



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
West Highland College

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean  
Colaiste na Gàidhealtachd an Iar

West Highland College UHI  
**Gaelic Language Plan**

2019 - 2022

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## Summary

**West Highland College UHI** recognises that Gaelic is a primary and valuable part of Scotland's rich heritage, national identity and cultural life; we also recognise that there is work to be done to raise awareness of this shared heritage.

**West Highland College UHI** recognises that the position of Gaelic is extremely fragile and if Gaelic is to be revitalised as a living language in Scotland, a concerted effort on the part of government, the public and private sectors, community organisations and individual speakers is required to:

- *enhance the status of Gaelic;*
- *promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic;*
- *encourage the increased use of Gaelic.*

**West Highland College UHI's** Gaelic Language Plan is in *addition* to the UHI Gaelic Plan, which has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the 2005 Act, and having regard to the *National Plan for Gaelic* and the *Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans*.

This is **West Highland College UHI's** first formal Gaelic Language Plan, which gives details on how we, as an individual UHI partner college will seek to improve our engagement with the Gaelic Language, improving awareness, access and opportunity for our staff, students and members of our community.

This plan will be in place for a maximum of three years, at which point we aim to have addressed some of our more immediate issues and to produce a new five year plan which brings a step closer to achieving the aims and objectives set out within UHI's own national Gaelic plan.

## Structure of the Gaelic Language Plan

The key components of our Gaelic Language Plan are:

### Introduction

This section describes **West Highland College UHI's** main areas of operation. It also provides a summary of the demography of the Gaelic language within the communities we serve.

### Core Commitments

The plan sets out how **West Highland College UHI** will use, and enable the use of Gaelic within our college centres and communities. It covers three key areas of improvement.

1. Awareness
2. Identity
3. Opportunity

### Implementation and Monitoring

The plan sets out how the implementation of our Gaelic Language Plan will be taken forward, and how implementation and outcomes will be monitored.

# Introduction

Overview of the functions of *West Highland College UHI* and the use of Gaelic within our area of operation

## Background Information

West Highland College UHI was created in 2010 as a result of merger of two legacy colleges in order to provide enhanced access to, and a more coherent provision of, tertiary education for the communities of Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. This area covers a sixth of Scotland's landmass, with a population of approximately 40,000 people, and contains some areas of very high rurality. The college was created to meet the needs of learners, communities and businesses. In doing so, it seeks to address the very considerable historic gap in access to and opportunities for post-16 education in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and aspires to reach and exceed the national average for participation in further education.

The college finds itself in an historic context of under provision of tertiary education where participation in further education is around 55% below national average. West Highland College UHI is a significant contributor in addressing this shortfall, not least through its membership of the University of the Highlands and Islands having been granted fundable body status in 2012 by the Scottish Government. West Highland College UHI is now a single organisation, which fundamentally changes the 16+ education landscape in this geographic area by vastly improving access to further and higher education. The college has a major function in contributing to strengthen the communities it serves, by helping to tackle inequality and helping individuals out of the poverty spiral by opening up many new opportunities.

The college has 10 centres equipped with some of the most advanced online learning technologies, bringing access to further and higher education to the entire area and population of Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross - from Ullapool in the north, to the Isle of Skye and the extremely remote Ardnamurchan peninsula in the west, Fort William and Kinlochleven in the south.

## Gaelic within the Communities we serve

In the 2011 census, it was recorded that 16,596 people in the Highland Council area (7.4%, above the national average) had some Gaelic ability. The majority of these people are based in the three districts where West Highland College UHI operates, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

Gaelic is spoken in all communities where West Highland College UHI has college centres, most notably on the Isle of Skye, where there is the largest number of Gaelic speakers in the Highland region, and where West Highland College UHI has two of its main college centres.

West Highland College UHI recognises that with the increasing numbers of pupils enrolling in Gaelic medium education across the Highlands and throughout Scotland, we are likely to have more students coming through the college with proficiency in the Gaelic language. We are committed to improving our support for those students who wish to use their Gaelic as part of their studies, and recognise the opportunities

for careers and jobs that it may open up to our students, particularly in areas such as childcare and music. The number of children in Gaelic-medium education in Lochaber, Skye and Ross shire:

School Type	Lochaber	Skye & Lochalsh	Ross-Shire	Total
Primary School	129	263	66	458
Nursery	42	92	16	150

### Gaelic within West Highland College UHI

West Highland College UHI currently employs around 200 staff (includes part time). The known number of Gaelic speakers and learners are as follows.

	Board	Senior Mgt	Employees
Gaelic Speaker	1	1	3
Some Gaelic Ability	1	1	7

Following a recent staff consultation, we are aware of strong support for the Gaelic Language, but we are also aware of a number of staff who have negative views of the language and its place within West Highland College UHI.

One of the main aims of this initial plan, is a series of Gaelic awareness exercises, to improve the perception of the importance of the language within the communities we serve. We also seek to improve access to the language for all our users.

We are committed to encouraging and supporting staff to use and learn Gaelic and are planning to offer training courses, awareness sessions, informal conversation circles, and provide much more visible use of the language across all of our learning centres.

## Core Commitments

West Highland College UHI is seeking to improve commitment to the Gaelic Language in the following three main areas.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Awareness   | Improving the awareness amongst staff, students and visitors to the college of the importance of the Gaelic language in our communities. Gaelic is all around us, in the place names, hill names, and within the songs and poetry of our area. We aim to show the value and importance of the language in the everyday lives of those who live, work and visit our communities. |
| Identity    | Improving access to the Gaelic Language, through training, online courses, informal conversation groups, as well as committing to bi-lingual signage on any new build or replacement signs, answering telephones in Gaelic, visual marketing or welcome messages in Gaelic.   |
| Opportunity | We are committed to creating opportunities for all our users to speak, learn or improve their Gaelic skills.  |

West Highland College UHI is working to ensure Gaelic is a visible and valuable part of what we do across each of our ten learning centres. We will ensure the progress of our plan is evaluated and monitored regularly.

### Information on current practice

- We are working towards full bi-lingual signage throughout the college.
- We are working towards some of our social media content being in Gaelic.
- We are encouraging staff members who have Gaelic skills to use the language as part of their working day where possible.
- We are working to improve the visibility and functionality of Gaelic within West Highland College UHI.

### Key areas of development and focus for the next 1-3 years are

- Implement bi-lingual signage throughout the college on new builds/replacement signs
- Improve awareness and perception of Gaelic amongst WHC staff.
- Incorporate Gaelic content within college courses where possible
- Create opportunities for staff, students and community members to use Gaelic within West highland College UHI
- Create opportunities for staff, students and members of the community to learn and improve their Gaelic skills at West Highland College UHI

# Gaelic Language Action Plan

## 1. Awareness

### Rationale

West Highland College UHI recognises that it has a role to play in supporting the Gaelic Language throughout the communities it serves. We also recognise, however, that doing this without the support and 'buy-in' of our staff would be very difficult. The first aim of our plan is to improve the attitude towards Gaelic amongst staff, and to train staff on the value of the language for our college users. As we currently do not monitor the number of Gaelic speaking or Gaelic learning students we have at West Highland College UHI, we are unable to provide any evidence to staff of the importance of the language to our students. A better awareness in this area will have a positive impact on Gaelic awareness within West Highland College UHI. We aim to take small but significant steps to improve the awareness and perception of Gaelic throughout all our college centres.

***West Highland College UHI recognises the importance of a positive attitude towards Gaelic and an awareness of its value within our communities.***

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### a) Promote positive awareness of the Gaelic Language amongst staff

#### Current practice

*Some members of staff speak Gaelic, but very rarely use as part of their working day.*

*Some members of staff have a negative attitude towards the Gaelic language and do not see it as a valuable part of the college, or the wider community.*

#### Action and Development

- Promote positive attitude of Gaelic amongst staff

#### Targets

- Gaelic awareness session to be delivered to all staff as part of staff conference 2019
- Gaelic awareness training to be offered to any interested staff members as a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) option

#### Performance Indicators

- Better attitude towards the language amongst staff members
- Measure uptake and engagement numbers

#### Lead Officer

- College Management Group - FG

#### Timescale

- May 2019 onwards

## **b) Monitoring numbers of students with Gaelic skills**

### **Current practice**

*We do not ask for any information on whether a student speaks Gaelic during the application/interview, or enrolment process.*

### **Action and Development**

- Add a question to the West Highland College UHI enrolment form and / or interview process that asks if the student is a Gaelic speaker or learner.

### **Targets**

- Better understanding of the number of students with Gaelic skills

### **Performance Indicators**

- Staff aware of numbers of Gaelic speaking students in their classes

### **Lead Officer**

- Quality & Registry Manager to investigate and implement

### **Timescale**

Investigate and implementation of most effective collection method by August 2019

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## **c) Monitoring numbers of staff with Gaelic skills**

### **Current practice**

*We do not ask for any information on whether a staff member speaks Gaelic during the application/interview, or enrolment process.*

### **Action and Development**

- Add a question to the West Highland College UHI application form and / or interview process that asks if the applicant is a Gaelic speaker or learner.

### **Targets**

- Better understanding of the number of staff with Gaelic skills

### **Performance Indicators**

- Staff aware of numbers of Gaelic speaking staff members at WHC

### **Lead Officer**

- HR Manager to investigate and implement

### **Timescale**

Investigate and implementation of most effective collection method by August 2019

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## **d) Social Media**

### **Current practice**

*All posts are written in English*

### **Action and Development**

- Introduce some Gaelic posts to our social media output  
Eg Facebook, twitter, Myday

### **Targets**

- All engaged with our social media see the Gaelic language as an important aspect of West Highland College UHI's public image
- Introduce a 'word of the month' information on local place names

### **Performance**

- Engagement with Gaelic posts and content
- Awareness of Gaelic within the community relevant to the area

### **Lead Officer**

- Marketing Manager - WHC Gaelic Advocate can assist with Gaelic on banners

### **Timescale**

Review number of posts at end of July 2019 and again at Dec 2019.

## 2. Identity

### Rationale

The presence of Gaelic in the corporate identity and signs of a College 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.

**West Highland College UHI recognises the importance of improving the visibility of Gaelic and increasing its status.**

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### a) Signage (internal and external)

#### Current practice

*Some signs are bi-lingual*

#### Action and Development

- Ensure signage in all new builds is bi-lingual

#### Targets

- Bi-lingual signage throughout our college centres

#### Performance Indicators

- All new / replacement signage to be in Gaelic and English.

#### Lead Officer

- Estates & Facilities Manager and Marketing Manager

#### Timescale

Review additional signage in December 2019.

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### b) Reception

#### Current practice

*Gaelic is not used in any telephone answering or welcomes*

#### Action and Development

- Introduce greeting in Gaelic where appropriate

#### Targets

- Train staff in use of simple Gaelic welcome Eg Madainn mhath
- Signposting to members of staff who speak Gaelic
- Screens / posters welcoming visitors to college to include some Gaelic

### **Performance Indicators**

- Staff confident and comfortable using simple Gaelic greetings when relevant
- Clear understanding of who is available within college centres that can speak Gaelic
- Bi-lingual digital welcomes in college centres

### **Lead Officer**

- Head of Student Services with support from HR Manager

### **Timescale**

Implement Welcome signage by September 2019.

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## **c) Mail and Email**

### **Current practice**

- E-mails are in English

### **Action and Development**

- Support Gaelic speaking staff in developing written Gaelic skills and confidence
- Make it clear that employees, who wish to use Gaelic as a form of communication where appropriate, should feel comfortable to do so

### **Targets**

- Provide bi-lingual e-mail signatures to those who wish to use them

### **Performance Indicators**

- Some staff use bi-lingual e-mails or signatures

### **Lead Officer**

- Marketing Manager and Gaelic Advocate
- HR Manager

### **Timescale**

Implement Gaelic email signatures as agreed, by August 2019

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## **d) Marketing**

### **Current practice**

Marketing is in English

### **Action and Development**

- Consider cost effective ways where we might include Gaelic content in our marketing

### **Targets**

- Some social media content to be in Gaelic
- Include more Gaelic in our course information/leaflets

#### **Performance Indicators**

- Engagement with posts

#### **Lead Officer**

- Marketing Manager

#### **Timescale**

Review in December 2019

### **3. Opportunity**

#### **Rationale**

West Highland College UHI recognises the importance for staff, students and members of the community to have the opportunity to use and learn Gaelic.

**West Highland College UHI recognises the importance of creating opportunities for learning Gaelic in a wide range of everyday situations and is committed to increasing its level of provision in this area.**

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#### **a) Continuing Professional Development**

##### **Current practice**

Very limited Gaelic options offered

##### **Actions and Development**

- Offer Gaelic CPD to all staff, through a range of on-line and face-to-face courses

##### **Targets**

- Source on-line content suitable for staff of all levels of Gaelic ability, including non- speakers

##### **Performance Indicators**

- Uptake of staff

##### **Lead Officer**

- Staff Learning & Development

##### **Timescale**

Investigate opportunities from May 2019 onwards. Review uptake end of December 2019

## **b) Informal learning**

### **Current practice**

*There is no opportunity for staff to access any informal learning provided by the college*

### **Actions and Development**

- Provide a range of informal learning opportunities within college centres, accessible to staff, students and members of the public

### **Targets**

- Lunchtime conversation circles
- Evening classes
- Workshops on local place names / hill names
- Lunchtime Gaelic song group

### **Performance Indicators**

- Staff student engagement in activities
- Staff / Student / Public engagement in activities
- Engagement

### **Lead Officer**

- Finance & Compliance Manager (Roddy MacPhee) with support from Staff L&D

### **Timescale**

Pilot one or two activities by the end of September 2019 and review uptake

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## **c) Formal learning**

### **Current practice**

*Formal learning in the college is in English.*

### **Actions and Development**

- Look at areas of the curriculum where formal Gaelic course content may be possible
- Scope for the delivery of specific Gaelic courses at West Highland College UHI

### **Targets**

- Include Gaelic delivery where appropriate in our curriculum plan from 2020 / 2021
- Deliver one course, with significant focus on Gaelic language and culture by 2021 / 2022

### **Performance Indicators**

- Gaelic content being delivered within timescale

- Course being delivered within timescale

**Lead Officer**

Curriculum Area Lead - Gaelic

**Timescale**

Review progress in August 2019

## Implementation and Monitoring

**Timetable**

This Gaelic Language Plan will formally remain in place for a period of 3 years from this date or until a revised plan is put in place. Throughout the plan, we have set out the individual target dates for when we expect to implement specific commitments.

**Publicising the Plan**

West Highland College UHI's Gaelic Language Plan will be published on the West Highland College UHI website. We will also:

- Issue a press release announcing the plan
- Make copies of the plan available in our college centre reception areas
- Make the plan known to employees
- Distribute copies of the plan to other interested bodies and
- Make copies available on request.

**Administrative Arrangements for Implementing the Gaelic Language Plan**

This plan for West Highland College UHI has been endorsed by the College Management Group and the Executive Leadership Team. The Board of Management will be provided with progress updates towards achieving the actions set out in the Gaelic Plan.

Overall Responsibility:

The College Management Group will be responsible for monitoring and ensuring that West Highland College UHI delivers on the commitments set out in this plan.

Individual Staff members:

Through regular staff meetings, we will continue to disseminate the plan, ask for staff input and regularly review progress. We will offer support and training to staff members to ensure we are delivering on all aspects of the plan.

## **Informing other organisations of the Plan**

We will issue a press release, we will use our website and social media channels.

## **Resourcing the Plan**

West Highland College UHI has minimal Gaelic resources within its centres and a very limited budget. We have attempted to make our aims high impact, but achievable. We will apply for the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) funding to help us deliver our staff training and create our Gaelic content for marketing.

## **Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan**

The College Management Group will monitor the implementation of the plan. The Executive Leadership Team will review the plan each year. Advice and support will be provided by the UHI Gaelic Officer.

## **Contact details**

The senior Gaelic officer with operational responsibility for overseeing preparation, delivery and monitoring of West Highland College UHI's Gaelic Language Plan is:  
Roddy MacPhee – Email [rodny.macphee.whc@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:rodny.macphee.whc@uhi.ac.uk) Tel. 01397 874263

The college Gaelic advocate is:

Rachel Walker – Email [Rachel.walker.whc@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Rachel.walker.whc@uhi.ac.uk) Tel 01397 874245