists and the breadth of interesting topics that were presented were amazing, many of which I had never explored in my own research! During the lunch break, many undergraduate students also presented posters on their research, including another of Edinburgh’s history students, Lola Moutel-Davesne, who presented a poster on her dissertation research relating to gangsta rap and black activism in the US.



The all-important speaker’s name badge.

At the end of the day, it was time for me to present my paper. My panel discussion was all about how history can inform us about the identities of marginalised groups, and my talk in particular was about the history of bioengineering (the industry which designs and constructs artificial limbs) and the experiences of those who used artificial limbs in Edinburgh since the First World War. I had learned about bioengineering history through my summer internship at the Lothian Health Services Archive which is part of the University of Edinburgh’s Centre for Research Collections. This role had made me realise my passion for disability

history and why I am now studying the history of HIV and AIDS in Scotland as part of my undergraduate dissertation.

I'd be lying if I said that presenting my paper was not a terrifying experience, but I am so proud of myself for doing it and hopefully raising awareness for further research into the field of disability history. Here's hoping I can be involved in other conferences in the near future!

Summer in the city

The rules and regs of summer in Edinburgh by Student Ambassador Ruby.

I've always argued that Edinburgh is a city designed for 'bad' weather. The Old Town looks even more Gothic in the gloom, and no student's Instagram would be complete without a photo of Arthur's Seat surrounded by atmospheric sea mist called 'haar'. However, I'm also an advocate for staying in Edinburgh over the summer months so I've always chosen to take a summer job here, rather than head back to my family home, once exams are finished.

Over the past 3 years I think I've made every summer mistake possible, from getting sunburnt on the Meadows to promising myself I'll still revise if I go and sit outside. Some of these mistakes could be avoided with a bit more common sense, admittedly, but others you can only learn to avoid through trial and error. To give you a head start, I've decided to compile some of my hard-earned wisdom into some dos and don'ts. Enjoy!



The Meadows in bloom.

DO make the most of every sunny day

Summer in Edinburgh seems to always begin just as you're having to revise for exams or work to a deadline. "That's okay", you tell yourself, gazing wistfully out of the library window, "I'll work hard today and then I'll enjoy the sun at the weekend." Sensible, right? WRONG. What you'll quickly realise during your first summer in Edinburgh is that sunny days are glorious, but fleeting. The second the sun comes out you need to make the most of it, as it won't be there long!

DON'T burn the grass on the Meadows!

The Meadows is a large public park, located behind the University's Main Library. During the summer months it becomes the city's shared back garden and the epicentre of most students' social lives. Trying (and failing) to grill sausages over a disposable barbeque is a Meadows rite of passage and on a sunny day you'll see plenty of others doing the same. However, just as essential to this ritual as ketchup or hotdog buns are bricks to prop up your barbeque. Edinburgh residents

are very fond of the Meadows and, therefore, very protective of it. A single blade of singed grass is enough to get you dirty looks ...

DO head outside of town



Sun, sea and sand at Dunbar.

By the time it gets to your first summer, you'll be feeling settled in Edinburgh. You'll have your preferred floor of the Main Library, a favourite coffee shop, and a fierce loyalty to a particular late-night chip shop. You'll be feeling more confident and at home, and exploration will probably have taken a back seat in favour of studying.

However, summer is the perfect time to recapture that spirit of adventure you had in Welcome Week! With no more deadlines to hold you back, consider heading outside of the city centre. Portobello Beach is just a bus ride away and has a wonderfully retro amusement arcade to enjoy if the weather starts to turn. Alternatively, Dunbar has stunning views and is easy to reach on the train.

DON'T try to get anywhere in a rush ...

It is often said that the city's population doubles in August thanks to tourism. Whether this is true or not, it certainly *feels* true as previously quiet streets become bustling. Not only is there more people, the crowds also move slowly. Whilst you've had weeks to admire Edinburgh, everyone else wants to stop and take photos every few steps. Unfortunately, I've never found a way to get around this problem – you just have to relax and add an extra half hour onto every journey time.

MAYBE get involved in the Fringe?

I finish on a controversial one here – the Fringe seems to divide opinions. If you haven't heard of it, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is an arts festival which lasts for almost the entirety of August. There are thousands of shows and practically every spare room in Edinburgh becomes a temporary performance space. Fringe-haters complain about the crowds and the cost of a pint of beer being hiked, whilst Fringe-lovers can be found rushing from show to show and taking every flyer they are offered on the street.

I fall somewhere between the two. Yes, the Fringe is expensive but it's very easy for students to find part-time work. And, whilst the hours can be long and unsociable, working the Fringe is a great way to meet new people. The city does become very busy, but there's also the chance you'll spot a celebrity. Give it a go – it's right on your doorstep – then make up your own mind.

What I wish I'd known before starting university

Student Ambassador Scarlett looks back at the things she wished she'd know before starting her studies.

With 2 years of university completed, I've had a bit of time to reflect on my experience so far. As a History and Politics student I've gained several writing, studying, and analytical skills, but there is so much more to coming to university than just lectures and learning.

Take advantage of the City you're in



You're at university to study, of course, but you just moved to a new city as well! Edinburgh as a city has so much to offer outside of George Square and the immediate Old Town that surrounds it. It's so easy to get caught up travelling around the Nicolson Street area but you do not want to miss seeing the Castle, Holyrood Palace, Botanic Gardens and more. The rest of Scotland is easily accessible and it can be really helpful, some days, to travel out of the city and see the beautiful views available. You don't want to go all four years not taking advantage of what an amazing city Edinburgh is.

Don't beat yourself up if it's not amazing all the time

University is some of the best times of your life! But don't worry if it's not like that all the time. It can be easy to feel lonely and hard to be away from your parents sometimes, it also can be really difficult to go from school into university. You're making the transition from just focusing on your academic and personal life to having to constantly juggle academics, cooking, personal life, health, etc. all at once. It's exciting in the beginning but as the term progresses and you get more of a workload it can be difficult to balance. It's a big change so don't worry if you find it difficult. Also, don't worry if your friends you find in freshers' week aren't the same later on. Everyone is still trying to find their group of people and you won't always end your year with the same people you started with. Take everything at your own pace!

Take care of your physical and mental health

Your health is super important so make sure that you take care of yourself! One of the hardest parts in the first year of university is adjusting to living by yourself. You don't have someone there to remind you to eat properly or take a break. Try to keep on top of things and learn how to deal with stress and time management. In my first year I struggled to balance cooking, gym, classes, personal life, breaks, and seeing family. Now I've realised it helps me to make a list of goals at the beginning of each week and think on it. It's helped me keep my balance and work ethic sustained! And if you need any help, it's okay to ask for it.

It's okay to have alone time

In my first year I felt like I always had to be around people and always had to have plans on the weekends. It is important to take a breather, though! There's nothing wrong with having a night in to recharge. It's okay to say no to going out

sometimes and just spend time with yourself. You have four years here and those club nights, parties and plans aren't going anywhere! Take everything one step at a time. Not everything needs to be done in the first semester of the first year.

First year does count

Yes, there is the safety net that first year technically does not count towards your degree, but because of this there are always some students who may not show up to every class. However, first year is incredibly important in giving you the tools you need to get you through second, third, and fourth year. Get into the habit of doing regular work, making relationships with your tutors and spending time studying. Just because it doesn't count doesn't mean it's not important! Trust me on this one.

The library is your BFF

Going along with number 5, take first year seriously and learn how to utilise the library and use the time there wisely. Edinburgh has an amazing library with every single book on the reading list. Some classes even make use of the research collections on the 6th floor.



Learn how to use the systems and online journals and save yourself a lot of time. I promise this will come in handy! Nothing like a fourth-floor library session to crack out the final bits of your essay.

Join societies and make connections



You have nothing to lose, so join as many societies that interest you! This is the perfect time to try something new. On the activity side Edinburgh has cheer-leading, horse riding, and dancing as well as academic ones like Model UN, History Society, Classics

Society and so many more. Edinburgh has an abundance of societies and you're bound to find one you like! Even if you're nervous and you've never done it before, I promise there are a thousand other new students in exactly the same position. Try new things and take some risks! I've met some of my closest friends through joining these societies and have just got back from a fun trip to Prague with the History Society. It's a great way to get involved and create a community in your School and you never know what fun experiences you'll get! Also, making sure to network and take advantage of the cool events the School and these societies offer. When opportunities come to meet professionals or graduate scheme recruiters, take advantage of them. You never know when it can come in handy!

You don't have to do what everyone else is doing

Take everything at your own pace. Everyone learns differently, everyone has different preferences, etc. Don't let the student stereotype of stress culture pressure you into acting a certain way.

Don't over pack

Your room in your halls does not have the capacity for your entire wardrobe. You can leave a couple shoes or random bits and pieces behind. The top you haven't worn in 5 years can stay behind. Please learn from my mistake.

Enjoy every moment

Everyone is in the same boat, navigating this roller coaster of a time. There's so many opportunities to take advantage of, new friends, and new experiences to enjoy! Just relax and don't overthink things. You'll be great.

Essay writing

Everything you ever wanted to know about essays but were afraid to ask by Student Ambassador Constance.

Essay writing, love it or hate it, it is the metric by which we students are measured. Figuring out your 'style' is something of a journey and will inevitably include some painful marks to grow as a writer. However, there are some tips I can offer, distilled from my four years of successes and failures, to help demystify the approach to essay writing.

Picking a topic – Don't go for the obvious and easy. This can be hard, especially if you are pressed for time. But the reality is a lot of people are going to go for the obvious and easy, especially if you are in a big course. It will only make it harder for you to stand out amidst the fifty other people who picked the same question.

Picking a topic Part 2 – Pick a topic you like. If you like a subject more, chances are you are going to try harder and, dare I say, enjoy the process of researching more. Better yet, if you have the opportunity to pick a question, go for it. It is a perfect opportunity to focus on what *you* enjoy.

Research – Get your ducks in a row. Do not cut corners, I repeat, do not cut corners. This is when you want to be

organized and systematic. Make sure you are clear when you take notes and have noted who said what. I still get cold sweats thinking about running to the library at 3 am because I could not figure out which book I had taken a quote from.

Research – Be one with the source. If you are using primary sources, it is best to have a direct quotation so that you ensure you have not lost any of the original source's meaning, especially if it is literary in nature.

Writing – (When you can) Take bite size pieces. Inevitably, there will be a time where you write an essay in a day. Afterwards, you will feel groggy, gross and your brain's IQ will have depreciated to the value of a guinea pig until you have had a full 8 hours of rest. Some people can function perfectly under these circumstances – if you are one of them, Godspeed my friend – but most are not. My best essays were slow burners where I took time to make a really pretty and detailed outline and only wrote a maximum of 500-1000 words per day.

Editing – Take some time and then go for it. Essays are like boyfriends or girlfriends; sometimes you just need a little space. Give yourself a day or two to avoid your essay and then go to a printer, print that baby out, grab a pen and read it aloud. Yep, read it like it is the Queen's Speech and cringe at the sound of your own voice. It the most useful tip a lecturer from first year gave me, and by far the most surefire way to catch grammar mistakes.

Submit – Get the receipts. Chances are you will be submitting your essay online via Turnitin. For all that is good and holy, no matter how tired you may be, check your email to make sure you got a receipt confirming your submission. Nothing is worse than losing marks for an essay you thought you submitted on time.

What is perhaps the most important thing is not to be dismayed

if you do not get the mark you want. Read the feedback and take it to heart when you go to write the next one.

A visit to Rosslyn Chapel



Edinburgh is a tourist hotspot but students can enjoy its attractions all year round. Ossana, a Student Ambassador, went to Rosslyn Chapel.

The end of exams put me into a touristy mood. It is during these times, even more than usual, that I feel immensely glad that I chose to study in Edinburgh. The city offers endless beautiful spots and close proximity to other unbelievable sites.

I decided to take a trip to Rosslyn Chapel, only an hour bus ride outside of the city. It received many great reviews, and is renowned for its intricate carvings, and is considered one of the finest churches in Scotland. Built in 1446, the chapel has played critical roles in Scottish history, and continues to be a place of worship and an important site in Scotland.



The chapel was everything one could expect and more. Unfortunately, photographs were not allowed within the building, so you can be assured that the following is spoiler free. The church is rather small, but every wall, ceiling, and column is covered in intricate carvings and sculptures. The themes carved include Christian themes, as one would expect, such as the Seven Sins, angels playing instruments (including the bagpipe!), and the face of the Christ (hidden among the stars on the ceiling). But there are also more obscure themes which even experts are still baffled about. Among the decorations are 'Green Men' faces, that may have to do with paganism. Also among the carvings are ears of corn, monkeys, and the face of a frustrated master-smith staring angrily upon the superior work of his apprentice (there is a humorous story that goes with it, but I shall not ruin it for you).

My experience in the church consisted of repeatedly saying "Wow!" and playing a game of Medieval 'Where's Wally?' ("Where's the angel with the bagpipe? No. Not that one, that one is holding a harp! How many Green Men have you found? I've only found three. Oh wait, there's a fourth!").

In 2003, Rosslyn Chapel was featured in the bestselling novel

The Da Vinci Code. Subsequently, the 2006 movie adaptation, starring Tom Hanks, was filmed in part in the chapel.

Perhaps slightly to my disappointment, the local guide told us that the Star of David which was featured in the movie was nothing more than a prop, a sticker stuck on the wall. The sticker has since been removed, but it left a green mark which you can still easily find if you know where to look. Some think it damages the church, but it is undeniable that that mark has attracted many keen Hollywood worshippers there.



If you are still not convinced to make the trip, let me assure you that just outside the chapel is a beautiful visitors' center and a café that overlooks the best of nature. Coffee, views, and Medieval treasures: What more can one ask for?

While one cannot necessarily trust what one reads in books (especially one written by Dan Brown), you can be assured that Rosslyn Chapel is truly as beautiful as they claim, if not more. And while it may not contain the Holy Grail, there are secrets and unsolved mysteries hidden on every wall, column, and in its mysterious crypt, just waiting for someone to solve them...

Address: Rosslyn Chapel, Chapel Loan, Roslin, Midlothian, EH25 9PU

Opening times: Seasonal differences (please refer to website – www.rosslynchapel.com)

History Society trip to Prague and Vienna, 2018



As one of the Trip Officers for the Edinburgh University History Society, Student Ambassador Carmen was responsible for organising a trip to Budapest and Vienna for 40 society members during Innovative Learning Week.

While we were only away for 5 days, it felt like ages because we did so much in both cities! – Carmen

Day 1: Monday, 19th of February

Our flight to Budapest was extremely early – but this meant we got there really early too, giving us plenty of time to get our bearings! While the sky was blue, it was freezing cold as we walked around streets on the Pest side of the city, taking in the amazing views of Liberty Square & Parliament Square.

After giving everyone a few hours to have dinner (and a nap after a long day of travelling!), we met up again to see the iconic Hungarian Parliament building light up at night. Here, we were able to get a big group photo, before running off to take some night shots of the stunning view over the River

Danube!

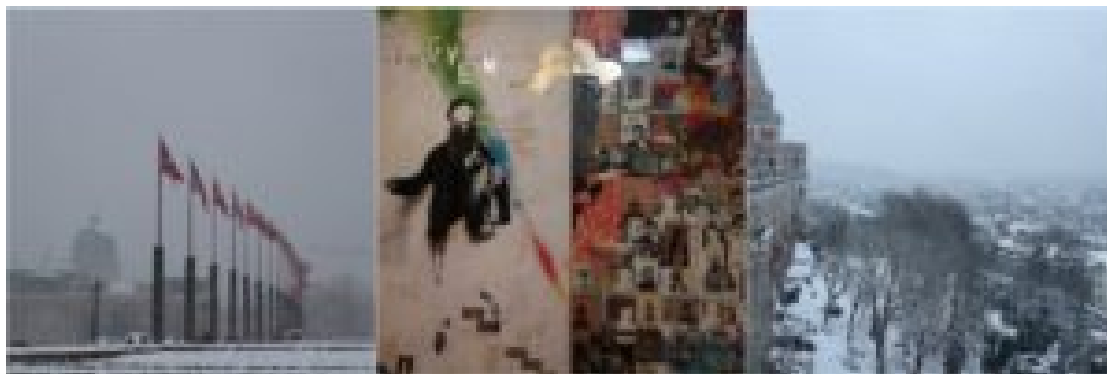


Day 2: Tuesday, 20th of February

On our second day, we walked along the Széchenyi Chain Bridge (covered in snow!) to go across the Danube to Buda Castle. Using our trusty Budapest Cards, we were able to get a free Castle bus that took us outside the building – a lifesaver considering it was a very uphill walk!

Some of our group were lucky enough to see the changing of the guard at the Sándor Palace, the residence of the Hungarian President. Others visited The Budapest History Museum and The Hungarian National Gallery. I particularly enjoyed the third and final floor of the Hungarian National Gallery, as it had some really interesting Hungarian modern art.

Later that afternoon, we had a private tour of Hospital in the Rock. This is a museum located in an underground cave system near Buda Castle, which was previously used as a hospital during World War II and The Hungarian Revolution of 1956. During the Cold War, it was also used as a nuclear shelter and remained a top-secret operation until 2002. We were not permitted to take any photos during this museum tour, but everyone loved the tour. During our visit, there were items on loan from museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, giving us the chance to see objects that were destroyed during the blast in 1945.



Afterwards, some members of the History Society committee and myself (with a giftshop bag from Hospital in the Rock in hand) went to visit Fisherman's Bastion, a beautiful terrace giving us some panoramic views of the city.

Day 3: Wednesday, 21st of February



Early on Wednesday morning, I took a large group of people on the trip to Memento Park (also known as Memorial Park). Located on the outskirts of Budapest, this open-air museum houses over 40 statues that would be placed throughout towns and cities in Hungary during the Communist era.

Later that afternoon, we went to House of Terror, a museum dedicated to the fascist and communist regimes in Hungary during the 20th century. We were also not allowed to take photographs in this museum, but it was fascinating being able to see how Hungary exhibits its horrific past. Afterwards we went to Lukacs Thermal Baths. This is one of the local baths in the city and allowed us to relax before getting ready to pack our things and leave for Vienna the next day.

Day 4: Thursday, 22nd of February

Early in the afternoon, we set out from Budapest via private coach and made our way to Vienna! Here, we checked into our hostel and had a wander around the city before eating at the Naschmarkt, home to many fantastic restaurants. That night, I was so tired after a long day of travelling and sightseeing I went straight to bed! However, some very dedicated tourists in our group went to the prestigious Vienna State Opera.



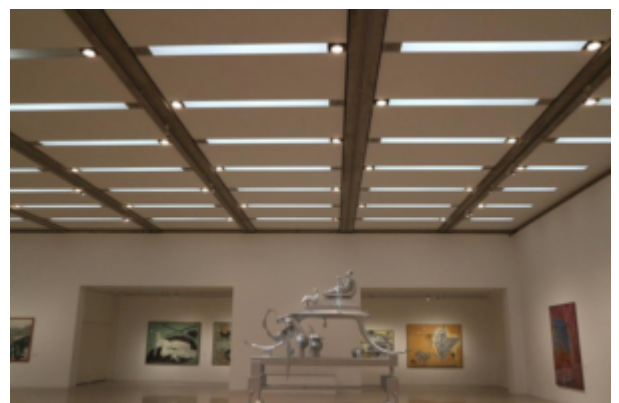
Day 5: Friday, the 23rd of February

On our last full day of our trip, we got up early to go and visit the Hofburg Palace. This was the former imperial palace and winter residence of the Habsburg Dynasty, who previously ruled the Holy Roman Empire. The building was built in the 13th

century and today serves as the residence and the workplace for the President of Austria.



The Palace has many interesting exhibitions. We got to see The Imperial Silver Collection, which was fascinating because it showed how complex and ornate having dinner was for the Habsburg family; we got to find out about the life of Empress Elisabeth of Austria, commonly known as Sisi, who had struggled with the fame and social expectations of royalty before being assassinated; and we got to see The Imperial Apartments, which gave us a glimpse of how the Austrian royal family really lived. We were not allowed to take photos in most of these exhibitions, but I definitely took a lot from this visit and learned so much about Austrian history that I did not know about before!



Afterwards, we all went to lunch and then reconvened later in the afternoon to go to the Imperial Crypts. This is the burial vault of the Habsburg Dynasty, where the bones of 145 royals are kept, and it is astonishing to see how extravagant their

coffins are! Here, we also saw Sisi's coffin, as well as that of her husband, Franz Joseph.

For the rest of the day, everyone had free time to get as much sightseeing as possible of Vienna! I went to Mumok, a world-renowned modern art museum located in the famous MuseumsQuartier. It was really great fun, especially the interactive exhibition when we were allowed to wear aluminium foil jackets!



Later that evening, we had our final dinner of the trip as one big group in an authentic Austrian tavern. This gave us time to reflect on our busy and fun-filled week that we'd had, as well as the opportunity to eat some pork schnitzel and kaiserschmarrn, a fluffy shredded pancake traditionally served with plum jam.

Day 6: Saturday, 24th of February

Home time!

I thoroughly enjoyed being responsible for organising an international trip with the Edinburgh University History Society. While certainly stressful at times, I learned a lot about myself and played a key role as part of a team; developed so many new skills that I would not have been able to otherwise; and made long lasting friendships along the way. I believe that societies truly enhance student life here at Edinburgh, and I am so glad that I made the decision to become

involved in the student community in this way. Hopefully I'll get a place on the very popular History Society trip next year, as they are such a fantastic way to go abroad with new people at an affordable price!

The Royal Yacht Britannia



The city is full of historical sites, and Student Ambassador Francesca visits one of the most popular.

Edinburgh is home to a wealth of tourist attractions, such as Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace, the National Museum and National Galleries, Dynamic Earth, Camera Obscura and the Scotch Whisky Experience. There's something for all tastes and interests but the Royal Yacht Britannia is easily the best. Tucked away at Ocean Terminal, 15 minutes from the city centre, it's also one of Edinburgh's best-kept secrets. The Royal Yacht, which you might know from Netflix's 'The Crown', was the Queen's home-away-home for over forty years. It was launched from Clydebank in 1953 and sailed over a million miles before being decommissioned in 1997.

Britannia carried the Royal Family across the world on numerous tours and state visits, and has hosted glittering

receptions for world leaders, including Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher Nelson Mandela and Ronald Reagan. It was also used for family holidays off the coast of Scotland and several Royal couples have honeymooned aboard, most famously Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1981. Recently, it was the dramatic setting for Zara's wedding reception to Mike Tindall. The Royal Yacht today is a beautifully maintained vessel and presented with its original furnishings.



The Royal Apartments (from top left): the sitting room, the Queen's bedroom, the state dining room and the sun deck.

Except for maintenance hatches and the like, you can roam freely around the entire ship. The Royal Apartments, including the bedrooms, offices and sitting rooms, are where the Royal Family lived. There's certainly a very 50s décor feel to these rooms, which are more functional than plush. There's also a beautiful sun deck (once equipped with a water slide !), complete with a tea room serving delicious cakes and snacks.

A few levels below are the sailors' quarters and social spaces. Yachtsmen on Britannia were known as 'Yotties'. These

spaces are probably some of the most interesting parts of the ship. Tiered according to rank, sleeping quarters range from private cabins to bunking shelves (!) and while the officers' dining room is nicely furnished with trinkets from the ship's travels, the general mess hall looks more like a school canteen. What surprised me was the mini-pubs on board, where yotties and officers could grab a pint and settle down for games or entertainment. There's also a fudge shop on this level, where you can try some truly bizarre flavours.



The Junior Officers' pub onboard.

The lowest levels of the ship have been turned into more of a museum-like exhibition. The engine room has been opened up to showcase the original machinery, while the racing yacht, Bloodhound, has also been put on display. This yacht has raced at the Cowes Week Regatta and has been sailed by Prince Philip, Prince Charles and Princess Anne.

Britannia is an exceptional tourist attraction, steeped in history. She is an excellent example of heritage and conservation work in the sector. Visiting Britannia offers a glimpse of life at sea and a flashback into a bygone age. The Royal Yacht is also a remarkable symbol of British cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century and 'soft power'. I've visited Britannia four times since coming to Edinburgh, and really can't recommend it enough for showing family and

friends around the city, or an afternoon away from the Library.

The Talbot Rice Gallery: A hidden gem



How many Universities can claim to have a world-class gallery as part of their campus? Student Ambassador Osanna visits Edinburgh's, the Talbot Rice Gallery.

I cannot remember which I fell in love with first: classical art or contemporary art. Though I have chosen to study Classics, I have maintained a great interest in contemporary art. After all, contemporary art often draws on historical themes and artistic styles, and challenges how we see and study them.

Barely two minutes away from the HCA building (the William Robertson Wing) is the hidden gem that is Talbot Rice Gallery, the University's contemporary art gallery. Part of the University's famed picturesque Old College, the gallery includes its own Georgian hall, which has been transformed into a cinema for the current exhibition.

I had recently began volunteering at the gallery as an Information Assistant, and I was exceptionally excited about the new exhibition, displaying the works of video artists Rachel Maclean and David Claerbout.

I believe myself destined for this post, as I have happened upon Rachel Maclean's exhibitions not once, nor twice, but THREE times in three different cities (Edinburgh, Manchester, and Venice). Edinburgh-born Maclean is a graduate at our University and had recently represented Scotland at the *Venice Biennale*. It is an understatement to say I admire her deeply. Her work currently on display is titled *Spite Your Face*. It is based on the 19th century tale of *Pinocchio*, yet its message is evidently modern, reflecting on the questionable reliability of politicians, consumerism, and the media. Placed in the context of Brexit, controversial presidential issues in America, and ongoing battles for rights around the world, Maclean's work is an honest, if brutal portrayal of the darker sides of society. It is vivid, dynamic, and begs reflection, and viewers are unlikely to forget it in a hurry.

I had never before encountered David Claerbout's work, and I was indeed in for a pleasant discovery. The pieces on display were very different from Maclean's work, but compliment it wonderfully. Claerbout's work centers around exploring space and time. One particular piece which caught my attention is named *Radio Piece (Hong Kong)*. I do not wish to ruin the piece for you, as I believe one should be able to experience it however they wish. But as someone from Hong Kong, I believe it reflects the feeling of being entrapped within a clustered space, both physically and mentally, and reflects consciousness of Hong Kong's colonial history and how it still affects us today.

I volunteered at the exhibition on its preview night and was overwhelmed by the influx of eager viewers. I was initially nervous, but quickly found my feet with help from a fantastic team of volunteers, who are also mostly students from the

University, and a group of helpful gallery staff. It was truly a rewarding experience, and I was very glad to be able to witness it.

But the best was yet to come! After the preview, I recognized, swarmed by enthusiastic viewers, the artist Rachel Maclean herself! Like any fangirl, I could barely contain myself, but was too shy to approach her. After much chickening out and a lot of encouragement from my new friends at the gallery, I finally managed to greet her. She turned out to be the nicest, most approachable person one could possibly meet. I shook her hand, and muttered something unintelligible, which she somehow responded positively to. I managed to get a photo with her, which concluded perfectly a fantastic and fulfilling evening.



Osanna and artist Rachel Maclean

The opportunities for cultural enrichment and volunteering at the University of Edinburgh are fantastic and I cannot recommend them enough.

(The exhibition runs from 24 February 2018 – 5 May 2018)

First Annual Staff-Student Cup



The School, its Societies and students organise regular events and this was the inaugural event in the Staff-Student Cup (which is a shield, it's a long story). Senior Student Ambassador Francesca was there!

This semester the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) is launching an annual Staff-Student Cup. This is a series of three challenges, pitting academics against students. Last night was our first event: a quiz, held at the Villager pub. With over 50 people, and nine teams, we had a great turnout.

We started out with an anagram challenge on the theme of buildings around George Square campus while people chatted, bought their snacks and drinks and found a seat. Anagram solutions included the Old Medical School (home to HCA), the Playfair Library (the beautiful library at Old College), Potterrow and Teviot (where most of the Student Union activities take place) and Buccleuch Street (pronounced Bukloo).

The first two rounds were on general knowledge and films. Questions included: Where was the 1966 World Cup final held? Who played Don Corleone in 'The Godfather'? Then we got on to the third round – a little more competitive – on trivia about the city of Edinburgh. We had to answer questions on the name

of the fire festival held each spring (the Beltane Fire Festival), the population of the city (the 7th most populous in the UK), famous writers (Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of detective Sherlock Holmes), the Edinburgh Capitals (an ice hockey team) and where you would find works of art by Eduardo Paolozzi (the National Museum of Scotland).

The final round – on History, Classics and Archaeology trivia – was the most interesting, especially as it pitted students against experts in their fields. Some questions weren't too difficult: What British city was called *Acquae Sulis* by the Romans? Bath! What is the name of the School of HCA's quad? The Elsie Inglis Quad! But some were fiendishly difficult, even for specialists. We were quizzed on the name of the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated (Spencer Perceval), what US President Benjamin Harrison installed in the White House but was too afraid to use (electricity), and the names and order of Henry VIII's six wives (my team failed this question, so you'll have to Google it). Then came the two bonus questions. When was the Old Medical School – our building – completed? 1886. And when was the University founded? 1582.

The quiz master disappeared to count the scores and the results were revealed... in first place... 'The 7 Sisters' – the staff team!



Francesca Morphakis