

Deciding on Honours?



What makes the Honours year special?
Will it help you to get a better job?
Will it be very difficult?
What's in it for you?

These are just some of the questions that you might ask yourself when thinking about your exit route from Edinburgh Napier.

Deciding on Honours...

Scotland is unique within the UK in allowing you to graduate with an Ordinary degree or an Honours degree. Here at Edinburgh Napier you can choose your degree exit point. This is an important decision. What factors do you need to consider?

"Honours complements all the hard work done in years one, two and three. It's a great year for networking and learning transferable skills." (Fiona, FHLSS)

What makes the Honours year unique?

What's the Honours year all about? It's designed to be testing and to be stimulating – you'll be expected to really focus on your subject area and to explore topics in more depth. What makes Honours really different from previous years at university is that you will be asked to undertake an in-depth dissertation or project report. This is a large piece of work that you have to organise and it requires a lot of thought and effort. It can be a bit daunting at first because you have to choose your own topic area and undertake the research by yourself. But you quickly build on your existing skills and many students say it is the most rewarding part of their Honours year.

Honours is a great opportunity to deepen your subject knowledge

"Being an Honours student gives you satisfaction and independence; you will have freedom to conduct research that you are both interested in and passionate about. In a sense, it is more about you and what motivates you about your subject area." (Denise, Business School)

Doing a dissertation is at the heart of the year

"My dissertation has allowed me to link all the different modules over the last 4 years together and apply them to a new topic. It's been a thoroughly enjoyable experience to do my own research rather than just reading about everyone else's!" (Nicola, Business School)

"Unlike years 1 to 3 when you more or less have to follow the syllabus, the Honours dissertation really gives you the chance to study and focus on an area or issue of law you are interested in. Although at times demanding, you can experiment with new research skills (such as interviews and questionnaires) and is a great way to produce your own, unique research" (Angela, Business School)

Career benefits of Honours

The great advantage of an Honours degree is that it opens up lots of opportunities in the labour market. For example, many employers look only for students with an Honours degree. This is especially the case outside of Scotland where the Ordinary degree is unusual. Graduate training schemes often require entrants to have an Honours degree. So, the final year at university gives you a head start in a labour market that is becoming very competitive. And, best of all, an Honours degree helps you to secure a better starting salary once you leave university.

Opening up a wide range of careers and professions

“During my last year at Edinburgh Napier, I acquired and developed the skills essential to pursue my dreams in the commercial music industry.”
(Paul, FECCI)

Important in getting you noticed by potential employers

“An Honours degree shows motivation and a ‘get ahead’ mentality. A must for our fast-changing working environment.”
(Stuart, CISCO)

Opportunities now... and in the future

An Honours degree opens up a whole range of opportunities for lifelong learning. You have more options to undertake graduate studies just now, as well to return to studying later on in your career. This is especially important if you find you want to change direction and retrain later on in life. You will find that many universities say an Honours degree is ‘essential’ or ‘highly desirable’ when applying for graduate study. Whatever the circumstances, an Honours degree gives you improved access to lifelong learning.

Going on to further study

“A fourth year is a worthwhile and important step to postgraduate study. To miss it would put you at a disadvantage compared to others, especially for younger postgraduate students.” (John, FHLSS)

“The fourth year acts a springboard to a research or teaching career.”
(Fiona, FHLSS)

Honours: what's in it for me?

The Honours year is a great time to further develop your personal and academic skills, as well as to learn more about your subject. The year is designed to be stretching and completing it will give you great confidence in your ability to succeed. This confidence is invaluable in helping you make the next steps in your chosen path. And there is immense personal satisfaction in being able to produce a big piece of academic work like a dissertation or project. Many students struggle with the dissertation, but get there in the end, and this can be a very rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Here's what Maria thought...

"The honours year just isn't like any other year. The courses tend to be very focused and specialised. Your relationship with the tutors is different too because it's less formal and there's lots of discussion and debate. But more than anything what makes the honours year stand out is having your own Honours project. This is your own piece of independent research, which you undertake with your own expert supervisor. I'll never forget picking up my final project from the printers, and feeling 'wow, this is my work!'. And you just never know where it will take you. All of us got jobs on the basis of our projects. My project led to a Masters. Eventually, I hope, it will lead to a PhD."
(Maria, Business School)

Making the decision: FAQs

Who can I ask for help?

Help is offered by a range of people in the university including your PDT or programme leader. Guidance is also offered by our Student Advisers. Please contact sar@napier.ac.uk

How can I carry on studying when I don't want to get into more debt?

It's important to weigh up the short term costs of the extra year and the potential financial benefits it may bring in the longer term. One extra year of debt might be a small price to pay compared to a potential lifetime of higher salaries.

Can I take some time out before starting Honours?

Yes, in many cases this is possible, but not all. Please check with your programme leader. You can often take a break from your studies and come back later to do Honours, provided that the programme of study is still on offer. This is can be very helpful, for example if you want to earn some extra money, meet other family commitments or have some time to reflect on your future.

Can I graduate with an Ordinary degree, change my mind and come back to do the Honours year?

Yes, Edinburgh Napier provides the flexibility to do this. You will be admitted to the Honours year, subject to the programme of study still being on offer.