Gaelic Language Plan 2022–25

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 1 November 2022

Foreword

SQA has an important role to play in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic in a multilingual Scotland and I am delighted to set out our continuing commitment to meeting the objectives of the National Plan for Gaelic and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 in this — the third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan, covering the next three years.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig works closely with public bodies towards incorporating Gaelic in the exercise of their functions to mainstream the language as part of the day-to-day fabric of modern Scottish life.

SQA continues to raise the status and profile of the Gaelic language and create practical opportunities for its use. We are proud to provide a range of Gaelic qualifications suitable for everyone from learners to fluent speakers, that not only develop language skills, but also incorporate musical, cultural, historical and vocational elements. Working in partnership with other educational bodies has been, and remains to be, a fundamental element of our Gaelic Language Plan.

We will also continue to offer our Gaelic services to our employees and the public. This will ensure that where Gaelic services are made available by us, Gaelic users will be made aware of their existence, and be actively encouraged to use them.

Scottish Ministers have announced that SQA is to be replaced by a new curriculum and assessment body as part of a review of national education bodies. We will play a full and positive role in the review process that is underway, reflecting the skills, knowledge and experience of colleagues across SQA. How the review impacts our delivery of this plan will be closely monitored.

Fiona Robertson
SQA Chief Executive

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Introduction

Description of SQA

SQA is Scotland's national awarding and accreditation body. Our purpose is to help people fulfil their full potential while maintaining standards across Scottish education. We are an executive non-departmental public body that reports to Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament. Established under the Education (Scotland) Act 1996, SQA is sponsored by the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate. Our remit and function are outlined in the amended Scottish Qualifications Act 2002.

SQA has a workforce of almost 1,000 spread between offices in Glasgow and Dalkeith — but with many colleagues working from home at present. SQA engages with learners, schools, colleges and training providers across Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally, to develop, maintain, and improve a framework of qualifications. We also set and maintain standards for many other awarding bodies and accredited qualifications.

Awarding

As an awarding body, SQA develops, maintains and improves a framework of qualifications gained at Scotland's schools, colleges, employers and training providers. These include:

♦ National Qualifications, studied at schools and colleges, such as National 1–5, Highers, and Advanced Highers
♦ Higher National Qualifications, often studied at colleges, which can serve as a bridge to further study at university
♦ a range of vocational qualifications, developed with industry partners, and responding to perceived skills needs

Accrediting

As an accrediting body, SQA sets and maintains standards for many other awarding bodies, and for accredited qualifications such as Scottish Vocational Qualifications. SVQs provide evidence that learners can do their jobs well and can be studied in colleges or in the workplace.

SQA Accreditation provides extensive support and quality assurance that offers a badge of quality for awarding bodies and their customers. Colleagues in SQA Accreditation work with standards setting organisations and other stakeholders in the development of National Occupational Standards, qualification structures and associated products, and SCQF credit rating of qualifications.

SQA also plays an important role in supporting Foundation Apprenticeships and the wider Developing the Young Workforce policy: our qualifications form part of the majority of Scotland's Modern Apprenticeships. Our accreditation function also makes an important contribution in this area.

SQA can't develop and deliver qualifications on its own; we work with experienced teachers, lecturers and other subject experts. In a typical year, SQA employs around 15,000 such appointees. Appointees work on everything from devising qualifications, creating assessments and marking, to quality assurance visits and exam invigilation. SQA's appointees are vital for ensuring that our education and training systems work effectively. In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic and cancellation of the 2020 National Qualifications examinations diet meant that we called on the services of only a small number of senior appointees in a review capacity.

Objectives and strategies

In 2019–20, we carried out an internal consultation and development exercise to assess and update the ways we express, implement and monitor our strategy as an organisation. As a result of this process, we now have five outcomes, which we have published in our Corporate Plan for 2020–23:

♦ We provide a credible qualifications system
♦ We are flexible in meeting customer needs
♦ We have a sustainable business operating model that is appropriately resourced in order to deliver our remit now and in the future
♦ We are a thriving organisation, with quality jobs and a fair work environment for all our people
♦ We are trusted, respected and valued by our customers, stakeholders and partners

These outcomes help us in our aim of maintaining, developing and continually improving our qualifications, accreditation work, and other activities. We seek to do this through continually engaging with those who use and are affected by our products and services. We are open to feedback and are very willing to respond to it.

SQA's strategic objectives are embodied in our outcomes. These set out our aims and aspirations as an organisation, and make a vital contribution to the wellbeing, progress and development of Scottish society as a whole, and of the individuals who form part of it. They cover both our accreditation and awarding functions and align with and support the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF).

Organisation structure

SQA's activities are directed by an Executive Management Team (EMT) consisting of the chief executive and the directors responsible for the major functions of the organisation. These functions include awarding our own qualifications and accrediting and regulating the activity of other awarding bodies. The functions are overseen by our Accreditation Committee — a statutory committee established by the Education (Scotland) Act 1996.

SQA's policy, and in particular our Corporate Plan, is developed by the EMT, with strategic direction provided by the non-executive members of the Board of Management, and in consultation with the Scottish Government. The EMT oversee the implementation of the plan and provides regular progress reports for review by the Board. The role of our Advisory Council, whose members are appointed by the Scottish Government, is to represent our

various stakeholders and consider and advise SQA on their needs and views in relation to our qualifications and awards.

The organisation's functions are split across eight directorates:

♦ Business Development
♦ Business Systems
♦ Communications
♦ Finance and Corporate Services
♦ Operations
♦ Qualifications
♦ People
♦ Policy, Analysis and Standards

In June 2021, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published its report on Curriculum for Excellence. Following the publication of the review, Scottish Ministers announced that SQA would be replaced and a new specialist agency would be created which would have responsibility for both curriculum and assessment. This is an opportunity for significant change that will meet the future needs of our learners, our society and our economy, and which has the support of us all.

As evidenced in SQA's previous Gaelic Language Plans, SQA has been able to extend its existing and long-held provision for the language and will continue to do so. The impact of the review and replacement of SQA on this, our third plan, will be monitored as the findings of the review take shape.

Gaelic within SQA

To help secure a sustainable future for Gaelic in a multilingual Scotland, SQA is committed to the objectives set out in the National Plan for Gaelic and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which recognises Gaelic as an official language of Scotland.

In our work, SQA seeks to:

♦ encourage the increased use of Gaelic
♦ promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic
♦ promote a positive image of Gaelic

We offer opportunities for colleagues to learn Gaelic by providing links to relevant resources, events and news on our Scotland's Languages intranet page. Staff can also engage with other speakers and learners on our SQA Gaelic Hub on Yammer.

Although Gaelic-medium education was officially established in 1985, the Gaelic language has been used as a medium of communication, teaching and learning for hundreds of years. SQA and our predecessor bodies have a long-standing support for the Gaelic language.

Key developments include:

1904   Including Gaelic as a subject for the Secondary Leaving Certificate

1905   Introducing Lower and Higher Certificate examinations in Gaelic (intended for native speakers)

1962   The Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board (SCEEB) established the Gaelic (Learners) course, enabling differentiation between learner and native speaker examinations for Gaelic in the Ordinary Grade

1968   SEB introduced the Higher grade examination for Gaelic (Learners)

1981   Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board published Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (GOC). The guidelines aimed to give an authoritative set of writing conventions for teachers and candidates, to remove the inconsistencies in written Gaelic noted by SCEEB examiners

1983   First official use of Gaelic in the teaching of secondary subjects following Comhairle nan Eilean's pilot project as an extension to its primary bilingual programme. Pupils in Lionel and Shawbost secondary departments in Lewis began learning social subjects through the medium of Gaelic

1985   Gaelic-medium units set up in schools in Inverness and Glasgow, fuelling demand for provision in other areas

1988   First mainland Gaelic-medium unit opened at Hillpark Secondary, Glasgow

1992   Provision for Gàidhlig and Gaelic-medium subjects established in Millburn Academy, Inverness and Portree High, Skye, thus ensuring continuity of Gaelic-medium education for pupils of two of the largest primary units

1993   SQA began to offer Standard Grades in Matamataig (Mathematics), Eachdraidh (History), Nuadh-eòlas (Modern Studies) and Cruinn-eòlas (Geography)

2009   SQA launched Modern Languages for Work Purposes — a suite of units at Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher level. Generic specification covering 10 languages including Gaelic (Learners)

2011   New models of entry and certification developed for SQA Gaelic-medium courses to ensure that course titles and all units attained through the medium of Gaelic are reported in Gaelic on candidates' Scottish Qualifications Certificates. There are also recognition statements reported on the detailed record of attainment to indicate that the course was assessed and attained through the medium of Gaelic

2011   Launch of National Units developed by SQA in partnership with Colleges Scotland to improve provision for adult learners of Gaelic. The units cover the four key language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing

2011   Launch of NPA Contemporary Gaelic Language Songwriting and Production. This award covers issues which have shaped modern Gaelic society, language and culture, and includes an introduction to the roots of Gaelic music making, with a focus on the transition to contemporary Gaelic music and its genres

2012   Launch of NC Celtic Studies. This National Certificate provides an understanding of developments in the creative, cultural and heritage industries, Gaelic language, the politics of the Celtic nations, and traditional music and dance

2013   SQA launched Modern Languages for Life and Work Award at SCQF levels 3 and 4, developed to meet the aims of Curriculum for Excellence, and available across 10 languages including Gaelic (Learners)

2018   Development of SQA's PDA in Gaelic Translation. A Professional Development Award intended for those already working as translators who wish to further develop their knowledge, skills and practice. It is also suitable for those with a high level of language competence in both Gaelic and English who wish to undertake the process necessary to become a competent translator working to professional standards

2020   In response to feedback from centres, the Modern Languages for Life and Work Award was made available at SCQF levels 5 and 6 along with its component freestanding units

SQA recognises that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and cultural life, and that education plays a vital role in minority language revitalisation. We are committed to working in collaboration with stakeholders and partners across Scotland to ensure the Gaelic language thrives in our linguistically diverse society and to ensure it has a sustainable future. We aim to promote the many benefits it can offer our candidates and our colleagues, be it the educational, economic or cultural benefits.

SQA promotes Gaelic language and culture through our ongoing support of events such as the Royal National Mòd and the National Gaelic Schools debate. We support and contribute to the Faster Rate of Progress government initiative for Gaelic and work closely with a range of stakeholders such as Education Scotland, Stòrlann, Gaelic Local Authorities Network (GLAN), Scottish Government, Comann nan Pàrant and GTCS.

It is important that candidates who have experienced Gaelic-medium education throughout their broad general education in primary and secondary can have full access to Gaelic-medium education in their senior phase to consolidate and further develop their Gaelic language skills. SQA fully supports the development of a coherent national strategy to ensure that this happens.

Following discussions as part of the Faster Rate of Progress meeting in September 2021, a working group was established with the aim of expanding the current subject offer in senior phase. Early discussions include exploring alternatives to National Courses, practical alternative pathways — including Modern Languages for Life and Work Awards, and links to apprenticeship programmes. We recognise the importance of pursuing a more mixed economy for Gaelic-medium education (GME) students in the senior phase, offering a suite

of opportunities, better matched to need and context linked to Developing the Young Workforce pathways.

Further information on our provision for Gaelic is available at www.sqa.org.uk/gaelic.

Gaelic in Scotland

According to 2011 Census figures (currently the most up to date), the total number of people recorded as being able to speak and/or read, and/or write, and/or understand Gaelic was 87,056. Of these, the total number of people who could speak Gaelic was 57,602. While the number of Gaelic speakers declined overall in the last census, the number of people able to speak, read and write Gaelic increased between 2001 and 2011, reflecting a growth in Gaelic literacy and growing numbers of Gaelic learners. Two major developments in the last decade have seen the increase in digital platforms for language learners. 425,000 learners are currently engaged in the Duolingo Gaelic Course[1], and the recent launch of SpeakGaelic by the BBC in October 2021 shows that there is an appetite for learning Gaelic in Scotland.

Each year, Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) publishes public data on Gaelic education. Key statistics include:

♦ 3,801 pupils in primary GME (61 schools/units in 15 local authorities)
♦ 1,474 pupils in secondary GME (32 schools in 12 local authorities)
♦ 75 primary schools in seven local authorities offer Gaelic Learner education
♦ 3,599 Gaelic Learner pupils (32 secondary schools in eight local authorities)

The map on the next page shows the locations of Gaelic education provision currently available in Scotland. More detail on these statistics is available from BnG at: www.gaidhlig.scot/en/education/education-data.

We are proud of our vital role in creating a sustainable future for the language in Scotland.

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[1] **Duolingo user statistics, as at 29 October 2021 https://www.duolingo.com/courses/all**

Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig 2020-21 Gaelic Medium Education

	Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig	GME primary school
●	Bun-sgoil le sruth FtB	GME primary with English stream
●	Bun-sgoil le sruth FtG	Primary school with GME stream
•	Le sgoil-àraich FtG na cois	With associated GME nursery
★	FtG aig S1/2/3 gu h-ionadail	GME in S1/2/3 delivered locally
▬	Comhairle le FtG a-ghnàth	Local authority with regular GME
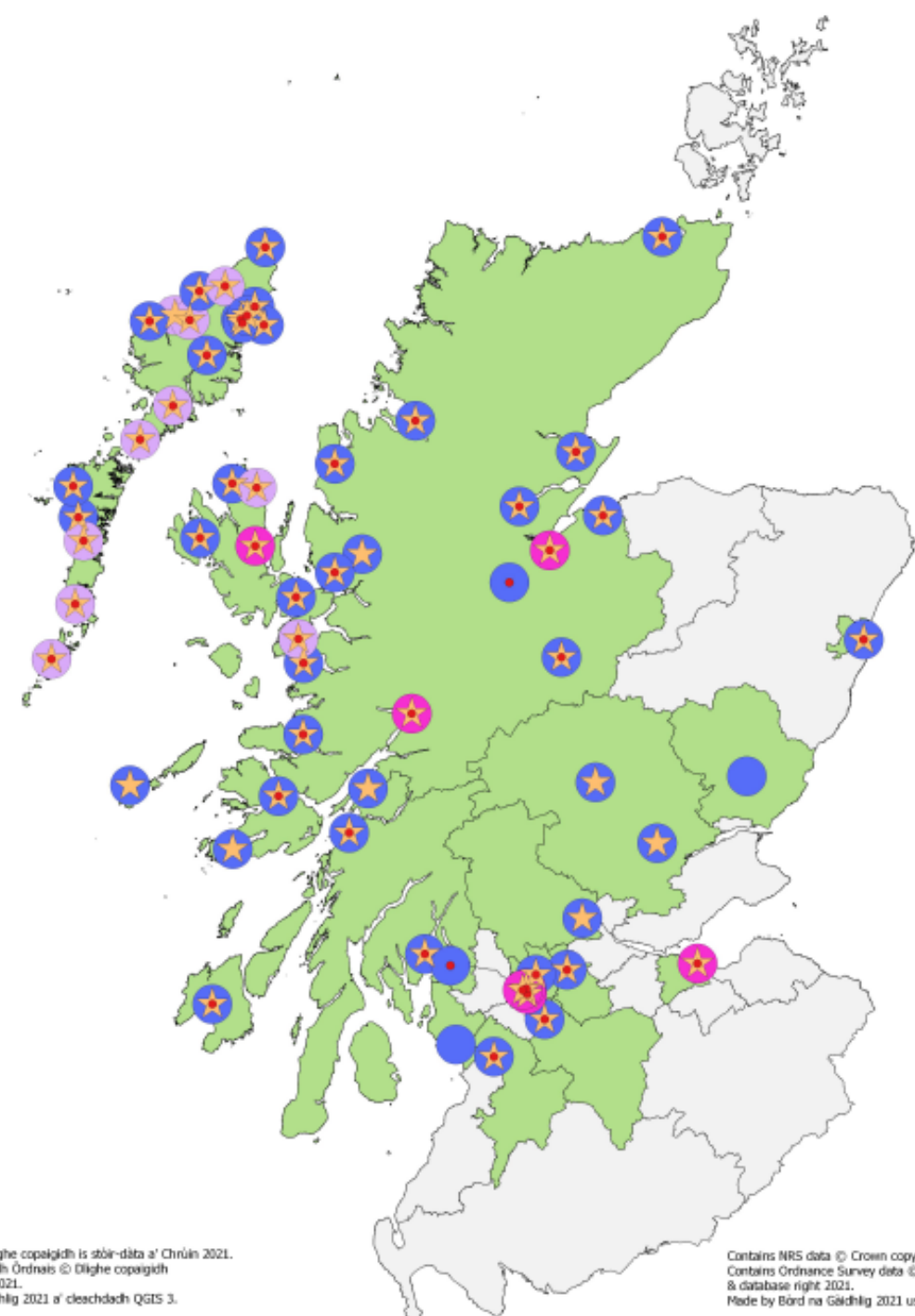
The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

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

One of the key features of the 2005 Act is enabling BnG to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.

This document is the third edition of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan, prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and with regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans. It sets out how we will use Gaelic in our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.

The National Gaelic Language Plan

SQA supports the aim of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–23 that 'Gaelic is used more often, by more people and in a wider range of situations'.

We are committed to achieving this aim by focusing our work on:

♦ increasing the use of Gaelic within our organisation and encouraging more people to use Gaelic more often when they interact with us
♦ increasing the opportunity for people to learn Gaelic as part of our day-to-day operations
♦ promoting a positive image of Gaelic whenever we can as part of our day-to-day operations as an organisation

Internal Gaelic capacity audit

One of our outstanding actions from our second Gaelic Language Plan was to carry out a colleague audit to establish and maintain a skills database to identify colleagues with existing Gaelic language skills, and to identify colleagues who are interested in learning Gaelic.

Our Gaelic Skills Audit, conducted in May 2021, aimed to identify Gaelic use and skills as well as any potential training and development aspirations our colleagues may have. SQA is committed to proactively encouraging the use of Gaelic among colleagues and customers, and the information we gathered with the skills audit will help us to plan the development of greater Gaelic use and visibility at SQA throughout the period of this plan.

The Gaelic Skills Audit, in the form of an online survey, was communicated to all colleagues through an all-colleague email as well as via our intranet and Yammer sites. The response rate to the survey was 10% (107 colleagues).

Key findings from the results include:

- 79% of respondents have an awareness of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan
- When describing their current Gaelic ability and use, 7% of respondents are current Gaelic learners and 7% of respondents have previously studied Gaelic
- 10% of respondents have a basic ability in understanding Gaelic
- 84% of respondents have no ability in understanding Gaelic
- 53% of respondents would be interested in learning Gaelic

More detail is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

Over the lifetime of this third plan, we intend to re-engage with previous respondents as well as engage with more colleagues across more services and business areas in order to determine how we can develop increased use and visibility of Gaelic within SQA.

Key findings from the Gaelic Language Plan consultation

A fundamental element of our Gaelic Language Plan is collaborating with our partners from across Scotland. In accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, this extends to consulting on the content of the Gaelic Language Plan itself.

It is important to us that the plan meets the needs of all our stakeholders — from learners and teachers to employers and training providers. Our consultation was published on our website from Tuesday 2 November until Tuesday 16 December 2021. Through our social media channels, we encouraged all those with an interest in SQA's Gaelic provision to participate in the consultation.

We received 11 responses in total with the majority of responses agreeing with the actions and aims detailed in the draft plan. Key themes in the responses included:

♦ the availability of Gaelic-specific qualifications in the curriculum
♦ as a result of the review of the education bodies and the ambition to align assessment and curriculum in the Scottish education system, it was noted that there will be opportunities to strengthen GME in the future
♦ an internal review of Gaelic skills is necessary at SQA (and its successor body)

SQA does not consider that the public consultation has suggested any requirement for a fundamental change to the proposed plan. The existing plan is sufficiently flexible to consider many of the points raised by respondents.

The feedback we received has been recorded and will be reflected in the internal action plan, which will be established through SQA's Gaelic Language Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group.

In addition, from 30 September until 26 November 2021, a public consultation was hosted on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland, in his role as independent advisor to the Scottish Government on the replacement of SQA and the reform of Education Scotland. The information provided will support Prof. Muir in his considerations. An analysis of the responses will also be published in early 2022. As part of this consultation, Professor Ken Muir considered that it was important that those representing GME schools had the opportunity to engage with him on how they envisage the planned reforms impacting them. As a result of this, BnG was asked to be part of the Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group and have also responded to this consultation. Any relevant actions will be considered and taken forward.

Further details are included in Appendix 2.

Key principles

Equal respect

Under the terms of the 2005 Act, BnG works with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to the English language, and BnG in turn expects that public authorities will demonstrate in their plans how the principle will be achieved and maintained in practice.

SQA will ensure that where Gaelic is included as part of our operations and services the services will be of an equal standard and quality as those that we provide in English.

Active offer

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

This will take the responsibility away from the individual having to request the service and will give Gaelic users the confidence to know that their needs will be met if Gaelic is their preferred choice. We will ensure that our Gaelic language services are as accessible as our English language services.

Mainstreaming

SQA will ensure that opportunities for the public and our colleagues to use Gaelic are normalised, in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–23 aim that Gaelic is used more often, by more people, and in a wider range of situations.

Plan commitments

High-level aims

The high-level aims are a small number of strategic level actions, closely linked to the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–23. BnG has three high-level commitments:

♦ increasing the use of Gaelic
♦ increasing the learning of Gaelic
♦ promoting a positive image of Gaelic

Under these, and through engagement with BnG, seven high-level aims have been identified as the key priorities for SQA over the next three years. Although we do not have specific high-level aims detailed below in relation to the National Gaelic Language Plan high-level commitment on 'Promoting a positive image of Gaelic', through discussions with BnG it is satisfied we meet this commitment through the other high-level aims and corporate service aims presented in this plan.

While we remain committed to the implementation of this edition of our Gaelic Language Plan 2022–25, we recognise that these are extraordinary times. We are continuing to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland, the rest of the UK and the world. In addition, it is likely that our priorities and associated timescales may change as a result of the review and replacement of SQA. However, we are focused to deliver what matters most, while working with others to shape the changes that lie ahead, and we will monitor our progress through our Gaelic Language Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group.

Increasing the use of Gaelic

High-level aim: **Further promotion of Gaelic freestanding units with the potential for these to be included within vocational qualifications or Foundation Apprenticeships**

Desired outcome: Engagement with SDS and other stakeholders to ensure public awareness of Gaelic unitised provision

Current practice: Info on units is held on web page and shared with stakeholders on request: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74313.6132.html
Units promoted via GLAN and GLAD network (for adult learners)

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Engagement with SDS on any planned Foundation/Modern Apprenticeships to ensure SQA Gaelic units and Modern Languages for Life and Work Award are considered for Gaelic language upskilling VQs, MLFW Purposes Unit promotion Ensure SDS is invited to planned launch event	March 2023	Qualifications Development; Communications

High-level aim: **Ensure the continuous review of the current Gaelic exam provision with a view to linking this with secondary school planning processes to ensure uptake and demand**

Desired outcome: SQA is an integral part of a National Strategy for GME in the senior phase

Current practice: SQA, in partnership with Education Scotland, Stòrlann, representatives of the GLAN and the Scottish Government supports schools in strengthening the secondary GME curriculum by developing a planned approach to increasing the National Qualifications offered through the medium of Gaelic

Continue to work with stakeholders to have a national strategic focus on expanding the range of SQA qualifications in Gaelic

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Engagement on GME through Ken Muir Review consultation	Complete	Qualifications Development
SQA contribution to Hayward Review on matters relating to GME	March 2023	Qualifications Development
Include Gaelic in Research & Analysis Strategy in order to support GME provision and scope potential research questions on Gaelic qualifications. Also includes GLP consultation analysis	July 2023	Policy, Analysis & Standards

High level aim:　　Ensuring that there is continued Gaelic representation within the exam timetabling committee and that this is embedded within the structure of the group

Desired outcome:　Views of GME sector are always included during timetable planning

Current practice:　A representative from GME always on timetable advisory committee

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Not applicable	Not applicable	Qualifications Development; Operations

High level aim:　　Priorities from the Scottish Government-led initiative, Gaelic — a Faster Rate of Progress (FROP)

Desired outcome:　SQA contributes to this initiative and attends regular workstream meetings

Current practice:　SQA to continue to contribute to the following workstreams: community engagement digital and media economy and labour market participation teacher recruitment and retention

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Provide summary to staff on SQA activity and collaboration with stakeholders involved in FROP	October 2022, 2023, 2024	Qualifications Development

Increasing the learning of Gaelic

High level aim: **Contribute to the work being carried out by LearnGaelic to support adult learners**

Desired outcome: Adult learners are aware of existing SQA provision

Current practice: Share entire provision for Gaelic with LearnGaelic so that adult learners can be informed of opportunities of SQA certification for Gaelic

SpeakGaelic project (launched October 2021) promoted to SQA colleagues as a learning opportunity on SQA Gaelic Hub on Yammer

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Continue to engage with LearnGaelic to ensure any new qualifications for Gaelic are promoted	March 2023	Qualifications Development
Strengthen relationship with SpeakGaelic /MG Alba to discuss opportunities to map SpeakGaelic content to SQA provision	Sept 2023	Qualifications Development

High level aim: **Ensure that the course development process is 'Gaelic-proofed' within the working practices of SQA**

Desired outcome: Gaelic is considered from the outset of new qualification development

Current practice: Currently it is reactive

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
SQA to add a question in business cases on implications for Gaelic-medium delivery Meet with Business Case Group for form review SQA to identify opportunities to secure the use of Gaelic in emerging programmes within qualification provision at all levels	March 2023	Qualifications Development

High level aim: **Create further case studies with pupils, teachers, and parents regarding the advantages of Gaelic qualifications to potentially increase the uptake of Gaelic qualifications**

Desired outcome: Increase in uptake of Gaelic-medium qualifications and awareness of benefits of GME and bilingualism

Current practice: Social media web clips have been created with candidates talking about their experiences with GME

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Produce case studies on Gaelic-medium candidates and their future career options and benefits they bring to the workforce	Sept 2023	Communications; Qualifications Development

Corporate service aims

In addition to the SQA-specific high-level aims, BnG has developed a set of standardised corporate service aims that are based on their experience of approved Gaelic Language Plans to date, with the aim of standardising key Gaelic services over time across the public sector.

SQA has shown incremental progress towards the delivery of these aims and identified areas where there is more work to be done. Our current progress against these aims and our planned future activity is detailed on pages 19 to 27.

Aim: Status

The presence of Gaelic in the corporate identity and signs of a public authority greatly enhances the visibility of the language, increases its status, and makes an important statement about how Gaelic is valued and how it is given recognition. Developing the use of Gaelic through signage can also enrich the vocabulary of Gaelic users, raise public awareness of the language, and contribute to its development. A number of commitments relating to identity were indicated in the first two iterations of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan and are now reflected in our current practice. SQA continues to recognise the importance of extending the visibility of Gaelic and increasing its status.

Logo and brand

Desired outcome: Render the corporate logo and branding in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process. The logo should demonstrate equal prominence for both languages

Current practice: We have a logo that contains Ùghdarras Theisteanas na h-Alba (Scottish Qualifications Authority) which appears on Gaelic publications or for use at Gaelic events. Also, on corporate PowerPoints and pens

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Action on renewal	On renewal	Marketing/Comms
Work with internal communications to raise awareness and highlight to colleagues that Gaelic can be included on email signatures	Year 1	Marketing/Comms

Signage

Desired outcome: Prominent signage will include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process

Current practice: Sign at Optima and Lowden reception in Gaelic. Optima ground floor sign is bilingual

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Work with Facilities Team to ensure equal respect is granted to Gaelic and English with regards to signage	July 2023	Qualifications Development and Facilities

Aim: Communicating with the public

The use of Gaelic at the initial point of contact that members of the public have with a public authority increases the visible and audible presence of the language and contributes to the sense that the use of Gaelic is possible and welcome. In addition to raising the profile of the language, it also creates opportunities for its practical use and encourages members of the public to use Gaelic in subsequent dealings with the public authority.

The use of Gaelic in interactions with the authority by mail, email and by telephone is important in creating practical opportunities for the use of the language, and contributes to the sense that its use is possible and welcome. The presence of Gaelic in a wide range of bilingual forms and Gaelic-only forms can also greatly enhance the visibility and prestige of the language. The preparation of Gaelic versions of forms, applications and similar documents, can also assist in expanding the range of Gaelic terminology and the awareness of the Gaelic-speaking public of such terminology, thus helping the development of the language itself. SQA recognises the importance of creating opportunities for the practical use of Gaelic in a wide range of everyday situations and is committed to increasing its level of provision in this area.

Promotion

Desired outcome: Positive message that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome

Current practice: Gaelic version of comments/compliments/suggestions form on web. My Centre email footers are bilingual

Actions required	Target date	Responsibility
Promote Bòrd na Gàidhlig's #Cleachdi initiative in SQA through Internal Communications	April 2022	Communications
MyCentre responses (acknowledgement) to be bilingual	Dec 2023	Business Systems/ Business Development

Written communication

Desired outcome: Written communication in Gaelic is always accepted (post, email and social media) and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy

Current practice: Any correspondence submitted in Gaelic is replied to in Gaelic

Actions required	Target dates	Responsibility
SQA will formalise a process for responding to customers contacting SQA in Gaelic and ensure all contact centre staff are aware of the process	October 2023	Business Development

Actions required	Target dates	Responsibility
We will make a standard bilingual email signature and an out-of-office reply available to all colleagues. We will encourage and assist colleagues to use these should they wish to do so	June 2023	Communications; Qualifications Development

Reception and phone

Desired outcome: Where Gaelic-speaking colleagues can provide this service, they are supported to do so, and the service is promoted to the public

Current practice: We use interactive voice recognition options in our telephone system providing advice on availability of Gaelic-speaking staff and resources to deal with enquiries
Sign at Optima and Lowden reception

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Continue to use interactive voice recognition options in our telephone system providing advice on availability of Gaelic-speaking staff and resources to deal with enquiries.	June 2024	Contact centre
Continue to work with Facilities Team to ensure visibility of Gaelic signage at reception at SQA's Optima and Lowden sites	April 2023	Facilities

Public meetings

Desired outcome: Opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic are regularly explored and promoted

Current practice: Limited public meetings at present. Gaelic spoken in qualifications team meetings; markers' meetings (not public), Gaelic spoken at events such as Royal National Mòd, An t-Alltan

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Explore opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic	Sept 2023	Events/Qualifications Development
Creation of Learner Panel and Parent Engagement activity to include representatives from Gaelic-medium education	June 2023	Communications & Engagement
Gàidhlig qualifications procedural meetings held in Gaelic	June 2024	Qualifications Development

Aim: Information

The use of Gaelic in a range of printed material can assist Gaelic development in a variety of ways. It helps increase the visibility of the language, it enhances Gaelic's status by being used in high-profile publications, it can help develop new terminology and enhance existing terminology.

The use of Gaelic in the media helps demonstrate a public authority's commitment to making important information available through the medium of Gaelic, and enhances the visibility and status of the language. As more people access information about public authorities through their websites, making provision for the use of Gaelic can also significantly enhance the status and visibility of the language. SQA is committed to increasing the use of Gaelic in these areas where the subject matter is of most interest to the general public or relates specifically to Gaelic issues.

News releases

Desired outcome: High profile news releases and all news releases related to Gaelic are circulated in both Gaelic and English

Current practice: Limited releases in Gaelic

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Work with Communications to plan and circulate high-profile news releases in Gaelic and English	March 2024	Communications; Qualifications Development; Strategic Planning and Governance

Social media

Desired outcome: Gaelic content distributed regularly through social media, guided by the level of actual and potential users

Current practice: We have posts on social media in Gaelic, some planned in advance, eg, during exam diet, Mòd week, Christmas messages, and others ad-hoc Qualifications Team works with Comms Team and keeps in touch for ad-hoc activity

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Social Media Team to consider Gaelic from outset as part of social media strategy	June 2024	Communications
Ensure Gaelic representation on the Communications content group	June 2024	Qualifications Development

Website

Desired outcome: Gaelic content should be available on a public authority's website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach

Current practice: Privacy Policy available in Gaelic. Gaelic content is available at www.sqa.org.uk/gaelic

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Qualifications Development to work with Communications, in particular the Digital team, to ensure Gaelic-medium qualifications web pages are in Gaelic	Year 1	Communications; Qualifications Development

Corporate publications

Desired outcome: Produced in Gaelic and English, with priority given to those with the highest potential reach

Current practice: Annual Report, Corporate Plan, Your Exams, Your Coursework, Marker Recruitment, SQA Provision for Gaelic, PDA Gaelic Translation, GOC all available bilingually

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Ensure a formal process in place that includes consideration of Gaelic from the outset for corporate publications. Where determined, produce corporate publications in Gaelic and English with priority given to candidate-facing material	June 2024	Communications; Qualifications Development; Strategic Planning and Governance

Exhibitions

Desired outcome: Opportunities to deliver public exhibitions bilingually or in Gaelic should be explored on a regular basis, with priority given to those with the highest potential impact

Current practice: Gaelic pop-up stands for use at events: one generic stand which can be used at any event, includes the Gaelic text 'Coilean do chomas' (translation of 'fulfil your potential'); another stand says 'Welcome' in a number of languages including Gaelic

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Review selection of pop-up stands in Gaelic	June 2023	Marketing

Aim: Staff

To deliver services through the medium of Gaelic, it is necessary to develop the requisite job skills and language skills of colleagues. The provision of language learning for colleagues helps promote adult Gaelic learning and promotes Gaelic as a useful skill in the workplace. The identification of jobs in which Gaelic is a designated skill will contribute greatly to the status of the language and to identifying it as a positive skill to acquire. The appointment of a Qualifications Co-ordinator for Gaelic has been an important factor in the production of previous and subsequent plans.

The use of Gaelic in advertising also helps recognise that Gaelic should be used in public life and that Gaelic speakers have an important role to play within a public authority. Whatever the level of Gaelic skills required, it is important that authorities ensure that Gaelic is a genuine occupational requirement. Authorities should adopt and apply objective criteria to ensure appointments are made in each case on a fair and consistent basis, and that they reflect the identified skills needs of the post. SQA recognises the importance of seeing Gaelic as an important job skill and of identifying situations in which its use is essential or desirable. SQA also recognises the importance of enabling colleagues to develop their Gaelic skills if they wish to do so.

Internal audit

Desired outcome: Conduct an internal audit of Gaelic skills and training needs through the life of each plan

Current practice: Internal audit completed May 2021

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Take forward actions arising from the responses to the staff audit survey	Aug 2023	OD; PAS; Internal Communications

Induction

Desired outcome: Information about a public authority's Gaelic Language Plan should be included in new staff inductions

Current practice: 'Scotland's Languages' module developed for SQA Academy
Scotland's Languages module to be part of SQA new start induction and part of their four-week goal

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Signpost existing colleagues to module and review completion figures	June 2024	OD; Internal Communications; Qualifications Development

Language training

Desired outcome: Gaelic language skills training and development offered to colleagues, particularly in relation to implementing a public authority's Gaelic Language Plan

Current practice: SQA Staff Gaelic Hub on Yammer, Scotland's Languages intranet page and OD intranet page contain a resource library and signpost links to learning opportunities

Scotland's Languages intranet site located within the SQA Qualifications Directorate contains information about SQA's Gaelic provision, Gaelic Language Plan (National and SQA), Scots language, British Sign Language, learning Gaelic/Scots/BSL, SQA at the Royal National Mòd, latest news, upcoming events and campaigns

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Continue to share learning opportunities, in particular SpeakGaelic programme	June 2023	OD/Qualifications Development
Collaborate with the Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity (ACE) Network in relation to Scottish languages, identity and culture. The ACE Network exists to provide support and create a sense of belonging that may not exist elsewhere in the organisation. ACE shares experiences, provides feedback and recommendations, and supports practical and clear steps we can all make to create a diverse and inclusive workplace	November 2023	Strategic Planning and Governance

Awareness training

Desired outcome: Gaelic awareness training offered to colleagues, with priority given to directors, board members, councillors and colleagues dealing directly with the public

Current practice: Previously delivered on two occasions by an external partner

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Deliver further training, exploring opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations with Gaelic Language Plans	June 2024	OD; Qualifications Development

Recruitment

Desired outcome: Recognising and respecting Gaelic skills within the recruitment process

Gaelic named as an essential and/or desirable skill in job descriptions in order to deliver the Gaelic Language Plan and in accordance with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig recruitment advice

Bilingual or Gaelic-only job adverts for all posts where Gaelic is an essential skill

Current practice: We do not have any posts where Gaelic is an essential skill. We make reference to SQA's Gaelic Language Plan in all vacancies listed

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
HR to review Bòrd na Gàidhlig's guidance on Gaelic as an employment skill document and use this guidance for vacancies where Gaelic could be deemed as an essential/desirable skill	June 2023	HR recruitment
At least one post to be designated Gaelic-essential	February 2023	Appointee Management/ Qualifications Development
Job vacancies will be advertised encouraging applications from Gaelic speakers	Oct 2023	Organisational Development/ Qualifications Development
Identify priority business areas where Gaelic can add value	Sept 2023	GLP Implementation and Monitoring group
Introduce bilingual adverts (Gaelic/English) for appointee vacancies relating to Gàidhlig and Gaelic-medium qualifications	Feb 2023	Appointee Management/ Qualifications Development
Investigate ways to encourage Gaelic speaking applicants in future Modern Apprenticeship recruitment within SQA	March 2024	HR recruitment; OD

Aim: Gaelic Language Corpus

As is the case with all languages, consistency of terminology and translation is very important, especially in Gaelic where new terminology and translation technology is emerging. SQA is committed to accessing developments in this sector and reviewing its internal translation processes. By working together with national partners such as Stòrlann, Education Scotland and translation companies, we will endeavour to contribute to, and develop, an educational database for Gaelic terminology.

Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (GOC)

Desired outcome: The most recent GOC will be followed in relation to all written materials produced by the public authority

Current practice: Translators are instructed to adhere to GOC when working on translations into Gaelic for SQA

Copies of GOC are brought to events such as the Mòd and An t-Alltan — anywhere where SQA has a presence for Gaelic

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Improve visibility of GOC on SQA website to include information on how to request copies	June 2023	Qualifications Development; Communications

Place names

Desired outcome: Gaelic place name advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is sought and used

Current practice: Follow guidance provided by AAA, in particular in Gaelic-medium Geography (Cruinn-eòlas) qualifications

Action required	Target date	Responsibility
Include link to www.ainmean-aite.scot on Cruinn-eòlas subject web page	June 2024	Qualifications Development

Links to the National Performance Framework and local and regional frameworks

SQA recognises the important role we play in supporting the Scottish Government's commitment to increasing the number of people using and learning Gaelic so bringing social, economic and educational benefits to Scotland and its people.

In June 2018, the Scottish Government published a revised National Performance Framework (NFP). This sets out the Government's purpose and its strategic priorities. For SQA, the NPF is the key guide to ensuring that our strategic priorities are aligned to those of the Government's, in particular:

- ♦ Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive economy
- ♦ Education: We are well-educated, skilled, and able to contribute to society
- ♦ Fair Work and Business: We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- ♦ International: We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally

As Scotland's national awarding and accrediting body, we will work with partners and stakeholders to continue to support the outcomes of the NPF and the contribution that Gaelic makes to these. SQA supports other local and regional frameworks, such as Community Planning Partnerships, Single Outcome Agreements, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and regional Skills Investment Plans.

Publication

Over the course of this plan, we will have a communication strategy in place to promote the plan and communicate our progress and achievements, internally and externally.

Internally we will:

- ♦ publish the plan on our intranet site, highlighting to colleagues our role in encouraging the increased use of Gaelic, promoting the acquisition and learning of Gaelic, and promoting a positive image of Gaelic
- ♦ promote the 'Scotland's Languages' module, developed for SQA Academy, to all colleagues
- ♦ update colleagues throughout the plan duration on the progress made to date and what more we can do. We will do this via channels such as the intranet, SharePoint and Yammer

Externally we will:

♦ publish the plan in Gaelic and English and issue a bilingual press release announcing the plan
♦ publicise the plan through our social media channels
♦ share our plan with our key partners and stakeholders

Resourcing the plan

The majority of activities outlined in this plan will be, or will have already been, incorporated and resourced through the existing SQA budget agreed with SQA's sponsor, the Scottish Government.

Monitoring the plan

SQA will establish a Gaelic Language Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group to monitor the actions taken throughout the duration of this plan. This will be a cross-business group of colleagues with responsibility for delivering actions outlined in this plan. The group will meet quarterly to review progress, and this will be reported to the EMT biannually.

In addition, implementation of the plan will be included in our Business and Operational Plans, and progress will be monitored through normal SQA governance channels. Regular communication, either in the form of written updates or meetings with BnG, will facilitate this process. An annual progress report will be provided to BnG and made available to the public.

The Gaelic Language Plan in the public authority

Overall responsibility for the plan

SQA's chief executive has overall responsibility for preparing, delivering, and monitoring SQA's Gaelic Language Plan. The chief executive's contact details are as follows:

> Fiona Robertson
> Chief Executive
> Scottish Qualifications Authority
> The Optima Building
> 58 Robertson Street
> Glasgow
> G2 8DQ
> fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk

Day-to-day responsibility for the plan

The Qualifications Co-ordinator (Gaelic) and the Corporate Planning and Reporting Manager have day-to-day responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan. Queries regarding the day-to-day operation of the plan should be addressed to:

Martin Johnston
Corporate Planning and Reporting Manager
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DQ
martin.johnston2@sqa.org.uk

Qualifications Co-ordinator (Gaelic)
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DQ
(Post currently vacant)

Appendix 1 — Internal Gaelic capacity audit

SQA's Gaelic Skills Audit took place between April and May 2021 to tie in with 'My Review' conversations taking place between colleagues and line managers. The aim of the audit was to identify Gaelic usage and skills and potential training and development aspirations of our colleagues.

The audit was publicised via an all-colleague email, posts on the SQA Gaelic Hub page on Yammer and an intranet article. The audit was located on the 'Scotland's Languages' SharePoint site and included messages from colleagues, including our CEO and director of Finance and Corporate Services, to encourage uptake and share their own experiences or aspirations to learn Gaelic.

SQA is committed to proactively encouraging the use of Gaelic among colleagues and customers, and the information gathered from future Gaelic skills audits will help us to plan the development of greater Gaelic use and visibility at SQA.

The following questions and responses illustrate the findings from the internal audit:

1. Which of the following best describes your awareness of SQAs Gaelic Language Plan?

More Details   💡 Insights

🔵 I'm aware of the Plan and am ...	26
🟠 I'm aware of the Plan but am ...	58
🟢 I'm not aware of the Plan	23

2. Which of these statements best describes your current Gaelic ability and use?
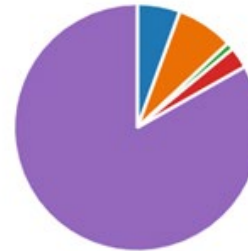
More Details

🔵 Gaelic is my mother language	1
🟠 I am a fluent speaker of Gaelic	1
🟢 I am a Gaelic learner	8
🔴 I have previously studied Gaelic	7
🟣 Other	90

3. If you have Gaelic, how would you describe your current confidence?

- ● I have some Gaelic but I lack t...   6
- ● I have some Gaelic but I often ...   8
- ● I will hold a conversation in G...   1
- ● I will start conversations in Ga...   3
- ● Other   89

4. How would you describe your ability in relation to understanding Gaelic?

More Details   💡 Insights

- ● Fluent   3
- ● Advanced   0
- ● Intermediate   3
- ● Basic   11
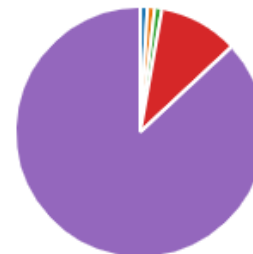- ● No ability   90

5. How would you describe your ability in relation to speaking Gaelic?

More Details   💡 Insights

- ● Fluent   1
- ● Advanced   1
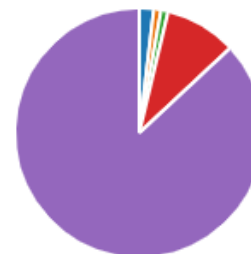- ● Intermediate   1
- ● Basic   11
- ● No ability   93

6. How would you describe your ability in relation to reading Gaelic?

More Details   💡 Insights

- ● Fluent   2
- ● Advanced   1
- ● Intermediate   1
- ● Basic   10
- ● No ability   93

7. How would you describe your ability in relation to writing Gaelic?

🔵 Fluent	1
🟠 Advanced	0
🟢 Intermediate	3
🔴 Basic	5
🟣 No ability	98

8. Which of the following statements best describes your experience in relation to Gaelic Education? (tick all that apply)

|	
🔵 I attended Gaelic Medium Edu...	2
🟠 I attended Gaelic Medium Edu...	1
🟢 I studied SQA qualification in ...	1
🔴 I studied SQA qualification in ...	2
🟣 I studied a Gaelic related degr...	3
🟤 I attended Gaelic language cla...	7
🟣 I am a parent/guardian of a ch...	3
⚪ I have no experience of Gaelic...	84
🟡 Other	9
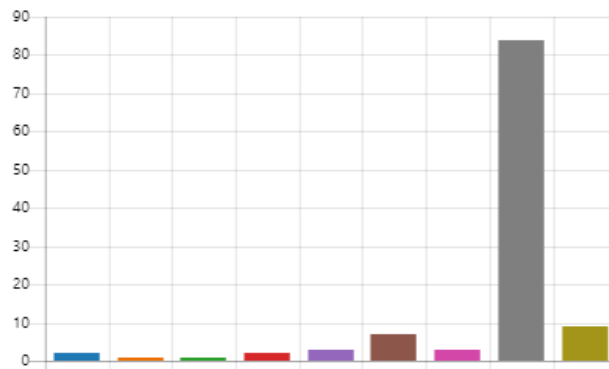
9. How would you describe your current interest in learning Gaelic?

💡 Insights

🔵 I have Gaelic and I am happy ...	2
🟠 I have Gaelic and would like t...	2
🟢 I am currently learning Gaelic (...	5
🔴 I would be interested in learni...	57
🟣 I do not wish to learn Gaelic	37
🟤 Other	4
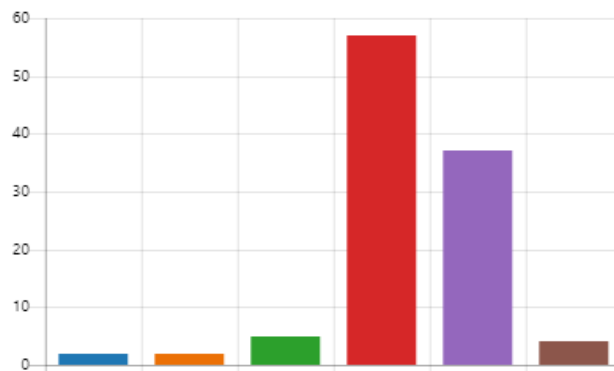
10. Is there anything else you think SQA could do to ensure a supportive culture for Gaelic learning and development?

107 Responses

Appendix 2 — Public consultation

A fundamental element of our Gaelic Language Plan is collaborating with our partners from across Scotland. In accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, this extends to consulting on the content of the Gaelic Language Plan itself.

It is important to us that the plan meets the needs of all our stakeholders — from learners and teachers to employers and training providers. Our consultation was published on our website from Tuesday 2 November until Tuesday 16 December. Through our social media channels, we encouraged all those with an interest in SQA's Gaelic provision to participate in the consultation.

In addition, from 30 September until 26 November 2021, a public consultation was hosted on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland, in his role as independent advisor to the Scottish Government on the replacement of SQA and the reform of Education Scotland. The information provided will support Prof. Muir in his considerations. An analysis of the responses will also be published in early 2022. As part of this consultation, Professor Ken Muir considered that it was important that those representing Gaelic-medium education (GME) schools had the opportunity to engage with him on how they envisage the planned reforms impacting them.

As a result of this, BnG was asked to be part of the Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group and have also responded to this consultation. Any relevant actions will be considered and taken forward.

We received 11 responses in total with the majority of responses agreeing with the actions and aims detailed in the draft plan. Key themes in the responses included:

♦ the availability of Gaelic-specific qualifications in the curriculum
♦ as a result of the review of the education bodies and the ambition to align assessment and curriculum in the Scottish education system, it was noted that there will be opportunities to strengthen GME in the future
♦ an internal review of Gaelic skills is necessary at SQA (and its successor body)

SQA does not consider that the public consultation has suggested any requirement for a fundamental change to the proposed plan. The existing plan is sufficiently flexible to consider many of the points raised by respondents.

We received 31 individual pieces of feedback from the 10 respondents. Of those,

♦ 19 comments did not require any action (were positive about the level of detail in the draft plan) and/or had already been considered by SQA
♦ 10 comments will be used to inform the internal action plan and will be passed on to the relevant department for consideration
♦ one comment was a duplication
♦ one comment related to the review of the education bodies. We will await the result of the Muir Review and will pass on the feedback to Scottish Government for consideration

The feedback we received has been recorded and will be reflected in the internal action plan, which will be established through SQA's Gaelic Language Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group. Moreover, through the creation of two new directorates at SQA (Communications and Policy, Analysis and Standards), we seek to engage with all those we work with and support. We continue to gather feedback and evidence to understand how our qualifications are operating and how we might improve them.