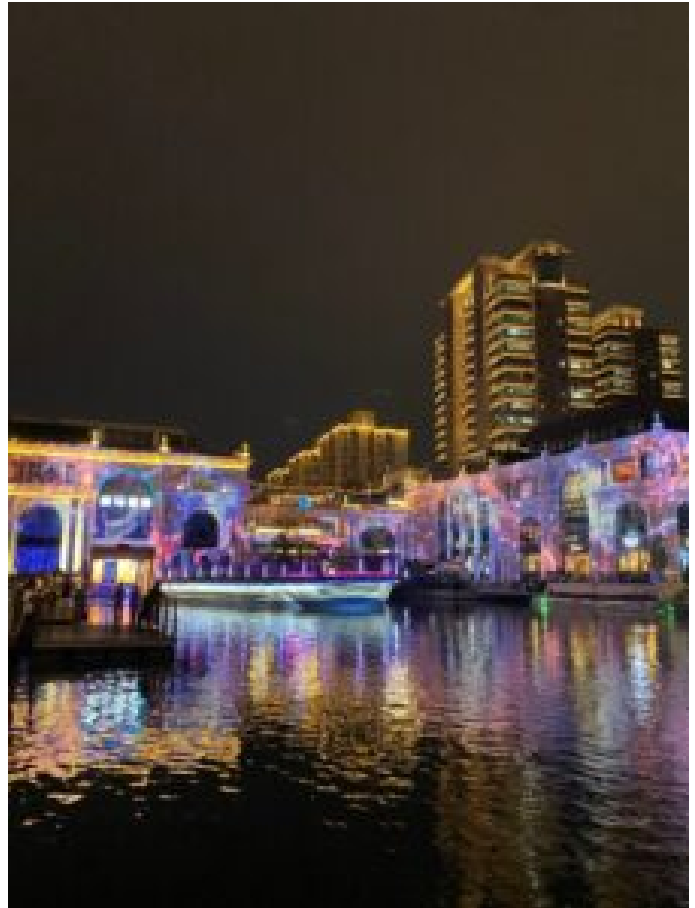


# **Studying abroad for a year – Aalish in Beijing**

Joint honours student Aalish is spending her year abroad at Peking University. She studies Chinese and History with the School of Literatures, Languages & Cultures.

The opportunity to combine both of my interests in History and Languages was something I knew I wanted to pursue at university and Edinburgh offered me not only that, but also the chance to study abroad in the world's most up and coming capital, Beijing. My degree is in Chinese and History and this year I am undertaking my year abroad at Peking University, China's number one university.

## **Why study a language and history at the University of Edinburgh?**



Beijing lit up to celebrate the mid-autumn festival.

The four-year degree programme offered by the University of Edinburgh really drew me to choose to study here. Not only does Edinburgh have amazing connections across the world with leading universities providing you with the opportunity to study at the very highest level, it also provides you with the opportunity to delve into both passions and does not limit you to only one field of study. Another perk of studying at Edinburgh, is that everyone partakes in a four-year degree, so once I return from my year abroad, I will be able to study history alongside my classmates once amore. On top of this, I still get the opportunity to continue my studies of history through the University of Edinburgh while I am studying in Beijing.

**What does my year abroad in Beijing look**

## like?

While studying at Peking University, I have 18 hours of contact with my Chinese language teachers, which is quite a lot! On top of this I am studying historiography and historical research methods through the University of Edinburgh online. Currently I have just started my historiography module, and I have been assigned a personal tutor to mentor me and help me through the topic. This has been extremely helpful, and my tutor is incredibly knowledgeable and quick at responding to any queries I have, despite the time difference. During my time here, I am most looking forward to exploring the living history around Beijing and the rest of China. Beijing is a very historical city with many museums and historical sites to explore.

## The history of Beijing I have explored so far



The Old Summer Palace.

Peking University is the first national university in China established in 1898 and the campus is on the former site of the Qing dynasties imperial gardens and encompasses traditional Chinese buildings alongside a pagoda and many lakes. Peking University campus borders the Summer Palace and Old Summer Palace, two incredible historical sites I have been lucky enough to visit. On top of this, there is Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, next to which is a man-made hill made with all the earth dug out from creating the moat in the Forbidden City. It serves as a wonderful viewpoint as well as being a feng shui shield for those located in the centre of the city! There is also the Temple of Heaven, which I hope to visit soon.

In terms of more modern history, the 2008 Olympic games were hosted within Beijing and some marvellous architecture came out of this, from the Bird's Nest (the Chinese National Stadium) to the 'trouser' building (the China Central Television headquarters).

While there is still so much to explore in Beijing, China is also rich in history. I plan to visit the great wall next month as this can be done as a day trip from Beijing. Additionally, I will get the opportunity to travel around China in my winter break and can travel to other cities within China. Top of my list is to visit Xi'an to see the terracotta warriors!

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# **Why I chose a Joint Honours Degree: Combining my passions...**

**...by Sophia / from the UK / studying History and Economics (MA)**

One of the most challenging dilemmas many prospective university students face is deciding which subject to study. When I began my university application journey I faced this dilemma. I had studied varied subjects during 6th form had two distinct subjects that fascinated me greatly, History and Economics. On one hand, history interested me because it offers rich narratives, diverse cultures, and profound lessons from the past, helping us understand the complexities of human civilisation and the forces that have shaped our world. However, economics also captivated me with its analysis of how societies function and the impact of financial systems on our daily lives. Faced with the challenge of choosing between these two compelling fields, I found the perfect solution: pursuing a joint honours degree in History and Economics.

This decision has allowed me to explore both passions in depth, providing a comprehensive and enriching academic experience. In this blog post I will share some of the benefits of pursuing a joint honours degree and highlight why I think the decision to study two very different subjects offers unique opportunities for growth and learning.

## **1) Interdisciplinary Learning: Embracing the Intersection**

One of the most significant benefits of pursuing a joint honours degree is the opportunity for interdisciplinary

learning. By studying two distinct subjects simultaneously, I've had the chance to explore the intersection of history and economics, gaining insights into how these disciplines inform and complement each other. This interdisciplinary approach has enriched my understanding of complex issues, allowing me to analyse historical events through an economic lens and vice versa.

## **2) Flexibility: Tailoring My Degree**

Another advantage of studying a joint honours degree is the flexibility it offers. Rather than being confined to a single field of study, I've had the freedom to tailor my degree to my interests and career aspirations. Whether exploring the impact of the economy on the environment and the formation of cities or exploring culture and the arts in 1960s Scotland, I've been able to explore diverse topics that captivate my curiosity and shape my academic journey. Additionally it gave me choice with my dissertation as I could do a history, economics, or economic history dissertation, further highlighting the flexibility of some joint honours degrees.

## **3) Diverse Skill Development: Fostering Versatility and Adaptability**

My journey studying two distinct subjects simultaneously has given me a wide range of skills that are valuable in today's job market. From honing analytical thinking and research abilities in history to refining communication and problem-solving skills in economics, I have developed a more versatile skill set. Additionally, by balancing the demands of two distinct subjects, I've honed my time management, organisation, and prioritisation skills, preparing me for life after my studies.

## **4) Networking Opportunities: Building Connection Across Disciplines**

Engaging with faculty members, peers, and professionals from

two different disciplines has provided me with invaluable networking opportunities. By building connections within two different schools at the University I have gained access to diverse perspectives, resources, and mentorship opportunities, enriching my academic experience and expanding my professional horizons. Whether collaborating on projects or participating in extracurricular activities, these networking opportunities have expanded my network and enhanced my overall university experience.

In conclusion, pursuing a joint honours degree in History and Economics has been a rewarding journey that has allowed me to combine my passions and develop a versatile skill set. From interdisciplinary learning to flexible tailoring of my education, this experience has prepared me for success in both academic and professional pursuits. Through networking opportunities and diverse skill development, I've enhanced my overall university experience and look forward to applying what I've learned in the future. If you would like to ask any questions about studying a joint honour degree please send me a message on Unibuddy and I would be more than happy to answer!

Originally published on the student Stories blog

**Want to find out more?**

Chat with Sophia

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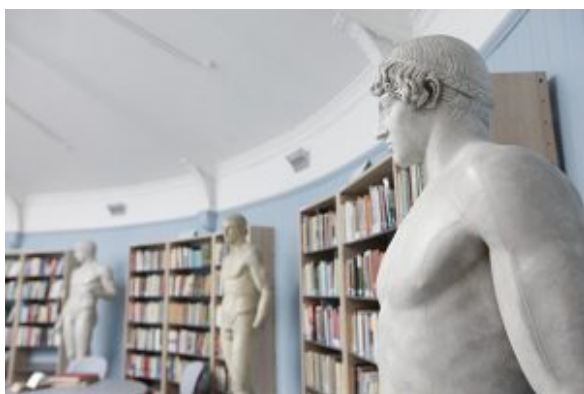
**So, you've decided to study a joint honours degree ...**

**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.