

Response 1 – 4/6/12

Dear Mr Tait

I would be interested to know overall the potential cost implications of the provisions proposed here.

Considering the university of Edinburgh will be charging Rest of UK students £9,000 per annum next year it seems potentially unjust to invest a large amount of money in Gaelic, based of the results of a survey overwhelmingly responded to by those with a vested interest in having greater provision for the language; namely those taken Gaelic language courses.

I would suggest that the uptake of the survey is too low to be statistically significant - the cross-section appears to be too narrow and I would question how many students at the University of Edinburgh who felt negatively about adopting of greater Gaelic language provision chose to ignore the survey altogether.

Whilst in real terms the number taking the survey was high, in relative terms the % of students taking it was incredibly low. For a survey of the School of Social & Political Science a survey with a response rate of approximately 12% was statistically insignificant for much of its findings to be directly worth implementation.

I will of course be wholly honest and say I was heavily against the provision of greater Gaelic if it would cost the majority in favour of a minority and if it would mean a large provision of bilingual materials (which the consultation doesn't suggest it would) so I am clearly very biased in my view. Considering the gaelic language is a part of Scotland's history and would be of little relevance to those other than students studying the language or Celtic studies / Scottish History I would be dismayed if the majority of students paid the price in the attempt to promote Scottish nationalism.

Kind regards

Mike Yeomans

Response 2 – 7/6/12

A charaid chòir,

As an Edinburgh alumnus, I welcome the Gaelic Language Plan and broadly agree with the plan as laid out. However, there is one issue regarding Chapter 3 - 2 Language Usage which I strongly believe needs adding to the plan.

The vast majority of university work today, both administrative and academic, relies on computers and software in one form or other.

Accessing the web, searching the university library, writing an essay, drafting a staff newsletter etc all require a computer and the appropriate software tools. The current setup is almost exclusively laid out for English-language use, which is problematic on two levels. First, it misses an opportunity of allowing people to use software in Gaelic (increasing use by existing speakers and acting as a learning aid for learners) and secondly, it creates technical problems at a very basic level, such as the entry of accented characters required in Gaelic and proofing (e.g. spell-checking). I believe that without much additional expenditure, the University could make better use of existing (free) technology to address these issues.

To this end, I would strongly recommend the inclusion of a specific policy on "Use and Promotion of Gaelic Software" in the plan, addressing current needs and future development. Such a policy should in the first instance contain the following:

- 1) Making "United Kingdom English Extended" the default keyboard layout across all University computers. This is exactly the same as the currently used "United Kingdom English" layout but with enabled deadkeys which in practice means that a standard keyboard can be used to enter characters commonly found in European languages such as acutes graves, cedillas, umlauts etc. This would not only benefit users of Gaelic but also users and students of other European languages such as French or German.
- 2) Identifying appropriate free open-source software available in Gaelic and making it available on University Computers in general (or at least on demand by staff) but in particular on computers used by the Celtic Department. In particular, the Gaelic versions of LibreOffice (a software suite which contains Gaelic proofing tools), a Gaelic web browser (such as Mozilla Firefox or Opera), a Gaelic email and calendar application (Mozilla Thunderbird and Lightning) and the VLC Media Player would seem appropriate.
- 3) Ensuring that such tools are regularly updated as updates become available.
- 4) Finding appropriate means of promoting such tools, once they have been made available. For example, a leaflet on such tools for freshers and new staff and a section on the Celtic Department's website.
- 5) Identifying other high-impact software tools which could be translated at a reasonable cost to benefit the use of Gaelic. For example, providing a Gaelic interface for the University Library search interface.

I hope you will find the above useful,

Is mise le meas,

Michael Bauer

Response 3 – 8/6/12

I am a non-Gaelic speaker who believes Gaelic is an irreplaceable part of Scotland's (and Europe's) national heritage and identity which is under serious threat, and should therefore be supported and promoted to keep it alive for us all, now and in the future.

In general, I think the University's Gaelic Language plan is good and welcome, but could be strengthened. In particular, there were some good suggestions made in the survey undertaken in March that could advantageously be incorporated in the plan, as follows. (I haven't chosen to follow the four chapters as I think they leave aside some important aspects of the promotion of Gaelic as they stand.)

1. The intellectual arguments for the promotion of Gaelic as a part of Scotland's whole heritage, not simply a regional concession to people who speak it as a first language, need to be cogently made and discussed.

Alongside the enthusiasm of many, the survey results expressed some hostility, sometimes very strong hostility, to the promotion and facilitation of Gaelic in Edinburgh, I think mainly on the part of staff. One respondent evoked the principle of freedom of speech, and asked that the University dissent from the 2005 law.

It seems to me that this is a debate (maybe a literal debate in the Playfair Library one afternoon) which the University could advantageously have, and make quite public. My own feeling is that a lot of people who oppose Gaelic on buildings etc. see it as a Brig-a-Doon type of tourist invention of a Scottish identity that never existed in this part of the country. You make the case in your intro that it did, but it seems to me the reason for the University to promote Gaelic is not just that 6% of Gaelic speakers live in Edinburgh, or that it was spoken here in the 10th-12th centuries, but that it's part of our heritage as a country, one strand of our diverse ethnicity and linguistic past that we should treasure and not allow to die, any more than we would bulldoze Maes Howe. The only way to keep it alive, for ourselves and for Europe, is to speak it, value it and be proud of it. A University like Edinburgh is extremely well placed to be among the leading cultural institutions involved in Gaelic's renaissance. But the other side of the argument should also be heard: we should not be afraid of that.

2. Promotion of Gaelic by social media.

Websites alone are not enough to promote Gaelic to the current digital-savvy generation of students. The University should create/encourage the creation of Gaelic apps (e.g. maps/GPS systems labelling everything on the campus in Gaelic) and podcasts. A Twitter account that would tweet a new Gaelic place-name or word every day would also be good. These sorts of media are an important way to promote Gaelic to the digital generation.

3. Links to other Celtic languages, especially Irish and Welsh.

For those who fear that the promotion of Gaelic is part of a separatist agenda, its ties to other Celtic languages in the UK and Ireland and place in the linguistic history of Europe should be included in exhibitions and on websites to allow contextualisation, and to facilitate Irish and Welsh speakers also picking up Gaelic.

4. Strengthening the scholarship aid to Gaelic-speakers.

It would be more helpful to make the two proposed scholarships fees and maintenance scholarships, not just fees only.

5. Introduce a University Gaelic Week, where everyone would be encouraged to speak a word or two of it (even if only 'slainte'). This would do a lot to move the University's use of Gaelic from a series of 'add-ons' for those who already speak the language, to something which would engage the whole University population.

6. I think the Gaelic immersion week-ends and summer-school classes are a great idea- tell me where I sign up!

Sara Parvis

Response 4 – 8/6/12

I have just read the Gaelic plan, and although the plan makes mention of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's aims towards corpus planning, I feel the plan fails to address what many people feel is Gaelic's biggest challenge at present -- the lack of a sizable linguistic corpus for academic study.

I would hope to see the University of Edinburgh acknowledging this issue, and making explicit pledges to work towards this. This can be as simple as pledging to make the university's Gaelic output, or a proportion of it, available for academic study as monolingual corpus and/or translation corpus material. This would be of marginal cost, and would encourage organic growth in an area that is of vital importance to the future work of the university's own Celtic and Scottish Studies department and its counterparts in other universities.

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Response 5 – 11/6/12

Re: Bilingual Signage (Section 1, actions on page 12)

I would be happy to support bilingual signage for University locations which are either important or relevant, but let's not introduce a policy which requires bilingual signs everywhere. Witness what has happened to the rail network where Transport Scotland's obsession with Gaelic names has required creation of new names for locations which appear to have no connection with Gaelic at all, eg Curriehill, Kingsknowe etc

Jim Nisbet

Response 6 – 11/6/12

Dear Mr Tait,

May I comment on the UoE Gaelic language plan. The plan seems excellent and contains many valuable initiatives. May I make a few specific comments –

Chapter 1 Gaelic in the City of Edinburgh – it may also be relevant to mention the Edinburgh thinkers and writers who helped promote the Gaelic dimension of the European image of Scottish culture in the 18th and 19th centuries - most obviously through Ossian, then Scott's poetry and novels.

Chapter 2 - Initiatives re signage, logos, email signatures, publications, press releases, correspondence, and holding meetings, seminars, events etc are useful of course - but - it may be of more long-term value to introduce Gaelic perspectives, where appropriate, in 'non- Gaelic' exhibitions, events etc, with a view to mainstreaming Gaelic perspectives into the treatment of Scottish/British cultural issues. This may be most likely to promote improved understanding of Gaelic's role in Scottish culture, strengthening support and interest more widely in the language, and the culture of which it is a primary medium. (The recent exhibition in NMS on the Lewis Chessmen could be seen as a good example of this.) Re Language learning – has offering the highly effective Ulpan method been considered? The materials already exist; courses could perhaps be offered free to members of staff, and at a special rate to students.

Chapter 3 - The emphasis on acquisition seems right – but how best to attract learners and sustaining them towards fluency? Again, given the success of Ulpan, it may be worth exploring how Ulpan could best be located within the University environment.

Section 4 – Community Engagement & Lifelong Learning: Could there be a way of allowing learners outside the UoE access to UoE events/resources? (E.g. learners in Council evening classes, Ulpan etc.) Restoration of a Gaelic level 3 offer from the OLL would – obviously - be very valuable. However, perhaps, to make it more attractive, perhaps it could be structured around available aspects of Gaelic culture, rather than on purely linguistic attainment i.e. be built around music, poetry, prose, television and radio content (of which there is now good provision via BBC Alba in addition to Radio nan Gàidheal), Gaelic/Scottish history etc. The level 3 (also 1 and 2) courses could also be integrated actively with some of the other very valuable UoE initiatives suggested elsewhere in the plan.

Chapter 4 – no comments.

Allan Jack

Response 7 – 12/6/11

Dear Sir,

Two elements for the Gaelic Language Plan warrant comment: the signage plan, and the plan to accept and respond to correspondence in Gaelic

Signage plan

Signs are principle aids for people who need help finding resources and making choice. They can be life saving. As such, they need to be clear and unambiguous.

Making Bi-lingual signs in the Main Library and Halls of Residence, when perhaps 1% of students can use these signs will decrease the accessibility of these areas by creating a misleading impression about their primary users.

While one might have some signs in a second language - picking one, be it French or Cantonese seems fraught.

Suggested change: The policy should pick out to one or two specific signs in each of these areas, perhaps not even signs, but plaques with a Gaelic and English commentary, noting the historical period in which Gaelic speakers ruled this region: That would be of value to the readers, without misleading regarding the current expected usage and without reducing the accessibility of hundreds of critical signs.

Accepting correspondence in Gaelic and replying in Gaelic

Accepting correspondence in Gaelic and replying in Gaelic has major implications: It means that all our legal, administrative, and teaching documents would need to be available in a language serving .5% of people (who fluently read and write Gaelic)

Given that no Gaelic speakers lack English, and that we have far larger groups speaking Cantonese, as well as French, German, Italian, Greek etc. making a commitment to dealing fully in Gaelic on demand will misdirect scarce resources in a way that is discriminatory against the overwhelming majority of students and staff with English as a second language.

I worry also about the potential errors and consequences of these errors when we undertake to translate potentially highly complex student queries about course choices, degree regulations, fees and other matters, out of Gaelic into English, then back-translating the response.

Dealing outside English in matters with contractual consequences is fraught. As such "accepting correspondence" and "replying to correspondence" means a major ongoing and potentially litigated responsibility.

Suggested Change: I can't see how we can do other than require all matters potentially influencing contractual obligations and information influences choices to be transacted in English.

Sincerely,

Timothy Bates

Response 8 – 14/6/12

Dear Sir

Writing as an individual graduate of the University I regard this whole project as a waste of time and money.

I studied Archaeology at Edinburgh and also hold a PhD in History from the University of St Andrews.

My genetic heritage is Scottish and research indicates it pre-dates the arrival of Scots or gaelic in this country.

The modern trend for inventing gaelic names for places in the Lothians and Fife is particularly laughable and reflects the same kind of mind-set which appears to drive this project.

Please stop this thing before it gets any sillier.

Yours

J. Colin Bain

Response 9 – 17/6/12

I am writing as Director of BILINGUALISM MATTERS (www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk), a research-based information service that I established in October 2008 in order to disseminate accurate information about the facts and benefits of early bilingualism in all sectors of society. BILINGUALISM MATTERS is based in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Science, which is one of the best research centres in the world for the study of language development and bilingualism.

Bilingualism Matters has been actively working to raise awareness of the importance of early bilingualism for the survival of Gaelic (as well as other regional minority languages in Europe), and of the importance of Gaelic as an opportunity to provide children with the linguistic and cognitive benefits of bilingualism. To date we have:

(a) collaborated with the Scottish Government, providing input to the Gaelic Excellence Group (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/excellence/GaelicReport>) and more recently to the Scottish Government's '1+2' approach to early language learning (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/05/3670/16>); I have also been invited to speak to the Highland Council (<http://connect.highland.public-tv/site/player/text.php?a=68001&t=&m=wm&l=&v=n>), at the Holyrood Magazine conference "Gaelic medium education: striving for sustainability" (Nov 2010), and I gave many seminars for Gaelic teachers and headteachers.

(b) set up of a Bilingualism Matters branch in the Western Isles: see <http://www.ppls.ed.ac.uk/lel/news/bilingualism-matters-opens-western-isles-branch>.

(c) collaborated with Comann nam Pàrant and Bòrd na Gàidhlig (see e.g. p. 5 of latest report at <http://www.parant.org.uk/pdfs/Aithisg%20Bhliadhna%202011-2012%20English.pdf>)

(d) collaborated with Moray House School of Education in the Celtic and Education degree. The Plan lists this as one of the purposes of this degree: "To give students a thorough understanding of the cognitive, pedagogical and social aspects of how language is acquired, how bilingualism develops, and the impact that bilingualism has on the developing brain". This is precisely the input that Bilingualism Matters (and PPLS) have agreed to provide.

I believe that an information and awareness-raising campaign about the facts and benefits of bilingualism is one of the keys to raise the profile of Gaelic and ensure its survival through inter-generational transmission. Bilingualism Matters - which is part of the University of Edinburgh - is ideally placed to contribute to the University's current efforts to promote recognition and use of Gaelic.

Antonella Sorace

Response 10 – 28/6/12

I have noted in an earlier context [1] that the merger of the Art College and the University provides major opportunities with respect to Scottish Studies. I quote:

“The proper articulation of the visual tradition common to both institutions would, in my view, underpin a sustainable stream of interdisciplinary research projects that would have the capacity to attract significant research funding from a variety of sources. The potential is significant. Please note that this is an informed comment. The viability of such interdisciplinary visually-based projects in the context of Scottish cultural studies has been indicated by my own success in attracting research funding to the University of Dundee over the past decade.”

The relevance of the above for the Gaelic Plan is that one of the projects I refer to, funded by an AHRC large grant extending from 2005-2011, was entitled ‘Window to the West: towards a redefinition of the visual within Gaelic Scotland’. It was a collaboration between Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (University of Dundee) and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (University of the Highlands and Islands). The purpose of the project was to restore an art history to the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, both through historical research and contemporary art practice. It was highly successful and has kick-started research in the area. Key support came from staff at the University of Edinburgh, including two Emeritus Professors, Duncan Macmillan (Fine Art) and Donald Meek (Celtic and Scottish Studies), and a number of current staff, in particular Dr Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, PI of the AHRC-funded Carmichael-Watson project, Dr Cathlin Macaulay of Celtic and Scottish Studies and Abigail Burnyeat, also of Celtic and Scottish Studies. I’d also note the support of Dr Wilson MacLeod, Head of Celtic and Scottish Studies, and of Professor Rob Dunbar, Director of the Soillse project (a collaboration of the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig). Similarly members of staff at Edinburgh College of Art have been key supporters of the research, and indeed have exhibited as part of the project. I note in particular John Stuart Murray, Head of Landscape Architecture, and the artist Donald Urquhart.

In practical terms I would suggest that the drafting of the plan takes note of the significance of the visual culture of the Gàidhealtachd, and the possibilities that that opens up in the context of the merger with Edinburgh College of Art.

Further information can be found at the following:

Open University, Gaelic in Modern Scotland, Visual Art Section.

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=406330§ion=6.1>

University of Dundee

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/research/researchprojectscentresandgroups/windowtothewest/>
<http://windowtothewest.weebly.com/>

National Galleries of Scotland Conference:

<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2010/10/07/state-of-the-art-staid-na-h-ealain/>

Some project publications:

<http://windowtothewest.weebly.com/publications.html>

Further links:

<http://windowtothewest.weebly.com/links.html>

Please note that I write this as an alumnus of the University of Edinburgh and as an interested member of the wider academic community, not as a member of University of Edinburgh staff.

Murdo Macdonald MA (Edin) PhD (Edin) FSA Scot HRSA
Professor of History of Scottish Art, University of Dundee.

[1] Response to the Consultation on the Merger of Edinburgh College of Art and the University of Edinburgh.

Response 11 – 4/7/12



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CWL/GM

4 July 2012

Mr Jamie Tait
Projects Officer and Policy Advisor to the University Secretary
University of Edinburgh
Student & Academic Services Group Business Unit
Old College
Room 214
South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH8 9YL

Dear Mr Tait

The University of the Highlands and Islands, as the first Higher Education institution to publish a Gaelic Language Plan, welcomes the development of a Gaelic Language Plan by the University of Edinburgh (and indeed other Scottish universities). UHI is very supportive of the direction being taken and would be very happy to engage with the University of Edinburgh in the future development and implementation of its plan in any way that it would find helpful.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Crichton W Lang".

Dr Crichton W Lang
UHI Vice Principal: Academic



Response 12 – 6/7/12

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Gaelic Language plan. I have a number of specific comments on some of the proposed actions in the Plan.

1 In Section I - Undergraduate Teaching and Support there is the following action:

"The University will endeavour to assign a Gaelic-speaking Personal Tutor to any student who so requests." The Lead for this is Celtic and Scottish Studies and the timescale for implementation is September 2012. Page 27

I have significant concerns about the inclusion of this action, worded in this way. Under the Personal Tutor system students will have Personal Tutors who are based in their own Schools. Are there sufficient Gaelic-speaking academic staff in every School in order for us to fulfil this commitment? The Personal Tutor system is being introduced at the start of next academic year, September 2012 in most cases, and to add this requirement at this stage in the implementation process would significantly add to the burden in Schools and risk compromising delivery of the PT system. There may be scope to explore expanding the scheme to enable students who wish it to have access to Gaelic-speaking academic staff who could supplement the support students get from their PT. However, it would be more desirable to consider this for a later phase of the Enhancing Student Support project. Could we therefore re-word this recommendation with the Enhancing Student Support project team (Ian Pirie, Nichola Kett, Brian Connolly and myself) and relevant staff in Celtic and Scottish Studies?

2 In Section 1 and Section 2 - Research and Postgraduate Study there are two similar actions:

"Within the terms of its formal policy on the use of Gaelic in assessed work, adopted in 2009, undergraduate dissertations submitted for assessment and examination may be presented in Gaelic." Page 27

" Within the terms of its formal policy on the use of Gaelic in assessed work, adopted in 2009, postgraduate theses and dissertations submitted for assessment and examination may be presented in Gaelic." Page 28

The lead for both of these actions is the Academic Registry, with immediate implementation.

This existing policy clarifies this initial wording and makes clear that:

"Candidates who wish to submit a thesis or dissertation in Gaelic should seek approval to do so as early as possible, and certainly not later than by the end of the first year of full-time study (or equivalent part-time study) in the case of research students. Approval must be given by the appropriate College Committee, which must be satisfied that appropriate arrangements can be made for supervision and examination, including the availability of both internal and external examiners suitably qualified to read and examine the thesis or dissertation." The policy also gives details of the specific requirements for a summary in English, the handling of Examiners' reports and the costs. By limiting the action to the first part of the policy we may give rise to expectations that cannot be met in all disciplines. Could the action be amended (perhaps by reversing the phrases in

the action) to make clearer that theses may be submitted in Gaelic if this is approved and the requirements of the policy are met?

http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Gaelic_In_Assessed_Work.pdf

3 Complaints procedure

"The public complaints procedure and student complaints procedure will remain in English, although the University will respond in Gaelic should they receive a complaint in Gaelic." Page 15

This lists the Lead as the SASG Business Unit and Academic Registry. The complaints function is now supported by Jean Grier and not Academic Registry.

I hope that this is helpful. All the best,

Sara Welham, on behalf of Academic Services

Response 13 – 8/7/12

To the Working Group:

Attached is my personal response to the University's Draft Gaelic Language Plan.

I used two sources: my own dissertation, which can be accessed at the Department of Celtic, and "Gàidhealtachdan Ùra" by McLeod (2007). [I mentioned in my response that I would attach my dissertation to this email but it was too large and the internet connection was too slow.]

I am copying in the Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Gaelic Officer of the Highland Society. Although these are my own personal views I am sure that they will be of interest to the Society. Also, if I have made any errors in my response they can correct me at any time. It is clear that they, of all the student groups at the University, have the greatest stake in the Gaelic language.

I noticed that the Plan mentioned an exhibition about Gaelic to be housed somewhere. I have written an essay on the early history of the Society (1837-1914), from sources in the archives, which may well be of interest to you.

I am delighted that the Plan is, at last, moving forward and I look forward to seeing the results appear around the University campus!

Yours sincerely,

Liam Crouse
MA Celtic and Archaeology
University of Edinburgh

To the University of Edinburgh's Gaelic Plan Working Group:

Within this letter, I would like to issue my opinions to the Group concerning the Draft Gaelic Plan of the University. I am an alumnus of the University, having spent four years (2008-12) studying an undergraduate degree in Celtic and Archaeology. As well, I am connected closely to An Comann Ceilteach (The University of Edinburgh's Highland Society), as the Social Secretary (2009-10), President (2010-12), and now as an Honorary Member. In 2012, I wrote my undergraduate thesis in Celtic on: "The Usage of Gaelic amongst Undergraduate Students at the University of Edinburgh".

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the University on this step and describe the amount of happiness it gives me to see this plan. It will provide the necessary support which minority language studies need so much. I expect that this will lead to the development and strengthening of the language in the city and University and that this will improve the student experience at the University.

I would like to also say that the development of Gaelic at the University would also improve the University's status. Since the amount of speakers/learners of Gaelic from outside the country is growing, particularly in Edinburgh, the University is in a distinctly advantageous position to attract and educate international students. As I did, and many of my university friends, many are willing to come to other countries to study the Gaelic language and culture. As an international student, if I only wanted to go to a university in Europe, I would have chosen England or some other place, as I

am sure many do. It was, however, the draw of Scottish culture that lured me here. How many Americans have come here to experience Scotland only to be disappointingly immersed in more American culture at Halls, the International Office, or the University in general?

Regarding the Draft Plan itself, this is a good start. The following paragraphs are my personal critique and opinions.

In the first Chapter, when Gaelic's situation in Edinburgh is being discussed in brief, it may be of interest to know that percentages of Gaelic speakers are higher in certain areas of Edinburgh than others. The highest percentages reside in Tollcross and Southside Areas, which are home to the Celtic Department as well as the Tollcross Primary Gaelic Unit.

I will also send my dissertation along with this message. However, I will include here some interesting findings:

- The portion of Gaelic speaking students from the Lowlands is growing larger. Most of the Gaelic speaking students at the University of Edinburgh who acquired Gaelic in the home or in school came from the Lowlands (mostly Edinburgh and Glasgow).
- There is a large proportion of students who speak Gaelic from outside the United Kingdom.
- It seems that there are two types of fluent Gaelic speakers: the group who use Gaelic very often and those who very rarely use it, the latter being more common. This means that students are coming to Edinburgh from their areas and losing their Gaelic-language communities of usage which they possessed at home. This was reinforced by interviews. This led to some losing confidence in spoken Gaelic. As well, they were of the opinion that the Gaelic communities of the town and University were extremely difficult to find. I, for one, agree with them.
- It is the Celtic students who use Gaelic the most frequently in the week.
- For the most part, the speech community at the University of Edinburgh is a community of students; Gaelic students do not necessarily interact with the outside community through Gaelic.
- Celtic students would speak Gaelic to their peers outside class more frequently.
- Celtic students form the majority of the membership of an Comann Ceilteach. However, this does not simply mean that other students are not interested, only that they may not have heard about the society. The society has had some trouble with attending the Societies' Fair during Freshers' Week recently.
- Students complained that the Gaelic community was not visible and that they could not find it/did not know it existed. There was also a lack of opportunities to speak Gaelic.

In the second chapter, the Draft Plan discusses Core Commitments. Although the Work Group is following Bòrd na Gàidhlig's guidelines, I would make a case that perhaps the Core Commitments that the Bòrd is advising, which might be suitable to a Council, might not be as suitable to a university, which greatest core commitment is to their students. This must be the primary commitment. As an example, one of the core commitments is communication, particularly to the public. I would argue that this is not as important as to communicate with some students in Gaelic. Although many points appear in the plan which would be very helpful to students, they are scattered

throughout the Plan. Perhaps the Plan might be more focused if those points which aim to enrich student Gaelic life be gathered under the core commitment of “Students”.

Schemes such as “Sgeama Còmhnaidh nan Oileanach” (Students Accommodation Scheme) and Gaelic Officer are essential if the University wishes to strengthen Gaelic usage at the University. Two years ago, I myself tried to organise a Gaelic Flat for a few students at the Department of Celtic. Certainly, Gaelic usage was higher than it would have been had the students been dispersed amongst other flats. In Glasgow, their “Taigh na Gàidhlig” (Gaelic Flat – of which there are now two this year) is a beacon to Gaelic student life in the town. It acts as a safe, informal environment where students can use Gaelic between friends and other students. Although at the University of Glasgow, the University provides monetary incentive for students to stay in these flats, I believe that this would not be necessary at this university as many students here would more than happy just to have the opportunity. I believe that an Comann Ceilteach is trying to create another Gaelic Flat this year.

As well as the “Sgeama Còmhnaidh nan Oileanach”, I would strongly argue that the second most important thing to enrich student Gaelic life at the University would be a room or café where Gaelic is encouraged to be spoken. I have heard this complaint too often that there is no domain for Gaelic where it can be spoken in a non-intrusive, informal setting outside of class. Perhaps the University may consider harnessing the help of the outside Gaelic community as well, which would also be of an immense value to the wider Gaelic community of Edinburgh. This could follow on the “Taigh na Gàidhlig” campaign of the 1990s (cf. NicDhòmhnaill in McLeod 2007). This could also bring a wider speaking populace into the café and wholly enrich the student’s Gaelic experience.

It would also be advantageous if a question were asked to first year students about Gaelic ability (or interest in Gaelic events), following the policy at the University of Aberdeen. This would be of great help to those organising events or to, for example, an Comann Ceilteach, to spread information about Gaelic events. This would also help to create a wider Gaelic community that is more inclusive of students out with the Department.

Towards a Gaelic Officer, if the work of the University of Glasgow and Fiona Dunn, the Gaelic Officer, is brought into account, an amazing amount of good may be accomplished. One thing that I have noticed in an Comann Ceilteach was that it is hard to keep a continuation of goals within the Society due to the fluidity of the student populace. If a Gaelic Officer was instilled to provide support and inspiration to the Society, and to keep it on a straight path of improvement, than this would without a doubt improve student experience. A Gaelic Officer would act as a bastion for Gaelic usage and support. As well, following Glasgow, a Gaelic Officer would be of great advantage to the promotion of Gaelic in the city.

Although probably the work of a Gaelic Officer in the future, it might be a good idea to create a Gaelic Language Policy in the Department of Celtic and the School of Scottish Studies. This would describe the Department’s wish that Gaelic is the preferred language spoken within 27 George Square as much as is possible. Fiona Dunn, the Gaelic Officer at the University of Glasgow, has stated how their Policy has improved language usage in their Department.

I will not waste too many words decrying the atrocious state in which the Department resides when there is no Chair of Celtic. It is a cause for embarrassment that I have attended the University and there has been no Chair for the majority of my course. This cannot continue.

However, other points concerning the production of University identity and emblems into Gaelic are very good. We know that Gaelic and students of Gaelic/with Gaelic have a long history at the University and it would be beneficial to display this. Signs, emblems and other are excellent ways to showcase Gaelic in the campus. As well, since the highest percentage of Gaelic speakers stay near the University, it might not be only students that this would affect.

This year in the Highland Society, we rediscovered a precious archive which begins in 1837, when a Gaelic society was first created at the University. It might be interesting to display these early roots as to showcase the origins of the oldest society at the University of Edinburgh. There is certainly a lot in the artefacts concerning student life in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As a student who has just graduated, it was a disappointment that I did not get the chance to hear or use Gaelic at the ceremony. Although the majority of my courses, included dissertation, essays, presentations, etc., where through the medium of Gaelic, no mention was made of it until I was back in the Department.

As a conclusion, I will take a translation from my undergraduate thesis:

“[Gaelic’s condition at the University of Edinburgh is weak. In the eyes of many, Edinburgh is a Lowland (an even international) town. Gaelic must be strengthened in the large cities (McLeod 2007) if it is to continue on in future years.

More so, the students of today will be the parents of tomorrow and this generation must be using and transmitting the language. Therefore, aims of reversing language shift must be directed on this generation to a greater extent.

There are students at the University who speak Gaelic and are willing to do so. They belong to the Highlands, the Islands, the Lowlands, and to the world more widely. The largest proportion comes from Edinburgh, however many hail from Glasgow as well. They all acquired the language in different ways; yet, there is a growing contingent of Gaelic speakers who do not come from traditional Gaelic backgrounds.

Gaelic was focused on the Department of Celtic and an Comann Ceilteach at the University. This is where the most Gaelic is used and where the largest proportion of Gaelic speaking students lives. Although some students are familiar, and participate with the wider Gaelic community of Edinburgh, for the most part, it is a student community.

The most common grievance among students was that there was a lack of opportunities to use Gaelic in Edinburgh and at the University. Edinburgh is not a Gaelic [“Gàidhealach”] city, yet Gaelic’s foothold can be improved. The Gaelic Plan of the University of Edinburgh is currently (2012) in the development process. This is an excellent occasion to strengthen and develop Gaelic at the University and many students have stated that they have an interest in this project. The University of Glasgow is a respectable example of what can be accomplished. Gaelic has a long, celebrated history at the University of Edinburgh, and although many stones have been laid on the cairn of Gaelic over the centuries, it is not yet a complete abode.” (Crouse 2012: 39).

Liam Crouse

Response 14 – 9/7/12

Chapter 1, Introduction. Does this chapter sufficiently take into account the role of Gaelic within the University of Edinburgh and the city of Edinburgh?

Yes. It was very interesting to read of the high number of respondents to your survey who are either undertaking a programme of Gaelic study, or who would like to.

Chapter 2, Core Commitments. Are the targets in this chapter clear and realistic? What else do you think the University could do?

Yes. Do you think a separate Gaelic logo for targeted use 'as appropriate' might cause confusion? SQA does not have a separate logo for this reason, although the full Gaelic spelling of SQA is used where appropriate. The suggestion of holding an exhibition showcasing the history of Gaelic at the university is an excellent one. SQA is currently investigating language learning opportunities for staff and it was interesting to read of the range of options available. Would you consider working in partnership with other bodies on this commitment?

Chapter 3, Policy Implications for Gaelic. Do you agree with the commitments outlined in each of the four sections? What else do you think the University could do?

Yes. The aims are ambitious but absolutely necessary to address the current lack of Gaelic-medium teachers. A coherent approach is required with bodies such as SQA, colleges and the universities contributing towards the national strategy to boost numbers and ensure that children who are being educated in Gaelic in primary school have the same access to a full Gaelic-medium education at secondary level.

Chapter 4, Implementing and Monitoring the Plan. How might we improve our plans as described in this chapter?

No further improvement required.

Further Comments. Do you wish to make any further comments not already covered in your response.

As an organisation working with a Gaelic Language Plan, SQA is keen to maintain contact with other bodies involved in Gaelic planning. It would be beneficial to involve universities in a national forum which has been formed in response to a need to maintain common strands between these bodies. SQA's Qualification Coordinator for Gaelic (Marilyn Waters) is the principal point of contact for Gaelic planning issues in SQA, should the University be interested in joining this group.

Le deagh dhùrachd,
Mairi-ailean NicUilleim (Marilyn Waters)
Co-òrdanaiche Theisteanasan - Gàidhlig
Qualifications Coordinator – Gaelic
Cultair, Daonna agus Gnìomhachais
Humanities, Arts and Business

Response 15 – 12/7/12 (originally received 22/6/12)

Please excuse the pedant in me but just one response to your Gaelic Plan. On p26 - 27 it refers to the Standard for Initial Registration.

Should that not be the Standard for Initial Teacher Education? It might have changed since I left the GTCS but for the sake of accuracy it may be worth checking. The more substantive point, however, is that there is no such thing as a dual qualification in Gaelic medium and English medium. Once you have achieved the Standard you are qualified to become a probationer teacher. That particular issue was the subject of debate for more hours than I care to remember when I was at the GTCS!

Hope you do receive responses. It certainly looks on the right lines to me.

Matthew MacIver

Response 16 – 12/7/12

Having read the Draft Gaelic Language Plan, I have some comments about it which I hope will be of use in formulating the final plan.

1) With regard to corporate identity, there seems to be nothing in the plan about producing University merchandise with a Gaelic element. Since a Gaelic version of the logo is to be developed for use in stationary etc., it should be easy enough to also use it for hoodies, t-shirts, baseball caps etc.

2) With regard to bilingual signage, it seems that at least in the short term there are no plans to have bilingual signage in the History, Classics and Archaeology building. Since the plan suggests that at least two Scottish History courses may have tutorials offered through the medium of Gaelic, it may be appropriate to have bilingual signage in areas of that building where such tutorials might be held - and, additionally, in the corridors where Scottish History lecturers have their offices.

3) Regarding websites, it is a welcome proposal that high level content and Celtic & Scottish Studies will be available bilingually. It is not however clear that Gaelic will be visible on the University's home page - e.g. in the use of a bilingual logo, or a "Failte gu Oilthigh Dhun Eideann" strapline. These could be used as clickable links to Gaelic content; but in any case the presence of Gaelic on the home page would be a clear statement of the value that the University places on Gaelic. Numerous Irish and Welsh educational institutions have similar uses of their respective languages on their home pages. As the first page a visitor will see when they come to the website, it is important that Gaelic has a presence there. I know of students, including at least one now enrolled on a Gaelic course, who did not know that Gaelic was offered as a subject at Edinburgh until they arrived to register for courses. This would certainly be less likely to happen if Gaelic was more immediately visible on the website.

4) The contract for the Gaelic Language Officer post should ideally be for longer than one year. Ideally the position should be in place for the entire duration of the plan (though this does not mean that the same person should necessarily hold the position the entire time). This would enable more time for the development of initiatives undertaken by the officer, and give time to develop proper working relationships with e.g. EUSA, societies, etc.

5) Filling the vacant Celtic chair must be a priority. There was no professor of Celtic during my entire undergraduate career at Edinburgh, and in this state of affairs cannot but hamper the work of the department.

6) The plan should include a commitment to creating a Gaelic "space" on campus - and indeed there are proposals for a cafe or common room to this end. Could the university work in co-operation with Gaelic groups in the city to make such a cafe open for city Gaels to drop in? This would increase the number of people coming, and learners and young speakers would surely benefit from conversation with older speakers, who are likely to have a richer grasp of vocabulary and idioms. Furthermore, if at all possible, the Celtic and Scottish Studies department should be kept in situ and not moved into a larger LLC building in which its unique community feeling and space in which Gaelic is commonly spoken would be lost. Gaelic speaking students very often chat to one another in Gaelic in the corridors or on the stairs at the entrance - I feel that this may be less common if the

department were moved to a bigger, busier building in which Gaelic speakers would form a much smaller proportion of the student body.

Hoping these comments may be of use,

Duncan Sneddon

Response 17 – 13/7/12

This is my response to the consultation exercise mentioned above. I am writing in an individual capacity and do not represent any organisation.

I did a PhD in the Department of Celtic, University of Edinburgh (graduating in 2002) and therefore I have a considerable interest in University matters.

1. Chapter 1, Introduction. Does this chapter sufficiently take into account the role of Gaelic within the University of Edinburgh and the city of Edinburgh?

Yes. The Chapter explains clearly how important Gaelic is, both to the University and to the capital city, in historical and modern times.

It would, however, be useful to include that many Gaelic-speakers in the city are natives of Edinburgh (and other parts of the central belt) who have learnt Gaelic, so that the impression is not given that all the Gaelic-speakers in the city are people who moved there from Highland areas.

2. Chapter 2, Core Commitments. Are the targets in this chapter clear and realistic? What else do you think the University could do?

Broadly speaking, yes, but they should be made stronger.

- *Identity*: Instead of making a Gaelic version of the logo – which will only be seen by Gaelic-speakers – a bi-lingual logo should be created for use in all situations as is the case in the Scottish Parliament and a number of other public bodies. It is important that a bi-lingual corporate image exists to boost the profile of the language.
- *Signage*: I agree very strongly with the proposals regarding bi-lingual signage. This will do a great deal to increase the visibility of the language and promote Gaelic, for, as it is said, “out of sight, out of mind.”
- *Communications*: I agree very strongly with this passage. I would also propose that the automatic text which appears at the end of emails be in both languages for everyone on the university system.
- *Publications*: I agree with these proposals.
- *Staffing*: I agree with these proposals. I am particularly in favour of having a Gaelic Officer. The Gaelic Development Officer at Glasgow University has been a great success.

3. Chapter 3, Policy Implications for Gaelic. Do you agree with the commitments outlined in each of the four sections? What else do you think the University could do?

I agree very strongly with this section. I am particularly pleased with the plans to increase numbers in Gaelic degree courses.

But, the proposals do not go far enough: the university should fill the Chair of Celtic immediately instead of proposing to establish a timetable.

4. Chapter 4, Implementing and Monitoring the Plan. How we might improve our plans as described in this chapter?

I agree with this section.

5. Further Comments. Do you wish to make any further comments not already covered in your response?

- The Chair of Celtic should be filled immediately.
- The University should do more promotional work to increase numbers in Gaelic/Celtic courses. Celtic and Scottish Studies is an excellent department and the same numbers of students should be studying Gaelic/Celtic in Edinburgh as in Glasgow and Aberdeen. The University itself must support this at corporate level.
- Degrees in Gaelic/Celtic at the University should prioritise modern Gaelic and achieving full fluency and literacy in Gaelic. There is not much point in teaching literature, history, folklore etc unless students are as fluent as they possibly can be and able to put their skills to use in the Gaelic-speaking world.
- The university should install Gaelic IT facilities in its systems – web-browsers (like Firefox or Opera), office programs (like LibreOffice, Thunderbird), spell-checkers etc and promote these resources to staff and students. Many such facilities are available now and it is important that large organisations roll them out through their corporate networks so that the day-to-day use of Gaelic in the workplace can be encouraged, rather than just encouraging people to learn the language.

I hope that these views will be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alasdair MacCaluim

Response 18 – 13/7/12

I would like to thank you on behalf of Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG) for this opportunity to comment on the University of Edinburgh's Draft Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17. It is CnaG's policy to use Gaelic with individuals or organisations who have the capacity to manage Gaelic language communications. In this context however, while we could follow this policy and provide this response through the medium of Gaelic, we consider it appropriate to use English.

We will not necessarily comment on all the proposed Actions, choosing to highlight those where a greater degree of commitment might be appropriate, or where further Actions might lead to additional benefits.

In overall terms we welcome the Draft Plan and the measures it contains. It appears to offer a wide-ranging consideration of the way in which the Gaelic language can be better incorporated into the work of the University and by doing so, to help raise the profile of the language on campus and further afield.

'Identity' section – Gaelic logo: We welcome the short timescale offered for the introduction of a Gaelic logo, but would suggest that an alternative course of action be considered. Experience elsewhere suggests that Gaelic-only material (publications, logos etc) - intended for use in a more limited range of situations - have less of an impact. We would recommend consideration be given to a bilingual logo for the University as a whole which could be used in a much wider set of circumstances. We believe this would do a lot more to raise the profile of the language and demonstrate a stronger commitment to it on the part of the institution.

'Identity' section – signage: We welcome the Actions outlined in this section, and the timescales set against them. These appear to capture that element of a 'broader brush' or wider applicability we have suggested above for the University's logo.

Communications section - reception and telephone: This seems appropriate. We would simply highlight this in the context of a wider point about monitoring demand for such services. It would be beneficial to consider some formalised or explicit means of recording the number and nature of instances where demand for such a service is made in Gaelic.

In terms of implementation, the risk in such a commitment is that it appears tokenistic or shallow. The training offered to staff ought to consider this, and means in which it may be countered.

Communications section - Mail and Email: A somewhat semantic point possibly, but might the word 'opportunity' be replaced with 'encouraged' - or something a little more proactive? E.g. "Staff to be encouraged to have bilingual versions..... etc"

Communications section - Public Events and Meetings: In relation to the Action outlining an 'expansion' in the number of Gaelic meetings. We appreciate that this is a high-level, strategic document, but it could perhaps benefit from a little more exposition of the aspirations/expectations here? How many meetings; in particular topic areas; simultaneous translation to be available? Etc.

Publications section - PR and Media: Once again, this may be a question of semantics, but in relation to issuing bilingual news releases there would be a difference between 'making these available' and

'issuing' them. We would suggest this commitment be changed to: "Gaelic-related PF and media releases to be issued bilingually." This would help consolidate the use of Gaelic and raised its profile. We would also suggest that consideration be given to using Gaelic first in these instances (as commonly done by some organisations, including CnaG).

Publications section - Exhibitions: In line with our comments above, in relation to bilingual logos and signage, we would suggest that consideration be given to incorporating some element of Gaelic into all exhibition work, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the subject matter.

National Plan section - Undergraduate teaching and support: There are two Actions/references within this overall section (including Research and Post-Grad. Study) to 'assessed work' being permissible in Gaelic. This is very welcome as it will help develop the 'transferability' of learning into a workplace or professional context. However, would it be possible to offer some form of reward or recognition for students or post-graduates who submit work in Gaelic? In all likelihood, it would be more work for Gaelic to be used in these instances, and some form of incentivisation might be appropriate.

National Plan section: University life: There is reference here to a Gaelic residential scheme. This is to be welcomed: it has been successful in Glasgow; is being considered in Aberdeen; and is developed from a much larger-scale initiative at University College Dublin. This is very much in line with the point made above about incentivisation or 'reward' for Gaelic useage.

In a wider context, we would perhaps suggest that more could be done to support student interaction across Scotland's universities? This would help develop and support the idea of a wider Gaelic community, and would be in line with other, welcome Plan Actions such as: the Gaelic Common room; Seachdain na Gàidhlig; and music/cultural events.

In conclusion, we welcome the Draft Gaelic Language Plan. We believe this would make a contribution to the wider language development effort and would afford a solid foundation on which to build future Plans.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd

Dòmhnall MacNèill
Ceannard,
Comunn na Gàidhlig

Response 19 – 14/7/12

Dear Sirs,

University of Edinburgh Draft Gaelic Language Plan

This is a personal response to the Edinburgh University draft Gaelic language plan.

As a graduate of Edinburgh University both in science and in education I feel that both the university and Edinburgh as our capital city have an important part to play in promoting Gaelic nationally.

I support the plan fully, particularly the elements such as bilingual signage which aim to raise the profile of Gaelic among non-Gaelic speakers. These are crucially important.

I believe that the plan should be strengthened in the following respects:

- The chair of Celtic should be filled at once.
- A bilingual logo/corporate identity should be adopted by the university rather than parallel Gaelic/English logos.

Yours faithfully,

Jenifer MacCaluim

Response 20 – 15/7/12

To whom it may concern :-

I write you as an alumnus of U of E who now teaches in the Celtic Studies department of St FX University.

I believe that the Gaelic Language Plan is a real sign of progress in terms of the university's representation of Scottish culture and the place of the university in Scottish society.

During my own time as student at the university, I was amongst many others who came to Edinburgh specifically to learn Gaelic and engage in Gaelic activities, and who felt that this vital aspect of Scottish heritage and identity was not given its due prominence and respect.

From my own research, I realise(d) that there was a long history of Gaelic in Edinburgh going back to the medieval period. Not only that, but students of Gaelic-speaking families and communities have always been present at the university.

It is crucial that these social realities finally be given their proper place in the life of the university and the ways in which it invests in the social and cultural capital of the nation. Gaelic is a unique and vibrant asset which enhances the university and the nation, and interests many students. Support for Gaelic also demonstrates the awareness of the multilingual reality of the world and underscores a commitment to equality and inclusivity.

Is mise le meas

Dr Micheal Newton

Response 21 – 16/7/12

On behalf of the University of Edinburgh Highland Society, 27 George Square.

Public Consultation on the University of Edinburgh Gaelic Language Plan.

To the University of Edinburgh Gaelic Language Plan Working Group.

I write to express the views of the Highland Society regarding the draft University of Edinburgh Gaelic Language Plan. I am the Highland Society's Gaelic Officer, and I have been doing a degree in Celtic for two years, since 2010. Firstly, we would like to express our pleasure in seeing this Plan, and we hope that Gaelic will be greatly strengthened in the University in the future.

It is good to see that the Plan includes a mix of major and minor issues. Little things like sending staff name-badges with Gaelic on them, for instance, or signs around the campus, gives considerable support to the language as it allows people to see Gaelic and appreciate that it is normal to use the language in the University. This will increase the confidence of Gaelic-speakers and will encourage others to learn Gaelic. It is also important that Gaelic be included in the graduation ceremony of Gaelic students. These students did a lot of their course through the medium of Gaelic and they work hard to support the language, and it is therefore fitting that this should be recognised when they graduate.

Amongst the major issues, perhaps the Gaelic Officer is the most important. We in the Highland Society often work with our friends in the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen and can see for ourselves the great benefits which such a post can bring. We have long held the view that a Gaelic Officer is necessary in our own university as well. Although there are many people in the University—including Celtic Department staff and the Highland Society students—who work hard to promote Gaelic in many ways, a Gaelic Officer would be very useful in co-ordinating their efforts in a more effective way, and providing a means of contact and stability from year to year as students come and go.

Another particularly important subject is the establishment of a EUSA Gaelic café, and a Gaelic common room in George Square. Although there are many students and members of staff who have some measure of Gaelic, they have few opportunities to speak the language to fellow students and colleagues, particularly those who are not doing a degree in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies. Although the Highland society tries to include these students in our activities our efforts would be much more effective if we got support from the University through such schemes as a Gaelic common room and the help of a Gaelic Officer. We are particularly pleased that the draft Plan mentions that the 'University will work with the Edinburgh University Students' Association to explore opportunities to work with the Edinburgh University Highland Society', and we would like to confirm that that Highland Society seeks to explore opportunities of this kind with the same enthusiasm. The committee, President and Gaelic Officer of the Society look forward to working with the University Gaelic Officer in the near future.

Also as regards a Gaelic Officer, some members of the Society feel that it is essential to ensure that the right person is appointed, and that he/she works in harmony with the rest of the University so that people don't think that things are being foisted upon them which will greatly affect their working lives on a daily basis. If people feel included in the project and don't get the impression that things they don't understand are being imposed on them from on high they will be more likely to support Gaelic. This having been said, however, the University must remain firmly committed to fulfilling its targets in respect of Gaelic. The correct balance must be found.

The most useful thing which a research-orientated university can do for a minority language, that other organisations cannot do, is research the language itself. Therefore it is very welcome that the 'University will offer two four-year fees-only MSc/PhD studentships in Gaelic language, literature and culture, one beginning in 2013 and one in 2014', in addition to continuing with existing projects such as the Soillse seminar series. Perhaps the University could also give more support to important inter-university initiatives such as the Gaelic Dictionary Project, which aims to create a much-needed Gaelic historical dictionary, and which is progressing at a very slow rate at present.

It is also good to see that, after a period of four years with no occupant in the Chair of Celtic, the University is, once again endeavouring to appoint a professor. It is very important that the Chair of Celtic is filled in Scotland's capital city which is home to one of the oldest chairs of Celtic in the country. Another welcome initiative in the draft Plan, and which is of considerable relevance to many of our members, is the establishment of a new degree in 'Celtic and Education'. Many of those doing Gaelic courses at the University choose a career in Gaelic-medium education, and this degree would be very useful for them.

Yours sincerely,
Gille-chriost MacGill-Eòin (Christopher Lewin).
Gaelic Officer, University of Edinburgh Highland Society.

Response 22 – 16/7/12

We welcome the draft Plan and congratulate the University for creating a forward-looking, substantial plan which is based on the principles of language planning. The plan is structured appropriately and is clear and easy to read.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction gives a good description of the university, of the city and of Gaelic in the area and creates a good context in which the plan can be understood. It is useful that numbers of speakers, the amount of Gaelic in the area, the place of the Department of Celtic in the University and the place of Gaelic in that department are set out.

Chapter 2: Core commitments

In the section on identity, the university logo is mentioned but it is not clear what is meant by this. Is it a Gaelic-only logo or is it bi-lingual, and which language will have prominence? Will the Gaelic/bi-lingual logo be used throughout the University or just in departments where Gaelic is taught? It would be better if it were visible throughout the University.

Communications:

In the section on mail and email, it is mentioned that staff will have the opportunity to have a bi-lingual version of their charity strapline. It would be better if they were encouraged to do so rather than just given the opportunity.

If "ainm-sgrìobhadh" can be taken to mean "signature" in English, it would be rather odd to make people have a different name for themselves in another language which neither they nor anyone else uses or recognises. This could cause confusion.

The plan states that "The University will accept correspondence in Gaelic and will reply in Gaelic when a response is required" but, in practice, people do not say "I would like an answer in Gaelic". Gaelic communications should be answered in Gaelic as a matter of course.

Under the heading Complaints, it would be good to make clear that complaints can be made in Gaelic. Very few people will do this unless they know that it is permissible. (i.e. Active offer)

Publications:

This section, including printed material, PR and the media, and the website, is very fitting.

The establishment of a data-base of Gaelic-speaking experts willing to provide media interviews is a very good idea. Given the amount of Gaelic used in the media now, the University would raise its profile if news releases were issued bi-lingually on non-Gaelic matters eg the broadband project, Tegola, in which both Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the University are involved. By restricting bi-lingual news releases to solely Gaelic topics, the University loses publicity opportunities about the other matters in which it is involved.

Staffing:

Language awareness training would be a positive step and it is good to see that everyone will have an opportunity to receive this.

EUSA offers opportunities to people who have some measure of Gaelic to use the language and there are a good choice of courses with more in prospect. It would be good if staff were encouraged to do this as part of staff development, promoting it to them and supporting them with any costs. The upcoming courses are appropriate but the wording "Investigate the possibility" is a little weak.

Recruitment:

We are pleased that the University intends to appoint a Gaelic Development Officer. We are certain that this will have an influence on the position of Gaelic agus that this post is essential to the effective delivery of Gaelic Plan objectives.

Chapter 3: Policy implications for Gaelic

It would be good if the language planning categories appeared in the list of actions so that it would be clearer how each action affected Gaelic eg language acquisition, usage, status, corpus.

It is good to see in Section 4 that the University wishes to work with other Gaelic organisations in the city.

It would be helpful to add a section to this chapter on development in the workplace.

Edinburgh University has a special place amongst higher education institutions in Scotland being the first to establish a Chair of Celtic, and it is both detrimental and discrediting that this chair has not been filled since Professor William Gillies retired in 2009. This Plan cannot have the same credibility and force until that gap has been filled.

Professor Boyd Robertson,
Principal
16 July 2012