University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 24 May 2019

Periodic Subject Review: Review of Celtic & Gaelic held on 22 February 2019

Helen Clegg & Robert Mulholland, Clerks to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Neal Juster	Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources), Panel Convener
Dr Michelle Macleod	University of Aberdeen, External Subject Specialist
Professor Carl Goodyear	Senate Assessor on Court
Mr Daniel Buchan	Student member
Dr Rhona Brown	School of Critical Studies (Scottish Literature), Cognate member
Dr El Spaeth	Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service (LEADS)
Ms Helen Clegg	Senate Office, Clerk to the Panel
Mr Robert Mulholland	Academic Collaborations Office, Assistant Clerk to the Panel

1.   Introduction

The Subject of Celtic & Gaelic is one of six subjects within the School of Humanities. The School of Humanities is one of four Schools in the College of Arts. The Subject is located at 3 University Gardens.

At undergraduate level, the School offers MA Hons provision in Celtic Studies, Celtic Civilisation, and Gaelic. Postgraduate Taught provision consists of two programmes: MLitt Celtic Studies and MRes Celtic Studies/Gaelic (in which the taught element may be either 60 or 80 credits).

Preparation of the Subject's Self Evaluation Report (SER) was led by Dr Sìm Innes (Subject Learning & Teaching Convener) and Dr Sheila Kidd (Head of Subject). The document was subject to a series of staff and student consultations. The Subject made every effort to include all groups of staff and to ensure all views were represented. Student consultations were organised via focus groups and Staff Student Liaison Committee, and the draft SER was presented on all course Moodles for comment.

The Review Panel met with Professor Wendy Anderson, Dean of Learning & Teaching in the College of Arts, Professor Lynn Abrams, Head of the School of Humanities, Dr Sheila Kidd, Head of Subject, Dr Sìm Innes, Subject Learning & Teaching Convener. A group of 9 key academic and administrative staff, including the University's Gaelic Development Manager, were met. The Panel also met separately with 5 early career staff, 6 Graduate Teaching Assistants, 10 Undergraduate students and 2 Postgraduate taught students.

2. Context

2.1 Staff

The Subject has 23 staff, covering 8.18 FTEs. The main categories are as follows:

Category	Headcount	FTE
Professor	1	1
Reader	2	0.88
Senior Lecturer	1	1
Lecturer	5	4
Graduate Teaching Assistant	11	n/a
MPA staff	3	1.3

The staff:student ratio for 2018-19 is 1:12.7 based on core teaching staff, which has risen slightly over the last two years.

2.2 Students

Student numbers for 2018-19 are summarised as follows:

Celtic Civilisation 1A	156
Celtic Civilisation 1B	146
Celtic Civilisation 2A	24
Celtic Civilisation 2B	23
Gaelic 1 (Advanced)	6
Gaelic 1 (Intermediate)	2
Gaelic 1 (Beginners)	29
Gaelic 2 (Advanced)	8
Gaelic 2 (Intermediate)	10
Junior & Senior Honours Celtic Civilisation, Celtic Studies & Gaelic	25
MLitt	3
MRes	3

2.3 Range of Provision under Review

Undergraduate

- Master of Arts – Celtic Studies (single and joint honours)
- Master of Arts – Celtic Civilisation (joint honours)
- Master of Arts – Gaelic Studies (single and joint honours)

Postgraduate

- Master of Letters – Celtic Studies
- Master of Research – Celtic/Gaelic

3. Review Outcomes

3.1 The Review Panel was impressed by the Subject's strong commitment to Learning and Teaching which was demonstrated by the staff through the energy they devoted to development of their provision and their desire to engage in scholarship activity. The Panel was also impressed with the Subject's clear and demonstrable commitment to engaging and supporting students, which was unanimously praised by the student groups met by the Panel.

3.2 The Panel was impressed by the students they met, who demonstrated great enthusiasm for the subject. Students described the Subject staff as approachable and helpful. They reported good experiences when support from staff had been required. They were aware of teaching being research-led, but stated they would appreciate the opportunity to be exposed to staff research interests as a learning tool. The Panel considered the positive feedback from students to be confirmation of the attitudes expressed by the staff they met who regarded providing quality support for students and developing good relationships with the student community as a priority.

3.3 The Panel was also impressed by the work being done by the Gaelic Development Manager. Her promotion of Gaelic language across the University had led to the launch of the University's Gaelic Language Plan, and she had developed a number of initiatives that had deepened student engagement. She was also key to the planned Gaelic immersion year currently in development.

3.4 It was clear that challenges were being faced with regard to staff workload and the perceived deterioration of the sense of a Gaelic community within the Subject. Nonetheless, the Panel saw clear evidence from the student and staff groups that a sense of community did exist and that the Subject was viewed as a positive place to work and study.

The following paragraphs detail the key points discussed during the review visit along with commendations recognising good practices and recommendations on areas where the Review Panel identified scope for improvement. Commendations and recommendations are made to support the School in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. Appendix 1 provides a summary list of the commendations and recommendations.

4. Strategic Vision

4.1 The Panel discussed strategic direction with the Head of Subject, Head of School, and Subject Learning & Teaching Convener. The Head of Subject noted that the Subject intended to build on its existing reputation as a centre of excellence, and to provide a stimulating and innovative environment for students and staff. A key intention was support for the Gaelic language and the growth of student numbers of the Gaelic programme. With this in mind, plans had been developed for a Gaelic immersion year, which would mirror the 'year abroad' system currently offered to students on Modern Languages programmes. This would be classroom based but also offer outreach opportunities within the Gaelic community. The Subject's view was that this development would appeal to potential applicants and increase application numbers.

4.2 The Panel noted that student numbers for the MLitt Celtic Studies remained low. This had been highlighted at the last review, in 2013. At that point, it had been recommended that the Subject review the programme if it did not show a marked improvement in recruitment. At present, three students were registered on the programme. The Subject took the view that it was nonetheless important to continue to offer the programme, given that the majority of research students in the Subject had continued from the MLitt.

5.   Enhancements in Learning & Teaching

5.1   Research-led Teaching

> The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject liaise with the Dean of Research in the College of Arts, to examine ways in which the Subject can raise greater awareness of staff research interests among all students undertaking its programmes and thus enhance their learning experience.

5.1.1   The Panel noted the importance that the Subject attached to developing a 'research-led and interdisciplinary approach to teaching at Honours and PGT level' (SER p.5), and acknowledged that, at both these levels, the Subject's aim was to align curriculum development closely with the research interests of its staff. The Subject considered that research-led teaching helped to promote modern and fresh approaches to learning and opened up new opportunities for interdisciplinarity and collaborative working. The Subject's willingness to extend the bounds of the traditional Celtic/Gaelic curriculum had been commented on positively by the External Examiner.

5.1.2   The Panel was aware that the Subject was involved in a range of Celtic and Gaelic research activities of both an academic and public nature, and had particular strengths in early medieval literature and history; Scottish Gaelic and modern Irish literature; and language, teaching and linguistics. Research and collaborative projects the Subject had been/is involved with included, among others, 'Dachaigh airson Stòras na Gàidhlig' (the Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic, DASG), an online repository of digitised texts and lexical resources for Scottish Gaelic, the long-established inter-university initiative 'Faclair na Gàidhlig' (Dictionary of the Scottish Gaelic Language), and 'Soillse' – "an international-quality research capability that will (would) support, inform and influence policy at national and local levels in the effort to maintain and revitalise the Gaelic language in Scotland and beyond".[1]

5.1.3   The Panel acknowledged the strong research undertaken in the Subject and the staff's efforts to incorporate this work in research-led teaching, particularly with regard to curriculum development in the later undergraduate years and at PGT level. Two PGT students the Panel met advised that they had attended a staff research presentation and this had been useful to them. However, the Panel's overall impression from its meetings with staff and students over the course of the Review, was that scope existed for the Subject to promote greater awareness of its staff's research interests amongst all its students.

5.2   Gaelic Development Plan

> The Review Panel **commends** the excellent work being done by the Gaelic Development Manager in engaging students, providing opportunities for them to interact with the Gaelic community, and normalising the use of Gaelic throughout the University.

5.2.1   The Panel discussed the Gaelic Language Plan with the staff group and, in particular, with the Gaelic Development Manager. The SER had detailed a number of activities she was involved in, including the development of the Gaelic immersion year. She reported that her relationship with students, and support from the University, had allowed her to find and develop opportunities to foster interaction with the Gaelic community. Staff reported that the location of the Gaelic Development Manager within 3 University Gardens (despite being employed by the College) had been very beneficial when most of the Subject's classes had been taught in Room 202, as the speaking of Gaelic was commonplace. Since the Subject no longer had access to this room for its teaching, that normalisation of the use of the Gaelic language had been lost.

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[1] http://www.soillse.ac.uk/en/, accessed on 14.3.19

5.2.2 The Gaelic Development Manager took the view that the campus restructure, and the College's move to a new building, would offer opportunities to consider how Gaelic might be normalised – not simply in visible terms such as bilingual signage, but also in ensuring Gaelic was naturally heard and spoken. She noted that this was essential in ensuring all students, not just those in the Subject, felt confident in speaking Gaelic on campus.

6.   Enhancing the Student Experience

6.1   Admission, Retention and Success

> The Review Panel was aware that a key component of the University's new Gaelic Language Plan focused specifically on recruitment and also that the Subject was developing a recruitment strategy that would increase its profile in areas outwith its traditional recruitment pool. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject takes this opportunity to incorporate within its recruitment strategy a greater emphasis on the use of alumni in its publicity and recruitment efforts.

6.1.1 It was noted from the SER that recruitment had been challenging in recent years, with a particular concern being the lack of fluent Gaelic speakers being recruited. In 2016-17, for the first time, no fluent Gaelic speakers had been recruited. The Panel heard that there had been a decline in the number of school pupils taking languages, including Gaelic, to Higher level, and that the number throughout Scotland choosing to study Gaelic to degree level was relatively small. Notwithstanding this trend, Celtic & Gaelic acknowledged that it was placed relatively favourably with regard to recruitment to its fluent-speakers' courses, in that the Sgoil Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu (SGG) (Glasgow Gaelic School) was located near the University. The Subject was aware, however, that it must continue to extend and diversify its recruitment efforts, particularly as no school pupils would have had the opportunity to study Celtic Civilisation, and only very few would have taken Gaelic. Furthermore, a changing demographic meant that the Gaelic 1 (Advanced) and Gaelic 2 (Advanced) courses which, at one point, would have been taken largely by native Gaelic speakers, were now largely taken by English-dominant Gaelic-English bilingual students who had undertaken Gaelic-medium education.

6.1.2 Currently, the Subject had several different strands to its recruitment efforts with the most important being University Open Days (at which normally a current student or graduate would help promote the Subject Area) and the Offer Holders' Day. The Subject also utilised social media, although development in this area was largely undertaken on an ad hoc basis.

6.1.3 While recognising the efforts that the Subject was making in recruitment and publicity, the Panel saw scope for the increased use of alumni. Greater alumni engagement would help demonstrate the type of career opportunities that were available to graduates from the Subject, and also assist students in accessing professional networking opportunities. Furthermore, many of the students with whom the Panel met emphasised that their main motivation for applying to the University of Glasgow, and Celtic and Gaelic in particular, had stemmed from advice and recommendations they had received from former students and graduates of the Subject.

> The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject gives consideration to marketing its Gaelic Studies programme together with programmes offered by the School of Modern Languages & Cultures, in order to raise awareness of the programme and maximise exposure to potential applicants with a language interest.

6.1.4 It was noted that the Gaelic programme had, in the past, been marketed together with other language programmes offered in the School of Modern Languages & Cultures. This no longer happened, though it was unclear why the change had been made. The

Panel took the view that reverting to this marketing strategy could bring the Subject to the attention of applicants with a language interest who may not have considered Gaelic.

6.2   Equality and Diversity

6.2.1   The Panel noted that the Subject planned to explore the introduction of a gender-neutral language policy, in line with that already in place in the School of Modern Languages & Cultures. The Panel welcomed this.

6.2.2   It was noted in the SER that the School of Humanities had received the Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2017 and, subsequently, a Gender Equality Committee was established. Two of the Committee members were from the Subject. Gender Equality was a standing item at Subject meetings and staff had been asked to ensure, wherever possible, a fair gender balance in their course reading lists. The Panel was impressed by the Subject's demonstrable commitment to gender equality.

6.3   Supporting Students in their Learning

6.3.1   The students with whom the panel met were extremely enthusiastic about the Subject and the support offered by staff. They reported staff being welcoming, approachable, generous and consistently willing to offer help, describing the Subject as "just a wonderful place".

6.4   Student Engagement

6.4.1   The undergraduate students who met with the Panel acknowledged that mechanisms to provide feedback on their courses were in place. While responses to evaluations/feedback were usually provided, there was room for improvement with regard to closing the feedback loop.

6.4.2   The students who met with the Panel indicated that they had been fully involved in the development of the SER, noting that focus groups had taken place and that a draft of the SER had been posted on Moodle for comment.

7.   Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

7.1   Curriculum Content

> The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject review the Gaelic language content of Years 1 and 2, to take account of the changing student demographic and to ensure that content is appropriate and up to date. Full consultation with students should be central to informing development in this area.

7.1.1   The Panel noted that, as with the acquisition of any language, students arriving in the Subject without prior knowledge of Gaelic found the classes very challenging. At present there were three language streams at Level 1 – beginners, intermediate and advanced – and two streams at Level 2 – intermediate and advanced. The Subject was keen to ensure that students, particularly in the 'beginners' stream, were properly supported in their language acquisition to enable them to continue to Honours, where much of the teaching was conducted in Gaelic.

7.1.2   The Panel discussed with the Head of Subject and the Subject Learning & Teaching Convener whether the current Gaelic teaching was appropriate. They reported that there had been discussion ongoing for some time about possibly revamping Level 1 and 2 Gaelic. The Panel was advised that these courses were rather difficult to pitch because it was considered vital to expose students to classic Gaelic works, but these were sometimes challenging for students at this level. Much effort was expended in finding creative ways to bring the texts to life for those students.

7.1.3   The staff group advised that, although numbers in the three streams could be low, they considered all three were essential, particularly in view of the fact that most students did not naturally have the opportunity to hear or speak Gaelic elsewhere. Staff were clear that they risked losing students if they withdrew any of the streams.

7.1.4   Some of the undergraduate students with whom the Panel met stated that the pace of beginners' Gaelic was very challenging, though those who had continued to Honours took the view that, in retrospect, this was necessary in helping them prepare for Honours. Those in advanced Gaelic at Level 2 felt that there was little benefit in translating poetry, and would find it more useful to analyse it, which would develop their skills more than translating and memorising.

> The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for its innovative plans to introduce an immersion year for students on the Gaelic programme. This would mirror the 'year abroad' system in place in Modern Languages programmes. The Panel recognised the workload implications, however, for an already over-burdened subject area.

7.1.5   The Panel was interested to read in the SER about the plans for a Gaelic immersion year. The Subject Learning & Teaching Convener reported that students on other language programmes had the opportunity to study abroad for a period, but students on the Gaelic programme did not have this opportunity. Plans were therefore being developed to offer students an immersion year, which would take place in a University setting but with outreach opportunities within the wider Gaelic community in Glasgow and the Western Isles. As well as immersing students in the language and therefore improving their language skills, this development would also provide the Subject with a unique programme and assist with recruitment. It was noted that the immersion year would be comprised of three assessed courses and constitute 120 credits within a five-year degree. It was noted that, at present, some students took time out of their programme and spent a year studying at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on Skye (a college of the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI)) to ensure their Gaelic ability was appropriate for entry to Honours, but this presented an issue with regard to funding. The immersion year would overcome this difficulty.

7.1.6   The Panel asked the students for their views on the immersion year plans. The postgraduate students were very positive about it, noting that it would be extremely beneficial in improving language fluency. They noted that not all students would be able to take advantage of it – for example, mature students or those with caring responsibilities – but on the whole they considered it a very worthwhile development. The undergraduate students agreed, noting that immersion should not be restricted to the language, but also extended to the social and cultural aspects of the Gaelic community, in order to have the most beneficial effect.

7.1.7   The Gaelic Development Manager reported that the immersion year was a key development and essential in order for students to achieve the fluency required for pursuing Gaelic at Honours level. She stated that the summer school previously available at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was helpful but that a more sustainable plan needed to be in place. She stated that she had had positive discussions with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the College of Arts, and that an application would shortly be submitted to the SFC. She added that, as well as language immersion in the classroom, students would spend several weeks in South Uist, living within the Gaelic community. She appreciated that not all students would be willing, or able, to undertake the immersion year and advised that students would also be able to follow the four-year degree as currently offered.

7.2   Intended Learning Outcomes

7.2.1   In discussion about Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), the undergraduate students who met with the Panel confirmed that they were aware of the purpose of ILOs and had been able to find and understand those that related to their courses. They were less convinced that students actively engaged with ILOs and used them throughout the year. The Panel reminds the School that ILOs should be part of induction, should be placed prominently and in a consistent location on all course Moodles. Students should be reminded to consult the ILOs prior to assessments.

7.3   Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching

The Review Panel **recommends** that IT Services, in consultation with the Heads of Celtic & Gaelic, and the School of Humanities, arranges to install Microsoft Office Scottish Gaelic spell-check language support software on all appropriate student-use university computers, including laptops available to students for loan.

7.3.1   The Panel was informed that, in 2015, Microsoft had added Scottish Gaelic to its existing range of languages and dialects supported by proofing functionality (spell-check) software in Microsoft Office. The Panel heard that this software was available on some newer computers in the University Library, however it was not installed on all student-use University computers to which Celtic & Gaelic students had access. Both the students and staff that the Panel met with considered that Scottish Gaelic spell-check software was an essential learning resource and that students were at a clear disadvantage in writing coursework in Gaelic by not having access to it. Students had regularly asked at Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) that this software be made available to them on all machines they used, and staff also had raised the matter in Annual Monitoring Reports, and elsewhere. The matter, however, remained unresolved.

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given to recording Gaelic Language classes in order for these to be used as a teaching and study resource. Clarity should also be obtained on the entitlement of students with disabilities to have recordings of classes.

7.3.2   It was noted that audio recordings of all Level 1 and 2 Celtic Civilisation lectures were available online after the lecture took place, and that Powerpoints were made available prior to lectures. Gaelic classes were not recorded as they were interactive and thus more akin to seminars. As well as the recording of seminars being out of line with the University's Lecture Recording Policy, there was a concern that students would not wish them to be recorded due to their interactive nature. The postgraduate students had no reservations about Gaelic classes being recorded and considered that they would be a valuable resource. The undergraduate students' views were mixed, with some students being unconvinced of the usefulness of such recordings, and others being keen to have all Gaelic classes recorded. It was noted that students with disabilities were entitled to have recordings of classes but there appeared to be some confusion about what was permitted.

7.4   Assessment and Feedback

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of the School of Humanities, in consultation with the Head of Celtic & Gaelic, liaise with the Convener of the VLE Development Board to (i) establish the level of access to Moodle Quiz materials currently provided to students and staff in the Subject and (ii) ensure that students in the Subject be afforded access to previous years' Moodle Quiz materials.

7.4.1   The Panel noted from the SER that the Subject employed a range of assessment methods used in its programmes, and that these reflected the diversity of learning

opportunities. Assessment methods currently in use included essays, reflective writing, examinations, grammar and translation exercises, oral assessments, Moodle quizzes and song recitals. The Panel was impressed by the Subject's focus on providing students with opportunities for formative assessment which also facilitated its aim to provide consistent, quality feedback to students.

7.4.2 It was reported that a review of assessment for Celtic Civilisation Year 2 had been underway since the previous review in 2013. The current assessment scheme comprised two essays and a final examination and, while beneficial from a skills development viewpoint, a significant amount of staff time was required to give feedback on two essays. This had led, on occasion, to feedback on the first essay being unavailable in time to be of use to students in preparing the second essay. The assessment scheme had therefore been reviewed and it was proposed that, from 2019-20, the second essay would be replaced by a presentation.

7.4.3 The Panel noted from the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) that, in line with the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy (2015-2020), the Subject sought to incorporate and develop the effective use of IT and VLE in its teaching. Moodle was used extensively across Celtic and Gaelic's courses and programmes at all levels, and it supported activities such as Moodle Forum, the circulation of SSLC minutes, the hosting of recordings and Powerpoints, and Moodle Quiz.

7.4.4 The Panel was informed that, in the period since the last review of Celtic & Gaelic in 2013, the Subject had introduced the use of Moodle worksheets, as a method of assessment for Celtic Civilisation level 1 students. This replaced one of two essays that were required previously. Additionally, Moodle Quiz was used for Gaelic Language. The staff and students the Panel met with considered that the use of Moodle Quiz was particularly valuable, in that it was used to support weekly formative assessment of student progress while, at the same time, helped to facilitate the incremental development of language skills. The Panel considered the creative use of Moodle Quiz by the Subject, particularly with regard to the incremental development of Gaelic language skills, to be an example of **good practice**.

7.4.5 Both staff and students that the Panel met with understood, however, that student access to their work (and related staff feedback) held on Moodle Quiz, was restricted to the current academic session. This meant that work that students had submitted in previous sessions was not available to them. It seemed to be the case, however, that staff did have some level of access to the previous year/s' work of students. The Panel shared the view of the staff and students whom they met with, that access to previous year/s' work on Moodle Quiz would be a valuable learning resource for students, particularly in the circumstance where course content built and expanded on material taught in the previous session.

> The Review Panel **recommends** that, in order not to disadvantage those students submitting work in Gaelic, the Subject gives consideration to increasing the word count for essays submitted in the Gaelic language, in recognition that generally, it requires more words in Gaelic, as compared to English, to relate the same information.

7.4.6 The undergraduate student group reported to the Panel that, in Gaelic Honours where they were required to submit essays in Gaelic, they felt constrained by having the same word count as would be imposed upon essays written in English. They reported that, in the Gaelic language, a greater number of words were necessary to relate the same information and, as such, an appropriate increase to the word count would be welcomed.

7.4.7 The Panel noted from the SER that the Subject's approach to formative assessment provided regular opportunities for students to receive feedback. The Subject aimed to

return work to students within 15 working days and to communicate to students any reason this deadline could not be met. The Head of Subject reported that, since reducing the amount of second marking carried out, time savings had been made and this had improved feedback turnaround times.

8. Resources for Learning & Teaching

8.1 Accommodation

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Space Management & Timetabling Team give consideration to accessibility issues in terms of the reasonableness of the distance students, and particularly students with mobility difficulties, are expected to travel between consecutive classes.

8.1.1 The Panel noted from the SER that students with mobility difficulties had been negatively impacted by room booking issues – for example, two disabled students had had consecutive classes timetabled in the Gregory Building followed by the St Andrews Building. While the buildings themselves were accessible, the distance between them was unreasonable and unfeasible for those students. While the difficulties of scheduling appropriate venues are recognised, particularly for multiple optional courses, the Panel took the view that, at least for the core courses, SMTT should consider methods of resolving such issues that ensure students do not miss classes.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of the College of Arts, together with other relevant staff, gives consideration to providing space which supports the development of Gaelic language and helps foster a sense of community within the Subject in the plans for the new College of Arts accommodation.

8.1.2 The members of staff with whom the Panel met considered that one of the key aspects of the Subject's provision was the emphasis placed on normalising the use of Gaelic, among Gaelic-speaking students and staff, in learning and teaching spaces. The aim was to create an environment which, for fluent Gaelic speakers, would be a natural extension of their learning experience in Gaelic medium education, while for learners, would be one aimed at increasing their confidence in using the language. Central to this aim was the Subject's adoption of bilingual signage and a bilingual policy within the Subject, in No. 3 University Gardens. The Panel was advised that the University's Gaelic Development Manager's office had been intentionally located immediately adjacent to the main teaching room (Room 202) in the building, with the aim of promoting the use of Gaelic in day-to-day exchanges between students and staff. The supportive environment had been commended at the last review in 2013.

8.1.3 The Panel heard that, in the period since the last review, the Subject had lost access to Room 202 due to the fact that, in general, the number of students taking Gaelic classes was either below the room capacity of 26 or, in the case of Gaelic Beginners, exceeded the capacity of the room; this therefore did not maximise efficiency of the room's usage in terms of Space Management and Timetabling's 'best fit' policy. As a consequence, there had been a considerable reduction in the use of Gaelic language within the building (both formally and informally) as students were now required to move to other parts of the campus to attend Gaelic classes.

8.1.4 The students and staff with whom the Panel met expressed disappointment that the Subject could not use Room 202 due to the best fit policy, particularly given that the University's Gaelic Language Plan set out the University's support for the language. They expressed the view that the loss of the room had been detrimental to the sense of community and that they now rarely heard Gaelic spoken naturally in the building. The Panel acknowledged the concerns expressed regarding the use of Room 202 but stressed that the room was a University-wide resource and it was important that limited

teaching accommodation was used to best effect for the maximum number of students. Nonetheless, the Panel agreed that it was important to have a learning environment within the University which supported the strong learning community in Celtic & Gaelic, and furthermore, took account of the wider aims of the University's Gaelic Language Plan.

> The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for its welcoming, approachable attitude towards students, and for fostering an environment where students feel extremely well supported and encouraged.

8.1.5 Despite the challenges presented by accommodation, it was clear to the Panel that a strong sense of community remained. The students with whom the Panel met were unanimous in their praise for the commitment, approachability and friendliness of staff, and noted that the small size of the Subject enabled this. The postgraduate students stated that, because of the small cohort, they felt "like a family". They reported having regular interactions with each other as well as with some undergraduate and research students. They very much valued this. The undergraduate students expressed similar points of view to the postgraduate students, in relation to staff, and noted that this was pertinent to the choice of Honours subject ("You come for the course and you stay for the department").

8.2 Engaging & Supporting Staff

Staff Workload

8.2.1 It was clear to the Panel from reading the SER, and from meeting with the staff group, that staff workloads were extremely high. Staff reported wishing to do more in terms of review of provision and assessment, and development activity, but were unable to do so due to the time spent teaching, marking and carrying out administrative tasks. Staff reported making time savings in certain areas only to have the saved time consumed by different tasks. Teaching efficiencies were sought by teaching different cohorts together, though the Panel questioned whether this was best practice. Staff reported that, in particular, language teaching carried a very heavy workload, with weekly exercises to be set and marked. It was also reported that much of the Subject's work was "invisible" because it was nominally conducted at School level but, in reality, was conducted by Subject staff .

8.2.2 The small size of the Subject meant that any staff absence due to illness, maternity or research leave could not be easily covered. It also meant that, in some cases, particular expertise had been lost and this in turn restricted student choice. Staff were also required to take on administrative roles with no ability to rotate or delegate these. These challenges were difficult for the Subject to reconcile with its desire to increase student numbers and its wish to remain represented on various Committees. There were also concerns that the available pool of GTAs was reducing in size across the School. However, the student groups also noted that the small size of the Subject was beneficial in the sense that they knew all of the staff and felt a sense of community as a result.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

> The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Humanities reviews the payment made to GTAs in the Subject, with a view to the GTAs being able to claim payment for at least one additional hour per week for undertaking extra administrative tasks that are over and above their core workload.

8.2.3 The Panel was advised that there was a team of 11 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) in Celtic & Gaelic and those the Panel met reported very positively on their experience in the Subject. They reflected on excellent support from academic staff and

felt part of a close-knit and strong learning and teaching community in Celtic & Gaelic – an environment described by one GTA as "nourishing" and "amazing".

8.2.4 All GTAs the Panel met had undertaken the general training course offered by the Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service (LEADS) and this was supplemented by two training sessions (on Induction and Marking) delivered at the appropriate times of the academic year, in respect of the Celtic Civilisation Level 1 courses. The Panel was told, that in general, the Course Convener would observe and provide feedback on the teaching of new GTAs. In turn, GTAs felt that they were active members of the teaching team and were encouraged to give feedback on aspects of tutorial delivery with which they were involved.

8.2.5 Study guides/GTA-only teaching materials were provided for six of the ten tutorials the GTAs led, and a set textbook was made available for the other four tutorials. GTAs who were not familiar with Level 1 Celtic Civilisation were encouraged to audit the course in their first year as PGRs (or follow it via recordings and Powerpoint slides on Moodle) with a view to tutoring it in their second year. The Subject was in liaison with the Learning & Teaching Convener in the School of Humanities with a view to arranging Moodle training for the GTAs who were not already familiar with that technology.

8.2.6 The Panel heard staff concerns that the pool of GTAs upon which the Subject could draw was dwindling and that consequently the existing GTA:student ratio in Celtic Civilisation Level 1 courses would be difficult to maintain in future. The Subject and the School were investigating means by which this might be mitigated, such as pooling GTAs across the School, but the number of research students in small subjects typically fluctuated over time and this made future planning difficult.

8.2.7 The Panel was informed by the GTAs they met, that in general, they considered their core workload to be manageable although certain teaching activities, such as manuscript analysis, were more time-consuming than others. The GTAs present at the meeting welcomed the revised policy on essay marking which had been adopted by the School in session 2018-19 which gave GTAs payment for marking two, rather than three, essays per hour. They expressed the view, however, that a considerable amount of their time was consumed by general administrative tasks, which amounted to considerably more than the limited administrative responsibilities described in the GTA job description. This included tasks such as replying to emails from students, attendance recording, Moodle forum messaging, issuing reminders and arranging meetings. The GTAs were of the opinion that they should be entitled to claim an additional payment of, at least, one additional hour per week in recognition of this extra administrative work that they undertook. The Panel considered this to be reasonable.

Early Career Staff

8.2.8 It was noted from the SER that support was provided through the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) together with mentoring support from outside of the Subject. Experienced staff were available to mentor early career staff in terms of assessment marking. Peer observation of teaching was also carried out and feedback provided. The early career staff who met with the Panel stated that they felt well supported but that mentoring meetings could be very difficult to arrange, as their mentors were senior staff members.

8.2.9 Staff were asked about their experience of the ECDP. The Panel heard that the ECDP had been required for existing experienced staff when they were appointed to promoted posts. The Panel agreed that the programme could have less value in such cases and noted that a process exists whereby prior experience could be taken into account. Efforts should be made to ensure staff are aware of this process. Any exceptions would require to be agreed on an individual basis and on the request of the individual concerned. More generally, there was concern among staff that the ECDP

made them feel less secure in their roles. While they welcomed the clarity the ECDP offered regarding promotion, the specific requirements for advancement within a specific timescale made staff feel unsettled. They reported being content with the gradual stages of development but the Panel recognised their concerns about job security in the event that the stages were not met in the timescales required.

> The Review Panel **recommends** that any staff member carrying out the Performance Development & Review process for early career staff should either have completed the Early Career Development Programme themselves, or be provided with appropriate training.

8.2.10 Staff were asked about their views on the Performance & Development Review system. Staff expressed the view that the requirements for being appointed to different grades and for promotion appeared to have become more challenging. The Panel did not believe this was the case, but noted that the interpretation of the criteria may vary from one reviewer to another, depending on whether the reviewer had gone through the ECDP themselves. It was agreed that it was necessary for reviewers conducting the PDRs of staff on the ECDP to have experience of the ECDP themselves, or to be given appropriate training, to ensure that early career staff were reviewed fairly.

8.2.11 Staff reported that they felt supported in their teaching but had little or no space for scholarship or research. All staff, including early career staff, had additional commitments in terms of convenership and administrative roles and, given the Subject's small size, there were not enough staff members to allow these to be rotated. Staff brought in to replace staff on teaching buyouts reported that these left them feeling very insecure and feeling obligated to work more hours than they were paid for because they required positive student feedback in order to have the opportunity of future work. Staff on teaching buyouts were not eligible for the ECDP and did not undergo any formal PDR process. It was made clear by staff that the Subject was supportive, but the situation itself was challenging.

9. Academic Standards

9.1 The Review Panel considered that the Subject had a variety of robust and effective procedures in place which ensure that it was engaged in a continual process of self-reflection and self-evaluation with regard to academic and pedagogical practice.

9.2 The Review Panel established from the Self-Evaluation Report and the supporting documents that the Subject was operating effective quality enhancement processes in line with University policy and practice.

9.3 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the School were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area.

10. Good Practice

The following area of good practice was identified by the Review Panel:

- The creative use of Moodle Quiz by the Subject, particularly with regard to the incremental development of Gaelic language skills.

Appendix 1

Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

<u>**Commendations**</u>

The Review Panel commends the Celtic and Gaelic Subject Area on the following, which are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the excellent work being done by the Gaelic Development Manager in engaging students, providing opportunities for them to interact with the Gaelic community, and normalising the use of Gaelic throughout the University. *[Paragraph 5.2]*

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for its innovative plans to introduce an immersion year for students on the Gaelic programme. This would mirror the 'year abroad' system in place in Modern Languages programmes. The Panel recognised the workload implications, however, for an already over-burdened subject area. *[Paragraph 7.1.4]*

Commendation 3

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for its welcoming, approachable attitude towards students, and for fostering an environment where students feel extremely well supported and encouraged. *[Paragraph 8.1.4]*

<u>**Recommendations**</u>

The following recommendations have been made to support the Celtic & Gaelic Subject Area in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment.

The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

Research-led Teaching

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject liaise with the Dean of Research in the College of Arts, to examine ways in which the Subject can raise greater awareness of staff research interests among all students undertaking its programmes and thus enhance their learning experience. *[Paragraph 5.1]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject.
For the information of: Dean of Research, College of Arts

Use of Alumni in Marketing

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel was aware that a key component of the University's new Gaelic Language Plan focused specifically on recruitment and also that the Subject was developing a recruitment strategy that would increase its profile in areas outwith its traditional recruitment pool. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject takes this opportunity to incorporate within its recruitment strategy a greater emphasis on the use of alumni in its publicity and recruitment efforts. *[Paragraph 6.1]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Marketing of Gaelic Studies with Programmes Offered by the School of Modern Languages & Cultures

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject gives consideration to marketing its Gaelic Studies programme together with programmes offered by the School of Modern Languages & Cultures, in order to raise awareness of the programme and maximise exposure to potential applicants with a language interest. *[Paragraph 6.1.4]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Review of Gaelic Language Content in Years 1 and 2

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject review the Gaelic language content of Years 1 and 2, to take account of the changing student demographic and to ensure that content is appropriate and up to date. Full consultation with students should be central to informing developments in this area. *[Paragraph 7.1]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that IT Services, in consultation with the Heads of Celtic and Gaelic, and the School of Humanities, arranges to install Microsoft Office Scottish Gaelic spell-check language support software on all appropriate student-use university computers, including laptops available to students for loan. *[Paragraph 7.3]*

For the attention of: Head of IT Services; Heads of Celtic & Gaelic, and the School of Humanities

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given to recording Gaelic Language classes in order for these to be used as a teaching and study resource. Clarity should also be obtained on the entitlement of students with disabilities to have recordings of classes. *[Paragraph 7.3.2]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject
For information: Head of Disability Service

Assessment and Feedback

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of the School of Humanities, in consultation with the Head of Celtic & Gaelic, liaise with the Convener of the VLE Development Board to:

(i)   establish the level of access to Moodle Quiz materials currently provided to students and staff in the Subject; and

(ii)   ensure that students in the Subject be afforded access to previous years' Moodle Quiz materials. *[Paragraph 7.4]*

For the attention of: Head of the School of Humanities
For information: Head of Subject

Assessment and Feedback

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends,** that in order not to disadvantage those students submitting work in Gaelic, the Subject gives consideration to increasing the word count for essays

submitted in the Gaelic language, in recognition that generally, it requires more words in Gaelic, as compared to English, to relate the same information. *[Paragraph 7.4.6]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Accommodation

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Space Management & Timetabling Team give consideration to accessibility issues in terms of the reasonableness of the distance students, and particularly students with mobility difficulties, are expected to travel between consecutive classes. *[Paragraph 8.1.1]*

For the attention of: Space Management & Timetabling Team

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of the College of Arts, together with other relevant staff, gives consideration to providing space which supports the development of Gaelic language and helps foster a sense of community within the Subject in the plans for the new College of Arts accommodation. *[Paragraph. 8.1.2 to 8.1.4]*

For the attention of: Head of the College of Arts

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Humanities reviews the payment made to GTAs in the Subject, with a view to the GTAs being able to claim payment for at least one additional hour per week for undertaking extra administrative tasks that are over and above their core workload. *[Paragraph 8.2.7]*

For the attention of: Head of the School of Humanities

Early Career Staff

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that any staff member carrying out the Performance Development & Review process for early career staff should either have completed the Early Career Development Programme themselves, or be provided with appropriate training. *[Paragraph 8.2.10]*

For the attention of: Head of Subject