George Square campus and surrounding area

A warm welcome to the University of Edinburgh and the city of Edinburgh. The University has a number of sites within the city – this tour is for the George Square campus.

Any prospective student of our University will find this tour useful as this campus is also home to the Main Library, Students’ Association, Centre for Sport & Exercise and a range of study spaces and other services that are open to all students at the University.

Walking at a leisurely pace with time to take in Edinburgh’s unique atmosphere and architecture, the tour should take no more than an hour. If you wish to extend the tour to include High School Yards, the Pleasance and Moray House School of Education, add approximately 30 minutes.

Look out for the various plaques around the University, which have been erected to commemorate the achievements of individuals who have been associated with the University through our 400 years.

A map showing accessible routes and entrances can be downloaded from: www.ed.ac.uk/estates/buildings-information/disability

George Square

50 George Square
Walk towards the Business School - The first modern building on your left, opened in 2014 and is home to the School of Literatures, Languages & Cultures.

Turn around and return to the NE corner of George Square.

Appleton Tower
Completed in 1996, the building is named after physicist Sir Edward Appleton. Recently redeveloped with teaching space used by a variety of subjects, as well as a café, computer labs, and social spaces.

Informatics Forum & Dugald Stewart Building
Designed by Bennetts Associates, the Informatics Forum has won numerous awards for its environmentally sustainable design and is used purely for research. Turn right onto Charles Street to pass the University’s Visitors Centre, and the Dugald Stewart Building, which houses the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences. This space provides a state-of-the-art centre for innovation and interaction, cutting-edge technology and flexible teaching space.

Teviot Row House
On your left is Teviot Row House, the oldest purpose built Students’ Union in the world, opened in 1889. The building is now run by Edinburgh University Students’ Association (EUSA), and boasts five bars, a debating chamber, dining room, refectory and several meeting rooms. Often referred to as ‘Hogwarts’ by tourists; feel free to go in.

McEwan Hall
On exiting Teviot Row House, the large circular building on your left is McEwan Hall, financed by Sir William McEwan, MP for Central Edinburgh and founder of the famous city brewery. Once Edinburgh’s premier concert venue, McEwan Hall is currently undergoing redevelopment and normally hosts graduation ceremonies and exams. Designed by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, and completed in 1897, the interior was designed by William Palm with the images decorating the ceiling representing the various subjects offered by the University.

Potterrow
On the opposite side of Bristol Square is Potterrow, another of the four Students’ Association buildings and a lively and popular place to meet friends. Go in and see the student facilities for yourself, which include banks, a shop, a café, a bar and the Chaplaincy Centre, which offers support for students of all faiths and none. Potterrow is also home to The Venue which hosts numerous themed nights throughout the year including gigs, ceilidhs, and a student club night called Cheesy. Next to Potterrow is the Richard Vernon Health Centre.

Exit Potterrow by the main door and turn right. Follow the railing and continue through the underpass and go along West College Street to enter Old College via the arch on your right.

Old College
On your right you will pass the Talbot Rice Gallery, and as you enter the quadrangle, turn left and follow the walkway around the courtyard and look for the plaque commemorating the University’s first female graduate in 1812, James Miranda Barry, (c.1795-1865). She was an army surgeon and Inspector General of Hospitals in Canada, who graduated in 1812: James Miranda Barry, (c.1795-1865). She was an army surgeon and Inspector General of Hospitals in Canada, who graduated in 1812:

On exiting Old College turn right, and then left onto Drummond Street. Continue to the end of Drummond Street and cross the road at the pedestrian lights.

A The Pleasance / Centre for Sport and Exercise
You will see the Centre for Sport and Exercise straight ahead of you, which has recently undergone a £4.8 million extension and refurbishment. If you turn right, slightly further up the hill you will find the Pleasance Student Union on your left. Built by Alexander Paterson and Thomas Dott in 1791, it is used by EUSA, as well as being a prominent venue during the Fringe. The Pleasance building itself has various committee rooms, as well as a theatre and bar.

B St Leonard’s Land / Moray House
On your right you will see St Leonard’s Land, which houses Physical Education and the University swimming pool. Directly across the road is Moray House School of Education. Further along Holyrood Road, there is the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood Palace and Holyrood Park.

Retrace your steps back up Holyrood Road to the crossroads. Go straight across the junction, onto the Cowgate. There is a narrow cobbled road (High Wynd) on the left which leads steeply up to Infirmary Street. Walk up and follow the curve to the right. Cross the road at the top and you will find yourself back at the main entrance to Old College. With your back to the main entrance to Old College, turn left and left again onto Chambers Street.

C Chambers Street

Adam House, on the north side of Chambers Street, is a modernist neo-classical building built 1955, and thought to be named after architect Robert Adam. Today it is used for matriculation, exams and theatre productions. As you continue to walk along you will pass Minto House, home to Architectural Studies and History of Art, and the National Museum of Scotland. Turn left at the top of Chambers Street.

D Bedlam Theatre
In front of you, where the road splits, you will see the Bedlam Theatre. The former North Free Church was designed by architect Thomas Hamilton and built in 1846. In 1941 the church closed and the building is now home to the University of Edinburgh Theatre Company, showing over 40 productions every year. The name Bedlam is attributed to the building’s proximity to Edinburgh’s first mental health hospital.

Take the right hand fork onto Forest Road, and continue to the traffic lights at the end. Cross to the left, down Teviot Place. On your right walk through a large archway with iron gates.

E William Robertson Wing / Old Medical School and Nursing

Originally part of the Medical School this Grade A listed building has been refurbished to unite the School of History, Classics and Archaeology under one roof. The building is named after William Robertson Wing / Old Medical School and Nursing.

William Robertson (1721-1793), who studied Divinity at the University and was appointed to the role of University Principal in 1762.

Staying in the quadrangle, the Old Medical School is on your left hand side. You can find the Anatomy Lecture Theatre here: which is still used for 1st and 2nd year Medicine lectures. Nursing is also taught in this building. The School of Medicine and Dentistry’s formal formation is found in 1726 and has since developed an impressive international reputation for both teaching and research. The Old Medical School where you now stand was completed in 1888. The 1800s were known for the grisly trade in dead bodies, when recently deceased corpses were illegally sold to the science of anatomy. A secret tunnel between College Wynd and the University’s anatomy theatre was used to deliver dead bodies for dissection. In the 1820s, William Burke and William Hare committed infamous series of murders to sell the bodies to Robert Knox’s School of Anatomy. The pair were finally caught in 1828. Burke was tried and hanged, but Hare was released and never heard of again. Today’s state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities for the School of Medicine are located at the Royal Infirmary, Little France.

This concludes the main self-guided tour. From the archway of Old College you are a 10 minute walk from Princes Street, and Waverley Train Station, however time permitting, we recommend extending your tour to include the following optional University sights. Upon exiting Old College turn right, and then left onto Drummond Street. Continue to the end of Drummond Street and cross the road at the pedestrian lights.