A warm welcome to The University of Edinburgh and the city of Edinburgh. This tour is for the King's Building Campus, the University’s second largest campus. Subjects within the College of Science and Engineering are taught here, with the exception of Informatics and Geography which are taught at the Central Campus in George Square. The Students’ Union is also open for all students at the University.

The recommended starting point is from the campus main entrance outside Ashworth Laboratories (Number 1), near Mayfield Road. The tour should take no more than an hour if walking at a leisurely pace, with time to take in the main buildings and facilities on campus. Add on 20 minutes if you wish to include Blackford Hill for The Royal Observatory, Edinburgh. Please note that the Nucleus Building (Number 14), at the end of the tour, is the only one open to the public.

Directions to the campus from the city centre are on the back of this leaflet. You can also use the postcode EH9 3JT to find your way via a map app/site. A map showing accessible routes and entrances can be downloaded from: www.ed.ac.uk/estates/buildings-information/disability
The best place to begin the tour is on the north east corner outside the Ashworth Laboratories, where the main entrance to King’s Buildings lies. This building is used by the School of Chemistry.

Evolutionary biology, immunology and infection research is carried out in the Ashworth Laboratories, the home of the Centre for Immunology, Infection and Evolution. Ashworth is also home to the Aubrey Manning Gallery which houses part of the University’s collection of natural history specimens.

The building was named after its donor Alexander Grant, creator of the popular McVitie’s Digestive biscuit. All the Grant Institute buildings are used by the School of Geosciences.

Joseph Black Building

Continue along the path, crossing at the pedestrian crossing. Stop at the large red brick building on the left.

This is the Joseph Black Building, home to the School of Chemistry. King George V laid the foundation stone for this building in 1920, making it the first building on campus. It has been developed over the decades into a state-of-the-art facility for all branches of Chemistry. New teaching laboratories are used by undergraduates and for cutting-edge research into nano-technology, protein structure and function, drug discovery, battery as well as cell materials.

Grant Institute

Take the path to the right along past Ashworth and the Grant Institute bike store until you reach a two storey building on your left. This is the Grant Institute, where the School of Geosciences is based.

The principal academic units within JCM and its aneue, the Eskele Williamson Building, are the School of Physics & Astronomy, the School of Mathematics, the School of Geosciences and the Biology Teaching Organisation. The centres of excellence within the building are the Centre for Science at Extreme Conditions (CSEC), the Higgs Centre for Theoretical Particle Physics and the Fritz Institute which is dedicated to mathematical physics. In addition, the building has five lecture theatres, a large multi-media teaching space and many group study rooms.

Continue straight ahead to exit via the double doors in front of you.

James Clerk Maxwell Building

Continue along to SRUC then turn left along Nicholas Kemmer Road and Peter Guthrie Tait Road. The large building ahead of you is the James Clerk Maxwell Building (JCMB). Enter through the main entrance on the left, near the cafeteria seating outside. (If you would like to take a break, you will find the cafeteria on level 2.)

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James Clerk Maxwell Building

Continue straight ahead beside JCMB for around 30 metres and at the end of the footpath to your left you will see the glass-panelled structure - this is the Alexander Graham Bell Building. To the left of this you will see the entrance of the connecting William Rankine Building.

Researchers in the Alexander Graham Bell building work on mobile and digital communications, including the latest technologies for mobile phones and digital communications systems. The William Rankine Building opened in 2006 as part of the School of Engineering. It houses Civil Engineering, environmental and buildings research and is home to Edinburgh’s Fire Safety Engineering research group.

Swann and Darwin Buildings

Head to the right following the path away alongside JCMB. You’ll immediately face the Michael Swann and Charles Darwin buildings. These buildings house Biological Sciences.

The Wellcome Trust Centre for Cell Biology is based in the Swann Building alongside other researchers in cell and structural biology which includes drug discovery, chromosome biology, RNA biology and epigenetic control of cell function.

The Darwin Building, is undergoing redevelopment. The new building will provide state of the art laboratories, technologies and spaces to support strategic research in Biology of our Changing World, Biology of Health & Disease, and Engineering Biology for Health & Wealth.

Nucleus Building

Across the road from the Swann and Darwin Buildings is the Algic Building. Immediately behind it, tucked away, is the Faraday Building.

The Algic and Faraday Buildings are home to marine renewables and energy systems research. Edinburgh has a long tradition of wave energy production from Stephen Saltine’s design in the early 1870s - including Saltine’s Duck. The waveflow research facility here at King’s Buildings supplements this research by enabling large scale testing of marine energy devices.

Sanderson Building

Head right on to the main road. The Sanderson Building is on your left.

The Sanderson Building houses the Institute for Materials and Processes, it has two chemical and mechanical engineering workshops, where academic researchers, research fellows and postgraduate students work in the areas of biomedical engineering, carbon dioxide capture, materials science, molecular simulation and design, multi-phase flows and complex fluids. Turn left back on to campus at Colin McLaurin Road and head up the side of Sanderson by Mary Stuck Building towards the Nucleus.

The Nucleus Building, Murray Library & KB House

Continue along Colin McLaurin Road where on your right you will see the King’s Buildings campus history exhibition. Take some time to stop and look at how the campus has evolved over the last 100 years. Ahead on your right is the brand new Nucleus Building, the Murray Library, and KB House.

The Nucleus Building, opened in 2022, is a learning, teaching and social hub at the heart of King’s Buildings campus. It has five lecture theatres, studio classrooms and specialist teaching labs as well as 400 study spaces.

You’ll also find the Careers Service, a café, and Students’ Association shop. The Nucleus is also open to the public on weekends.

The Nucleus Building is directly connected to both the Murray Library and King’s Buildings House.

The Murray Library, opened in 2012, is named after the late professor Noreen Murray and Professor Sir Ken Murray, who both worked in the School of Biological Sciences. The ground floor has the KB Café, and the upper floors have study spaces, helpdesk and collections.

KB house is run by Edinburgh University Students’ Association (EUSA), King’s Buildings House includes a branch of The Advice Place offering students free, impartial and confidential information on a range of issues. It is also home to the MathHub.

The next part of the tour is the optional visit to the Royal Observatory on Blackford Hill, 10 minutes’ walk from King’s Buildings campus.

Blackford Hill - The Royal Observatory Edinburgh

Exit the King’s Buildings campus at the main entrance, and head left up West Mains Road. Around 200 metres ahead on the left there is a grand archway. Go through this, and up the hill of Observatory Road. At the top, the paved area becomes a footpath – take the one leading left. Approach the Observatory by continuing along its road side, enter under the archway, and find your way up towards your immediate left.

Built in 1893, the Royal Observatory houses the Institute for Astronomy, the UK Astronomy Technology Centre and a visitor centre. One of the UK’s major centres of astronomical research, the Institute for Astronomy specialises in survey astronomy, cosmology, active galaxies and the formation of stars and planets.

Return to the main entrance to King’s Buildings.

Getting to King’s Buildings

King’s Buildings is well served by public transport from the city centre. Lothian Buses 24 and 67 buses both pass the campus, and Lothian Buses 9 stops on campus by Murchison House. All of these buses stop in the city centre, and also pass by George Square (central campus). During semester, a free shuttle bus service for students and staff also runs Monday to Friday from King’s Buildings to Central Campus. King’s Buildings is around a 30 minute walk from George Square, while many students prefer to cycle. Use the postcode EH9 3JF to search for directions.

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print, please contact: sra.enquiries@ed.ac.uk

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