

**GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN**

**2025 -2030**

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

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# 1. Introduction

### About the University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen (UoA), founded in 1495, is the third oldest University in Scotland and the fifth oldest in the UK. It is renowned for world-leading research in health, energy, food and nutrition, environmental and biological sciences as well as for an outstanding track-record for arts and humanities research. UoA has a community of more than 130 nationalities, with 16,000 students and 3,500 staff.

The University has always had a close connection with the Gaelic community. It is believed that one of the University’s founding fathers, Bishop Elphinstone, knew the learned classical Gaelic language. There is old Gaelic around his tomb in acknowledgement of the historic connection between scholarship and Gaelic at this University. Traditionally many Gaels chose University of Aberdeen as their alma mater. The Celtic society is one of the oldest student societies at the University and is thriving to this day. Many Gaelic scholars have passed through the doors of the University as students or staff e.g. Professor John Stuart Blackie, studied at the University in the 1820s and was appointed Chair in Humanities in the 1830s. In the first half of the twentieth century, the late Professor of Gaelic Derick S. Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais) and author Iain Crichton Smith (Iain Mac a’ Ghobhainn) studied at the University; Thomson later became the Head of the University’s Celtic Department in 1956. In more recent years, the renowned Gaelic scholar Donald MacAulay was a Reader in Celtic and Donald Meek held the first Chair in Celtic at the University.

Our foundational purpose is to be “open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others”. We still have that purpose and aim to enrich lives through our research, teaching, learning and sharing of knowledge to push boundaries and deliver our [Aberdeen 2040](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/2040/) strategic plan.

### The University Gaelic Language Plan and Aberdeen 2040

Aberdeen 2040 is the University’s twenty-year strategy based on creating excellence by being Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable .

Through our *Inclusive* commitments we aim to create an inclusive working and learning environment which celebrates the diversity of our staff and students, recognising this is a strength of our University. Our Inclusive commitments have a key strategic link to Gaelic language. The University’s GLP supports and increases the use and learning of Gaelic language and thereby increases the inclusivity of the Gaelic community.

The GLP makes commitments to *Interdisciplinary* research into Gaelic and students can study Gaelic with other subjects. This supports the *Sustainability* of the Gaelic language. By having a robust and ambitious GLP, we commit to sustaining Gaelic use in the University and to support this across Scotland.

Our *International* commitments have a strategic link to Gaelic through our provision of international education to learners from around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community and developing our campuses to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences. The GLP aspires to engage with the Gaelic diaspora around the world, for example, by enabling Gaelic language to be taken in combination with other subjects.

Teaching and research is primarily based at our Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill campuses. Teaching is organised across 12 academic Schools which encompass a broad range of disciplines.

The preparation and implementation of the University’s GLP is overseen by the University’s Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG) reports. A member of the University’s senior management team has executive responsibility for oversight of UoA’s Gaelic Language Plan. The University has a Gaelic Language Development Officer responsible for assisting with the development and implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan. The GLPAG group reports to the strategic body for EDI, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC).

### Gaelic in Aberdeen

**Education**

Aberdeen continues to offer Gaelic education opportunities for people of all ages. In the city there is a parent and child group (ages 0-5), a Gaelic medium nursery and primary unit, as well as a secondary school offering pupils the opportunity to undertake Gàidhlig N4/5, Higher and Advanced Highers. During the 2023-24 academic year, there were 33 Gaelic Medium Education pupils in Aberdeen, along with a further 16 pupils studying Gaelic at secondary school level plus 6 learners with the outdoor and Gaelic learning course. More information about Gaelic education provision in Aberdeen is available on the Aberdeen City Council website and the Gaelic Language Plan webpage.

**Language & Culture**

Aberdeen has a *Gaelic club*, which offers language and cultural events where speakers can use Gaelic as well as evening and weekend language tuition for all levels. In autumn 2023 there were 105 adults learning Gaelic with the Aberdeen Gaelic Club. Aberdeen has a *Gaelic Choir* and *a Fèis*, which is part of a wider network of Gaelic arts festivals and offers a week-long Fèis during the Easter holidays as well as weekly classes for some instruments. In September 2024 Aberdeen will run a local Mòd for the first time. The Gaelic community in Aberdeen comes together once a month for a ‘Srùbag’, a ‘coffee afternoon’, with activities for adults and children including Gaelic language classes and conversation circles, music classes, craft activities and a Gaelic children’s choir. Details about local and national Gaelic organisations, including where to find Gaelic resources and classes will be available on our Gaelic Language Plan webpage.

**Census Data**

Since the launch of our first Gaelic Language Plan, census data from 2022 has been released, providing new insight into the number of Gaelic-speakers in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Since 2011, the number of persons in Aberdeen with abilities in the language rose from 3,174 to 5969. In Aberdeenshire, there was a remarkable increase from 2,721 to 7087 people who reported an ability in the language. The number of Gaelic speakers has also increased to 2219 from 1,636 speakers in Aberdeen City and from to 2980 from 1,400 speakers in Aberdeenshire.

### gaelic at the University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen has a long, rich Gaelic history, which is continued through our provision of a broad range of courses relating to Gaelic language, culture, and literature.

Over the period of the last Gaelic Language Plan, we have continued to provide opportunities for students to undertake a degree in Gaelic, or to learn the language through two years of Sustained Study, which has enabled the University to bring the language to a wider audience. Our Gaelic courses and degree programmes are supported by the University’s Gaelic Department, which is part of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC).

Teaching the Gaelic language is the most significant way in which we support the national aim of increasing the number of Gaelic speakers. On average, 1.7% of our undergraduate intake each year register for Gaelic language courses. We offer Gaelic courses for learners and native speakers alike. This gives graduates the linguistic skills to confidently use the language and provides them with a wider background in the literature and culture, which has inspired many graduates to move into careers where they can use the language and support its development.

There are opportunities for staff to join a Gaelic undergraduate course, and information about Gaelic classes and learning resources (outwith the University) are promoted on the University’s Gaelic Plan webpage.

Our Gaelic academics in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture are leading researchers in their fields and have significant links with Gaelic stakeholders. Whilst previously being the co-lead and initiator of the Soillse Research Network, researchers continue to contribute to national policy directions with a specialism in adult language teaching; they have recently cooperated with a private multinational company to launch a new Gaelic learning app for intermediate learners,  [Glossika](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cadf114%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CQQ2MJO23%5C%20Glossika) - the design and roll-out of this app, which is free of charge to all, as well as [Gàidhlig na Cagailte](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/disciplines/gaelic/gaidhlig-na-cagailte-1528.php) – another free learning resource and [Lapach gu Lìomhte](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/disciplines/gaelic/lapach-gu-lomhte-1660.php). This is indicative of the University’s commitment to the core aim of the National Plan in creating new speakers of Gaelic. In addition to this the University houses the [National Centre for Gaelic Translation](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/research/national-centre-for-gaelic-translation-1605.php) for research into Gaelic translation and researchers make active contributions to community language planning initiatives as well as cultural research projects. The University also publishes the leading journal in the field: *Scottish Gaelic Studies*.

This is our third Gaelic Language Plan. Our previous Plans have set out ambitious commitments to increase Gaelic provision, increase the visibility of Gaelic and its use across the University. In the delivery of our previous Plans, we have made advances in increasing the visibility and use of Gaelic, such as by adding bi-lingual signage to our main entrance, including Gaelic in our graduation ceremony, having Gaelic represented at our Welcome Fair and other University events and creating a Gaelic Staff Network as part of our BeWell Network. Through these activities, we have been able to progress the principle of equal respect being afforded to Gaelic and English.

The University regularly delivers Gaelic activities for staff, students and the wider public. We have a weekly Gaelic conversation circle where students and staff can practice their Gaelic, we have piloted lunch time ‘Eat and Learn’ Gaelic language sessions and we organised a week of talks, workshops and events as part of ‘Seachdain na Gàidhlig’ (World Gaelic Week) which was well attended by staff, students and the public.

The achievements in Gaelic over the lifespan of the previous Plan have been delivered in a challenging context including the COVID-19 pandemic and sector-level financial challenges. In developing this Gaelic Language Plan, we have given careful consideration to previous commitments as well as to our institutional strategic priorities, as set out in the Aberdeen 2040 strategy. We have carried some commitments and actions into this Plan and ensured that the Plan supports the delivery of the National Gaelic Language Plan.

### The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act) was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

One of the key features of the Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic language plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.

This document is the University of Aberdeen’s Gaelic Language Plan prepared within the framework of the Act. It sets out how we will use Gaelic in the operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.

The University of Aberdeen’s Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the Act and having regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

### The National Gaelic Language Plan

The University of Aberdeen supports the aim of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23.

We are committed to the achieving this aim by focussing our work on the overall aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan which are:

* Increase the use of Gaelic.
* Increase the learning of Gaelic.

2. Key Principles

### Equal Respect

The University of Aberdeen will ensure that where Gaelic is included as part of our operations and services, we will ensure they are of an equal standard and quality as those that we provide in English.

### Active offer

The University of Aberdeen will make an active offer of our Gaelic services to our staff, students and the public. This will ensure that where Gaelic services are made available by us, Gaelic users are made aware of their existence, and are actively encouraged to use them.

This will take the responsibility away from the individual to ask for the service and will give Gaelic users the confidence to know that their needs will be met if that is their choice.

We will ensure that our Gaelic language services are as accessible as our English language services.

### Normalising

The University of Aberdeen will ensure that opportunities for the public and our staff to use Gaelic are normalised, in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan’s aims.

# 3. Plan Commitments

### Strategic Priorities

This Gaelic Language Plan sets out our plan for how we will embed Gaelic within our services and operations across the University as well as within our corporate communications with the public and key partners. We have embedded the key principles of equal respect, active offer and normalising Gaelic, as set out above, and building on the University’s successes to date.

In preparing the Plan we have had due regard to statutory provisions and to the National Gaelic Language Plan.

The University’s strategic priorities are set out below.

**Outreach: Increasing the Use of Gaelic**

Maintain meaningful relationships with key Gaelic partners and stakeholders across the City of Aberdeen and beyond, through our civic engagement agendas and where appropriate, initiate new partnerships to realise shared national ambitions for a prosperous and sustainable future for Gaelic in both Scottish and international communities.

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| **Commitment** |
| We will offer Gaelic Language Awareness Training to external public and private organisations.  |
| We will offer community support to local Gaelic organisations and our local authority, including: * hosting the Aberdeen Fèis (Fèis Obar Dheathain) once a year,
* hosting the Aberdeen Gaelic Club (Club Gàidhlig Obar Dheathain) once a month,
* hosting the Aberdeen Gaelic Choir (Còisir Ghàidhlig Obar Dheathain) and the local Aberdeen Mòd, if and as required
* develop links with local Gaelic speaking religious services within Aberdeen and the surrounding areas
* Developing a close relationship with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council and offer information, support and practical advice
 |
| We will investigate offering an online Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme.  |
| We will offer our Gaelic students opportunities to engage with local schools as ambassadors for learning and studying Gaelic.  |
| We will facilitate work experience opportunities in the local GME unit and Academy for our Gaelic students. |

#### Teaching: Increasing the learning of Gaelic

Continue to respond to the needs of the University’s diverse student community through a student-centred and active learning approach to learning and teaching, underpinned by curricula that addresses the needs of, and challenges faced by minority language communities, and which supports the professional and skills development of students.

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| **Commitment** |
| We will deliver courses in Gaelic language and culture at SCQF level 7-10.  |
| We will offer supervision in Gaelic-related post-graduate studies. |
| We will investigate new market opportunities to promote the study of Gaelic e.g. North America. |
| We will investigate opportunities in North America for support for Gaelic Studies at the University e.g. sponsorship or fundraising |
| We will develop new marketing materials to promote Gaelic study opportunities - online |

#### Research

In line with the University’s strategy – Aberdeen 2040, we will carry out interdisciplinary research on Gaelic language and society that is impactful and will strengthen the status of Gaelic. Where possible, we will seek to develop meaningful collaborations and we will explore different ways of communicating our research on Gaelic.

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| **Commitment** |
| We will contribute to major relevant inter-university research projects. |
| We will publish the pre-eminent Gaelic academic journal Scottish Gaelic Studies. |
| We will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Gaelic society through academic publishing and related knowledge transfer initiatives. |

#### Promoting the positive image of Gaelic

In the following section we have responded to high-level aims of the National Language Plan and carried forward commitments from the previous iteration of University of Aberdeen’s Gaelic Language Plan 2019 – 2024 and continue to identify opportunities to develop the presence of Gaelic in our operations.

**1. Promote the use of Gaelic in signage, branding and corporate communications**

| **Bòrd na Gàidhlig High-Level Aims**  | **Our Commitment** |
| --- | --- |
| **1.Logo and brand**Render the corporate logo and branding in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process. The logo should demonstrate equal prominence for both languages | 1.1 We will develop a bilingual logo.1.2 We will ensure that our bilingual logo, once developed, is used on our website, our corporate stationary and offered as an option for email signatures.1.3 We will embed our commitment to Gaelic in our revised branding guidance. |
| **2.Signage and Placenames**Signage will include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process.Gaelic place name advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is sought and used. | 2.1 We will ensure that all our signage at main entrances and reception areas are bilingual.2.2 On first installation or on renewal of signage, in our estate or digital signage, we will install fully bilingual signage. |
| **Promotion**3. Promotion of positive messages that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome are regularly repeated. | 3.1 We will use communication channels to promote the University’s Gaelic Language Plan, including the Staff News, plasma screens and social media.3.2 We will ensure that promotional materials for the University’s Gaelic language courses, including related prospectuses, will be produced in a bilingual format. 3.5 We will encourage staff to use the Gaelic language online resource, for example bilingual email signatures.3.8 We will design Gaelic clothing and merchandise to be sold at the University shop.3.9 We will develop and produce portable banners featuring bilingual content about the history of the University. |
| 4. **Written communication** in Gaelic is always accepted (post, email and social media) and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy. | 4.1 We will continue to ensure that mail and emails received in Gaelic by the University receive a response in Gaelic.4.2 We will include Gaelic in our graduation ceremonies, exhibitions and events. |
| **5. Reception and phone**Where Gaelic speaking staff can provide this service, they are supported to do so, and the service is promoted to the public. If there are not staff available to deliver this, capacity will be built through training and recruitment.  | 5.1 We will provide Gaelic language training for front of house staff and will include a bilingual message in the University’s main switchboard for out-of-hours callers. |
| **6. News releases**High profile news releases and all news releases related to Gaelic are circulated in both Gaelic and English. | 6.1We will produce high profile and Gaelic-related media releases bilingually through professional translators. |
| **7. Website**Gaelic content should be available on the public authority’s website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach, working towards fully bilingual website in those geographical locations in which the percentages or numbers of Gaelic speakers is greater, speakers in the community, this will be expected as standard. | 7.1 We will increase the relevant bilingual web content. |
| **8. Corporate Publications**Produced in Gaelic and English, with priority given to those with the highest potential reach and impact. | 8.1 We will increase our bilingual corporate publications, produced by professional translators, and ensure the Principal’s Foreword will be bilingual when publishing Financial Reviews.  |
| **9. Language and Gaelic Orthographic Conventions**A process is in place to ensure that the quality and accessibility of Gaelic language in all corporate information is high.The most recent Gaelic Orthographic Conventions will be followed in relation to all written materials produced by the public authority. | 9.1 We will use professional translation services to ensure quality and accessibility for all official translations.9.2 Translations will be spell-checked to ensure adherence to Gaelic orthographic conventions. |

**2. Highlight Gaelic in public engagement**

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| **Bòrd na Gàidhlig High-Level Aims**  | **Our Commitment** |
| **10. Public meetings**Opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic are regularly explored and promoted. In those geographical locations in which the percentages or numbers of Gaelic speakers is greater, working towards this will be expected as standard. | 10.1 We will include Gaelic language in key University events and relevant public meetings.  |
| **11. Media / Social Media**Gaelic content distributed regularly through social media, working towards fully bilingual social media. | 11.1 We will create a list of willing Gaelic speaking academics and distribute this to Gaelic media, so that they can add them to their contacts list.11.2 We will encourage Gaelic media to use the University as a location for filming/recording and help them to find interviewees.11.3 We will produce bilingual social media content for promoting Gaelic themed events, study and research.  |
| **12. Exhibitions and Events**Opportunities to deliver public exhibitions bilingually or in Gaelic should be explored on a regular basis, with priority given to those with the highest potential impact. | 12.1 We will deliver at least one exhibition biennially that has a Gaelic focus.12.2 We will review our collection and archives to create a Gaelic database resource for future exhibitions.12.3 We will deliver at least one Gaelic themed event every year.12.4 We will participate in Seachdain na Gaidhlig / World Gaelic Week every year. 12.6 We will incorporate Gaelic into the University’s Cruickshank Botanic Gardens. |

**3. Encourage the use of Gaelic by staff and students**

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| **Bòrd na Gàidhlig High-Level Aims**  | **Our Commitment** |
| **13. Internal audit**Conduct an internal audit of Gaelic skills and training needs through the life of each edition of the plan. | 13.1 We will continue to identify levels of Gaelic language skills amongst staff in the biennial staff survey. |
| **14. Induction**Knowledge of the public authority’s Gaelic language plan and training opportunities are embedded in new staff inductions. | 14.1 We will include Gaelic language awareness within staff induction programmes. |
| **15. Language training** Gaelic language skills training and development, delivered to staff, particularly in relation to implementing the public authority’s Gaelic language plan. | 15.1 We will encourage key staff, who are involved in the implementation of the University’s Gaelic Language Plan, to develop their Gaelic language skills. |
| **16. Using Gaelic**Staff are encouraged to use Gaelic in their work. | 16.1 We will deliver initiatives to support the use of Gaelic on campus, such as the Gaelic staff network, the Gaelic book lending library and Gaelic conversation circles. 16.2 We will deliver an annual Gaelic careers event for students and staff.16.3 We will create a Gaelic language online resource, including simple Gaelic phrases, greetings, basic vocabulary, and job titles. We will include instructions for installing Gaelic language packs on Office 365 and University PCs. 16.4 We will encourage our staff to consider the development of their Gaelic language skills as part of their yearly development reviews as appropriate and raise awareness of the Gaelic Staff Network. |
| **17. Awareness training**Gaelic awareness training delivered, with priority given to senior staff, other key decision makers and staff dealing directly with the public. | 17.1 We will provide Gaelic language and awareness training for staff within academic Schools and Directorates, with priority given to GLPAG members and Communications team staff.  |
| **18. Recruitment**Gaelic language skills are recognised and respected within the recruitment process throughout the public authority. Gaelic named as an essential and / or desirable skill in job descriptions in order to deliver the Gaelic language plan and in accordance with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig recruitment advice. Bilingual or Gaelic only job adverts for all posts where Gaelic is an essential skill. | 18.1 We will recommend that Gaelic language skills become a desirable criterion for University posts.18.2 We will ensure that at least one new post with Gaelic as an essential skill is designated or created within the lifetime of this edition of the Plan.18.3 We will ensure that roles for which a proficiency in Gaelic is identified as essential are advertised and interviewed bilingually. |

# 4. Implementation and Monitoring

**Delivery of the plan**

The delivery of the University’s Gaelic Language Plan will be over the period 2025-2030 and will be enabled by the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG).

We will seek to support the Gaelic Language Development Officer post, through sharing the cost with Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Alternative arrangements will be established if required. Where there is a need for additional funding, as a result of implementation of the Plan, we will identify the requisite costs in the annual budget process. External funding may be sought for individual projects.

**Governance**

The Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG) has a remit to implement this Plan and it is chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team, reflecting the importance the University places on championing and promoting the Gaelic language. The Group comprises staff from various Schools and Directorates, including Gaelic speakers. The Aberdeen University Students’ Association is represented on the Group.

The GLPAG will report on the progress of delivering the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) to the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) on an annual basis. EDIC reports to the University’s Senior Management Team (SMT) and to Court on an annual basis.

**Monitoring**

The progress of the Plan will be a standing item on the agenda of GLPAG, which will have overall responsibility for monitoring and advising on the Plan. We will prepare an annual monitoring report as required by Bòrd na Gàidhlig for consideration by GLPAG and SMT.

We will continue to ensure the GLP is aligned with our University Aberdeen 2040 strategy.

**Services delivered by third parties**

When we work with external organisations, we will make them aware of the Gaelic Language Plan and will seek to ensure that they engage with the principles of the Plan, as appropriate.

### Consultation on the draft Gaelic Language Plan

We will include the results of the public consultation in the final draft of the plan.

### Responsibility

The interim Convener of the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG) has overall responsibility for preparation, delivery and monitoring of University of Aberdeen’s Gaelic Language Plan. They can be contacted as follows:

Professor Peter Edwards

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The Gaelic Language Development Officer has day-to-day responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the University of Aberdeen’s Gaelic Language Plan. Queries regarding the day-to-day operation of the plan should be addressed to:

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**Publishing the plan**

Aberdeen University’s Gaelic Language Plan will be published in Gaelic and in English on our website. In addition, we will:

* issue a bilingual press release announcing the plan.
* publicise the plan through a variety of social media platforms.
* distribute copies to arms-length organisations and other third-party organisations, explaining their role in the delivery of the plan.
* distribute copies of the plan to key stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors.
* distribute copies of the plan to relevant Gaelic organisations and other interested bodies make hard copies available on request.