



**MA Hons
English and Scottish
Literature

Handbook

2019-20**

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The University of Edinburgh's MA Honours degree in English and Scottish Literature is unique in the depth and range in which it allows students to explore writing in English. This is due to a concentration on literary studies in the first two years (unusual in the normal curriculum of a Scottish MA degree), and the extent to which the Scottish element of the course broadens the scope of your studies away from the most- often taught writers of the English canon. This degree is in fact the most striking embodiment of the department's approach to literary studies in general, which is that no national literature or cultural tradition can be taught in isolation from others in the same language.

The information below explains how this principle is acted out in each year of the degree. You should read this handbook alongside the course handbooks for your core courses.

THE PRE-HONOURS YEARS (1 & 2)

Like all other students on the Edinburgh MA, in each of your first two years you will take three courses, each course usually taught through a lecture programme combined with a tutorial. However, in both first and second year, the English Literature lecture programme and the Scottish Literature lecture programme overlap, meaning that students taking both get fewer lectures in total than students taking other versions of the MA degree. So to compensate for this, students on the degree in English and Scottish Literature will often find themselves taking a *fourth* class, taught as a tutorial.

The first- and second-year courses in English Literature and Scottish Literature aim to introduce you to the vocabulary and techniques of literary criticism, and to give you a broad knowledge of the development of writing in English from the middle ages to the twentieth century. The extra tutorial courses complement and extend coverage of your core courses.

FIRST YEAR – SEMESTER 1

In the **first** semester of first year you will take

1. English Literature 1;
2. Scottish Literature 1;
3. An outside subject, to be chosen in consultation with your Personal Tutor in Induction Week;
4. A tutorial course : 'Literature at the Borders'.

In this semester, English Literature 1 and Scottish Literature 1 are an introduction to literary studies at university level. They share two ('core') lectures each week: you will attend these, plus one lecture for English Literature 1 students only, and another for Scottish Literature 1 students only. Lectures begin in week 1 of the semester.

Arrangements for 'Literature at the Borders' will be communicated to you in the first Scottish Literature lecture. You do NOT have to sign up for this course with your Personal Tutor, and it will NOT appear among your courses on your student record: it functions as an adjunct to the Scottish Literature 1 course. The 'Literature at the Borders' tutorials, like the tutorials for EL1 and SL1, will begin in week 2 of the semester.

Although you will be attending three tutorial courses in the department instead of two, the total amount of written coursework will be the same as for other first-year students. You will write an essay for 'Literature at the Borders' instead of the English Literature 1 close reading exercise.

FIRST YEAR – SEMESTER 2

In the **second** semester of first year you will take

1. English Literature 1;
2. Scottish Literature 1;
3. An outside subject, to be chosen in consultation with your Personal Tutor in Induction Week.

In this semester, the lecture programmes of English Literature 1 and Scottish Literature 1 do not overlap, due to the distinct approaches to literary history taken in each; so you have enough work on your plate without a supplementary fourth course of the type taken in first semester.

Full details of the English Literature 1 and Scottish Literature 1 courses can be found in their respective handbooks, available on the department website. The degree exams for these courses will address the material covered in second semester only.

SECOND YEAR

In second year you will take

1. English Literature 2;
2. Scottish Literature 2;
3. An outside subject, to be chosen in consultation with your Personal Tutor in Induction Week, which may continue your outside subject in first year, or be something quite new.
4. In each semester, a tutorial course on contemporary drama (in one semester) and contemporary poetry (in the other semester). The particular semester in which poetry or drama is taught will depend on tutor availability in any particular year.

As in the first semester of first year, English Literature 2 and Scottish Literature 2 share two 'core' lectures throughout the year. In each semester of second year, you will skip the first essay of each semester for your SL2 tutor, and write instead an essay for the tutor of your supplementary course on poetry or drama towards the end of each semester.

Arrangements for the first semester complementary course will be communicated to you via your student e-mail account during Welcome Week. You do NOT have to sign up for this course with your Personal Tutor, and it will NOT appear among your courses on your student record: it functions as an adjunct to the Scottish Literature 2 course. The supplementary course tutorials, like the tutorials for EL2 and SL2, will begin in week 2 of the semester.

Full details of the English Literature 2 and Scottish Literature 2 courses can be found in their respective handbooks, available on the department website. The degree exams for these courses will address the material covered in the main lecture courses; your only assessment for the contemporary verse and drama courses is the essay completed at the end of each semester for that tutor.

THE HONOURS YEARS (3 & 4)

Whereas in first and second year you will be doing at least twice as much literary study as a student on the single English Literature or Scottish Literature degrees, your curriculum in third and fourth year, when *all* single-honours students concentrate entirely on literary studies, is indistinguishable from that of other students in the department. You will take a total of eight Honours seminar courses over the two years, four in each year; attend the Critical Practice lecture courses in third year; and write a dissertation in fourth year.

The only requirement of your degree that differs from those of the other degrees is that at least four out of those eight Honours seminar courses should be courses with a significant degree of Scottish content. Those courses which we consider fall into this category are marked on the relevant webpages, and in the course-choice form, with an asterisk: we refer to them as 'starred' courses. However, the number of texts written in Scotland or by Scottish authors covered in such courses varies greatly, from all of them to just two or three texts. Often those texts will be taught in contexts other than a specifically Scottish one: in the context of British Imperialism, for example, or class, or women's writing. Just because a book is written in Scotland does not mean it is *about* Scotland, or that its relation to Scotland is the only interesting thing about it! But by the Honours years you should be familiar with the wide variety of approaches that we can take in reading literary texts, so this should be no surprise.

When the department comes to assign courses, students on this degree, and on others with Scottish Literature in their title, have priority for starred courses. You have the same free choice of topic for your dissertation as students on our other degrees. However, if you should choose to do dissertation work in Scottish Literature, the dissertation would count as two of the required courses with Scottish content.