

GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES



# History

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE



## A wide range of options spanning two millennia and circling the globe

Teaching History at the University of Aberdeen is led by research which has a demonstrable impact on society, engages with the public, and responds to issues of contemporary significance.

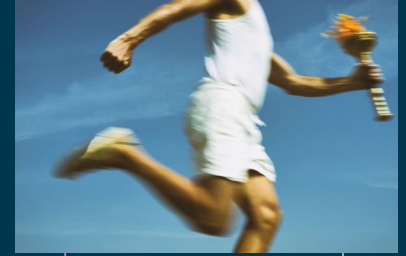
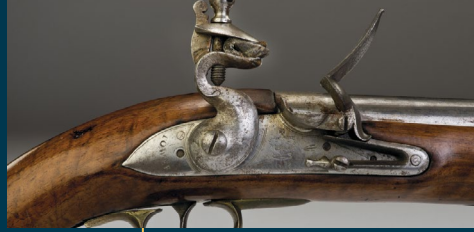
### What does this mean for me as an undergraduate student?

It's about learning from the best. Our research impact relates to the demonstrable contribution our research makes to society. That might range from working with the heritage sector through to informing policy-making. We communicate our research to varied audiences in ways that are relevant and fresh. We carry our passion for history that matters into the classroom.



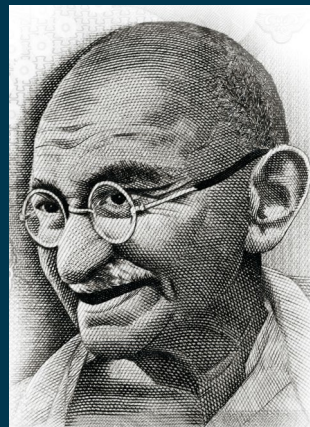
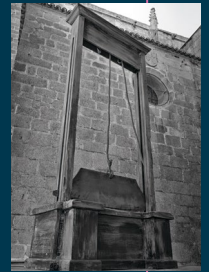
**GRADUATES IN EMPLOYMENT and/or further study 15 months after graduation\***  
Graduate Outcomes Survey 2025

\* Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies Graduates



Aberdeen is structured a little differently from other universities and these differences make Aberdeen special. To help you get started let us explain the basics.

At Aberdeen we offer as much variety as we can, so you always get a chance to sample something new. In your first year you experience a range of subjects in and beyond History, without the need to commit long-term. You can experiment with different subjects. Usually in the second year you start to focus on your main degree interests. By the end of the second year, you'll know which subjects you want to continue with at honours level. Having discovered where your historical strengths and interests lie, you can tailor your degree accordingly, taking advantage of the wide range of courses offered in the discipline.



# Across centuries and continents

Curiosity is key when trying to decide which areas to focus on. Beginning your studies by exploring different subject and geographical areas will allow you to make an informed decision about your final degree.

## Year 1

### Making History

And at least two from:

Europe in the Twentieth Century

Renaissances and Reformations

American Civilisations

The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science

## Year 2

### Birth of Modernity

Power and Piety: Medieval Europe 1100-1500

Global Empire in the Long Nineteenth Century

Kingship, Clearances & Conflict: A Millennium of Scottish History

Vikings: An Introduction

'The Other': Histories of Minorities and the Marginalised

The Face of Battle: Historical Perspectives on Warfare

*Courses at sub-honours levels are assessed in various ways, including essay assessments and exams.*

## Year 3

### Thinking History

– Core course on ideas and practices of history

### Honours Option Courses

In recent years options have included:

- World War I: International Perspectives
- Decolonisation: The British Experience
- The Long Black Freedom Struggle in America, 1865-2020
- Stewart Scotland
- Cultural History of Sport
- Eating History: Food and Culture
- The Making of the Modern Middle East
- History of the Body

### Seminar-Based

*Diverse Assessments*

## Year 4

### Special Subject

In recent years choices have included:

- Scottish Wars of Independence, 1286-1328
- History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- Hitler
- Myths of the North
- Black Radical Tradition

### Honours Option

#### Dissertation

- Supervised by staff member
- 10,000 words

#### History in Practice

- Focus on History in Society and Employability
- Option of Work Placement

*Students taking joint degrees choose between Dissertation and History in Practice*



### Sharing our Treasures

Great universities have great libraries. At Aberdeen our internationally important special collections and archives date from the third century BC to the present day. As well as 230,000 rare printed books, and more than 4,000 items from the sixteenth century, we have irreplaceable archival collections.

# A week in the life of a History student

Here's an example of how the week's commitments pan out for a current first year undergraduate student who has chosen to study Archaeology and Divinity and Religious Studies alongside their core History courses.

## Monday



**12noon-1pm | Archaeology Lecture**  
Archaeology in Action: An Introduction

By visiting archaeological sites, focusing on some of the world's most spectacular archaeological discoveries and discussing some of the department's own original research, we will explore what the discipline of archaeology adds to our understanding of the human past and present and what tools and techniques archaeologists employ in different environments.

**4pm-5pm | History Lecture**  
Europe in the Twentieth Century

This course provides an introduction to to twentieth-century Europe and history as an academic endeavour. We highlight a selection of major debates about key political, social, economic and other developments.



**12noon-1pm | Divinity & Religious Studies Lecture**  
Religions of the Ancient World

Religions of the ancient world will be explored in their historical, systematic, and practical/ritual dimensions. The course deals with three major religious traditions of antiquity, i.e., Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In addition, the course introduces students to the study of religion, dealing with issues such as: defining religion; insider/outsider problem in the study of religion; belief; and rituals as constitutive elements of the religious phenomena across time and space.

## Tuesday

**9am-10am | History Lecture**  
Making History



## Friday

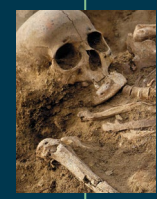
**10am-11am | Study**  
Making History

## Wednesday

**10am-11am | Tutorial**  
Making History

This course will introduce students to the subject of university level history. Team taught lectures will introduce students to approaches, sources, and the dilemmas facing academic historians. In tutorials, you will discuss your interests, your experiences in and expectations of studying History at university level.

**11am-12noon | Tutorial**  
Europe in the Twentieth Century

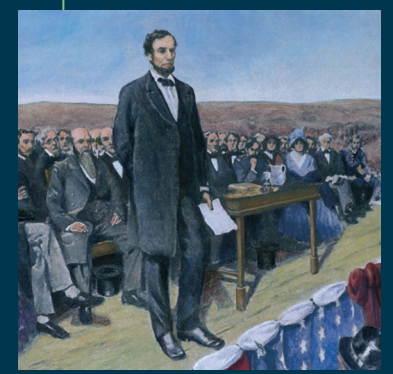


**1pm-2pm | Archaeology Lecture**  
Archaeology in Action: An introduction

**10am-11am | History Lecture**  
Europe in the Twentieth Century

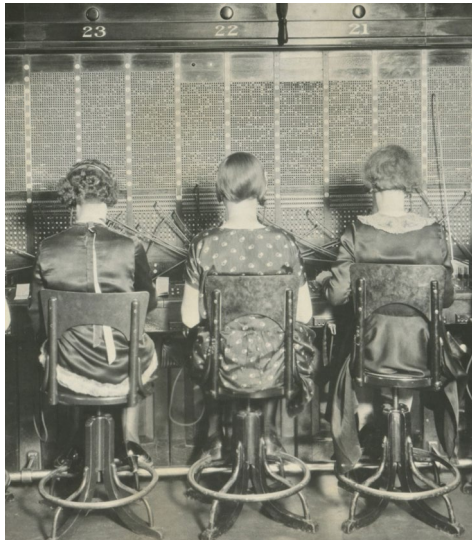
**9am-10am | Divinity & Religious Studies Seminar**  
Religions of the World:  
The Ancient World

## Thursday



# What skills will a History degree from Aberdeen give me?

- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Flexibility
- Analysis
- Relationship-building



History combines excellent training in skills valued by employers with a high degree of interest and enjoyment.

In a world where analysis and communication are ever more important, Aberdeen historians develop core skills essential to most careers – the ability to work independently and in teams, to collate and evaluate evidence and to present arguments clearly and persuasively.

## The Complete University Guide

History is one of the most versatile degrees you can take. It demands painstaking research and eloquent arguments. It'll ask you to analyse and debate, consider and compose, and to tackle some of the broadest, most controversial topics humans have dealt with. It's good training, good enough for almost anything.

## Kirstin Penny MA (Hons) History

People often asked, 'why history?' as if they felt the degree wouldn't lead me into a career, but history gave me multiple perspectives. It gave me a grounding in global politics, socio-economic environments, human psychology, economics, philosophy and many more. Through the study of history you learn to ask, 'why' and to get to the root of an issue, you see multiple solutions because you keep in your mind the knowledge of what went before you. It gave me a career in corporate learning & development where that grounding across multiple disciplines carries me through every project I work on.



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# Graduating Class



## Marlena Joy Nuernberger-Walle



For me, history is both exciting and reassuring. Knowing how things used to be makes it easier to understand the way things are now, and history shows us the importance of human agency - nothing is inevitable, and it is comforting to know that our actions can make a difference. I chose Aberdeen because I liked the amount of freedom Aberdeen offers as far as course choices. With other universities it felt like I had to choose a period/topic right away and I wasn't sure which area of history I like best (I still don't!).



## Alex Kither



Before going into an undergraduate degree at the University of Aberdeen, I was totally unsure which field I wished to pursue and at which institution. But at Aberdeen I was attracted by the impressive faculty, extensive library collection and strong connections with local museums, but the university itself was also a huge pull factor.

To browse through the Aberdeen Bestiary or to walk through the Kings College Quad - these experiences allow you to feel totally immersed in your subject and provoke an extraordinary enthusiasm. Moreover, in the summer, whilst working an internship in marketing, I discovered that the skills of document analysis, research and presentation that I had acquired through my undergraduate courses were totally applicable to the workplace.


The University of Aberdeen history undergraduate programme is a perfect environment to develop your understanding of the subject and enhance your employability.

## What sorts of careers do historians enter?

Focus groups and surveys show that employers highly value what humanities students learn at University. More than nine out of 10 say a job candidate's capacity for thinking and communicating clearly and solving complex problems is more important than his or her degree subject, according to an AAC&U poll. More than three-quarters favour applicants who understand other cultures.


In the past, our graduates have had no difficulty in securing rewarding jobs in a wide variety of sectors, ranging from journalism and broadcasting to teaching and research, finance, consultancy, law and public administration.




**Prof Jackson Armstrong**   
Head of History

Every time I write a reference I see how we teach exactly what employers are looking for: **independence, critical thinking, communication, empathy, interpersonal skills and cultural perspective.**


## Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now?

 I never thought I would have to deal with so many legal documents, yet, having to read and analyse primary sources really isn't any different from analysing a contract. Also, having to form an opinion and back it up in essays has formed a good basis in being a good negotiator. It is not just about what is on the piece of paper after four years, but all the skills you have gained along the way.

**Buyer for a major supermarket chain**

 Yes. It gave me confidence in myself and in my ability with words. It taught me not to always accept the conventional version of events, to try to see the 'big picture', to empathise with the people involved. It was essential in being able to distinguish the critical items from the merely important and to present them in a concise, legible manner.

**CEO, European manufacturing company**

 I quickly found that the training I'd had at Aberdeen... was an excellent preparation: skills in researching a subject, analysing it, and explaining conclusions orally and in writing.

**Civil servant in the Scottish Office**




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