

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.