

Gaelic Strategy 2023-28

1. Introduction

Gaelic is a central pillar of Scotland's rich heritage, national identity and cultural life and UHI North, West and Hebrides (UHI NWH) acknowledges that Gaelic is fundamental to its ethos and the region it serves.

Gaelic and English each have their own intrinsic value and we endeavour to ensure that they both have their rightful place in the work that we do. This strategy makes provision for Gaelic to be represented within our curriculum offer and in our work with communities and stakeholders.

The largest concentration of Gaelic speakers in Scotland is in the Outer Hebrides where 61 per cent of people aged three and over having some skills in the language. Highland region is home to the second highest concentration.¹

2. Background and Context

The National Gaelic Language Plan identifies key interlinking aspects of Gaelic language development and sets out a number of priority action areas for Gaelic language revitalisation and growth. Research, including current research led by UHI's Language Sciences Institute, has shown that an increased emphasis on community-focused language policy is essential for the revitalisation and development of Gaelic.

As asserted in the National Plan for Scotland's Islands, investment in Gaelic generates positivity. It creates a sense of self and of community and can make a substantial contribution to driving economic activity. It also offers significant opportunities for future economic growth. The Plan also highlights the symbiotic relationship between Gaelic and community, i.e. while Gaelic is important to the community, a thriving community is also important to the survival of Gaelic.

UHI NWH, as one of the largest tertiary education provider in the region and is uniquely situated to help drive forward a revitalisation of Gaelic language and culture across that region. The College recognises the importance of bringing College and community together and recognises the value of our Gaelic heritage. Therefore, UHI NWH will work with heritage and community groups to protect this heritage and to promote it as a community asset. UHI NWH is also strategically situated to contribute to the development of the Gaelic economy. The College can play a key role in developing Gaelic language and culture as an economic driver and in strengthening links between Gaelic and employability.

¹ <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

The Strategy builds upon existing strengths and partnerships, including those with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Council and community organisations such as Ceòlas on the Cnoc Soilleir project and community trusts. This emphasis on partnership working will develop stronger interdisciplinary activity between Gaelic language, culture & heritage and short course provision.

Purpose

As Gaelic has been identified in the merger business case as a key area of curriculum growth, this strategy outlines the shape of UHI NWH's approach to the development and delivery of Gaelic language, heritage and culture over the next five years. It sets out strategic priority areas alongside their key objectives – the targets against which our progress will be reviewed. This strategy will be delivered through our Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28.

Scope

UHI NWH will set out a framework of priorities for developing and delivering the college's commitment to Gaelic language, culture and heritage. The Gaelic language strategy is informed by a range of external and internal strategies and plans, including UHI *Gaelic Language Plan 2022-25* and *UHI Islands' Strategy* and we remain committed to the objectives outlined in Bòrd na Gàidhlig's *National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23*.

UHI Gaelic Language Plan 2022-25

UHI *Gaelic Language Plan 2022-25* is enabling across UHI academic partners and activities and has been developed within the context of the UHI mission *Where Learning Means More* and the *Daring to be Different* strategic plan. UHI NWH will adopt this plan, work to contribute to its success and contextualise it to embody our own values and behaviours, aims and objectives.

UHI's *Gaelic Language Plan* contains a set of core commitments:

- Enhancing the place, visibility and usage of Gaelic within the university's core business of education and research, including the proactive engagement with Gaelic-speaking communities in the region;
- Ensuring that the student experience affirms the principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English;
- Promoting the bilingual identity of the university through our corporate communications and marketing arrangements;
- Encouraging and supporting all staff, regardless of their role, and wherever they are employed within the university partnership, to appreciate, acquire and develop Gaelic language skills.

These core commitments align with our mission, vision, values, and behaviours.

3. Our Strategic Priorities Areas and Objectives

Our *Gaelic Language Strategy 2023-28* will provide the framework to deliver across three key themes, which align with UHI NWH's Gaelic Language Plan: :

- Community and Heritage; ([NWH GLP Strategic Priority: Theme 1](#)) ([NWH GLP Strategic Priority: Theme 4](#))
- Curriculum and research; ([NWH GLP Strategic Priority: Theme 2](#))
- The Gaelic Economy; ([NWH GLP Strategic Priority: Theme 3](#))

Theme: Community and Heritage ([NWH Operational Plan: Project 1; Project 2; Project 5; Project 8; Project 14](#))

Strategic Priority areas

- **To expand Gaelic language learning and usage across the region and digitally;**
- **To support the development of culture and heritage as a community asset.**

Key objectives:

1. Develop a suite of Gaelic language courses for parents of children in GME, from beginner to fluent speakers;
2. Develop a Gaelic creative writing short course;
3. Utilise the expertise of traditional Gaelic communities in our activities and programmes;
4. Collaborate with Ceòlas and other community groups to accredit community language provision;
5. Cater for the needs of the Gaelic diaspora, by expanding our online programmes of language, culture and heritage;
6. Increase community use of Gaelic in informal settings by further developing our Gaelic mentoring scheme and conversational sessions.

Success Criteria:

- 1.1 The number of Gaelic language enrolments increases annually until resource limits are reached;
- 1.2 At least one community-based Seasonal School will be delivered within each AY during the lifetime of the Strategy;
- 1.3 The effectiveness of these courses is tested within appropriate annual review reports;
- 1.4 At least one external stakeholder representing the Gaelic community joins an appropriate quality review team and makes an active contribution to the review of the development/delivery of Gaelic language provision;
- 1.5 Community based provision is expanded annually and is reflected in the appropriate review document;
- 1.6 Collaborations and accreditations are included within appropriate review documents;
- 1.8 The review of the experiences and further needs of the Gaelic diaspora should be incorporated into appropriate review documents and their views acted upon;
- 1.9 The mentoring scheme should be reported on annually and reflect any increase in the use of Gaelic resulting from the work of the college.
- 2.0 An annual programme of culture and heritage themed talks and lectures will be

delivered in Gaelic online.

Theme: Curriculum and research ([NWH Operational Plan: Project 4; Project 6; Project 9; Project 10; Project 11; Project 12; Project 15](#))

Strategic Priority areas

- **To develop and strengthen links between Gaelic and employability;**
- **To support and encourage latent speakers/adult returners to fluency;**
- **To expand Gaelic language learning and usage across the region and digitally.**

Key objectives:

1. Maintain and develop clear tertiary progression pathways across our Gaelic curriculum;
2. Increase the number of Gaelic language & Gaelic culture courses delivered online to widen accessibility;
3. Offer Gaelic language staff development programmes for beginner to fluent speakers;
4. Offer Gaelic awareness training for new staff and board members;
5. Develop micro-credentials and vocational provisions for business, tourism, health and social care, and children and young people sectors;
6. Increase our involvement in Gaelic related research activity and projects;
7. Build on our involvement in Gaelic activity and projects;
8. Offer capacity building courses for teaching practitioners to move into GME;
9. Develop programmes for ancillary GME staff requirements i.e. Early Years, speech therapy as ASN;
10. Pilot the delivery of Gaelic provision within at least 2 programme frameworks;
11. Support the development of part time PGDE (Gaelic medium) primary and secondary programmes within UHI to widen access and address workforce shortages in our region;
12. Increase enrolments on Year 1 & 2 of the undergraduate programme for Gaelic medium primary and secondary teacher education.

Success Criteria:

- 2.1 There are clear and marketed pathways to all Gaelic programmes;
- 2.2 Staff development programmes have been developed and delivered by session 2023/24;
- 2.3 The numbers of staff enrolling and completing successfully increases annually from then onwards;
- 2.4 The scope and effectiveness of progression pathways is reviewed within appropriate quality review documents;
- 2.5 Our commitment to embed Gaelic options across programmes has been achieved through assessment within appropriate programme/departmental quality review documents;
- 2.6 Our Skills + Portfolio has been updated and quality assured to ensure it develops Gaelic language and culture by session 2024/25;
- 2.7 The number of Gaelic programmes delivered online increases annually until resource limits are reached;
- 2.8 The scope and effectiveness of Gaelic programmes are assessed within appropriate quality review documents;
- 2.9 At least two pieces of research activity or projects have been initiated or undertaken within the lifespan of this strategy;

- 2.8 The number of appropriate undergraduate enrolments increases annually during the period of this strategy;
- 2.9 A flexible delivery model of PGDE (Gaelic medium) primary and secondary programmes has been developed and is offered for enrolment by the end of the strategy;
- 2.10 A flexible delivery model for Year 1 & 2 of the undergraduate programme for Gaelic medium primary and secondary teacher education has been developed and offered for enrolment by the end of the strategy.

Theme: The Gaelic economy ([NWH Operational Plan: Project 3; Project 7; Project 13; Project 16](#))

Strategic Priority areas:

- To support the development of Gaelic language and culture as an economic asset;
- To develop and strengthen links between Gaelic and employability.

Key objectives:

- 3.1 Establish a translation and cultural services agency;
- 3.2 Provide cultural services/support to the tourism industry;
- 3.3 Explore commercial opportunities for partnership working.

Success Criteria

- 3.1 Translation of UHI NWH press releases, social media posts and website material delivered in-house.
- 3.2 Translation service provided to at least 2 new clients each year;
- 3.3 Develop micro-credentials for the tourism sector;
- 3.4 Deliver at least two commercial events each year such as half-day/day language & cultural course.