



# **Gaelic and Scots Language Bill: Scottish Government Commitments**

**Submission to consultation**

08/12/2022

# Scots language

## **Q11. Thinking of the work of the key Scots bodies as referred to in the paper – What are your views on the work of the Scots bodies? How would you strengthen and add to the work of these bodies?**

Scots language recognition has come a long way since 2015, when the Scots Policy was launched to promote Scots as one of Scotland's indigenous languages in its own right. This recognition and raised awareness have had a significant impact on the sense of identity and belonging of members of Scots-speaking communities across Scotland leading to improved social cohesion and Scots speakers' participation in society through their mother tongue. It has also led to a more unified approach of all involved in Scots language revitalisation activities and the development of a strong overarching network of individuals and organisations across Scotland. The key Scots bodies mentioned in the consultation paper have played a crucial role in bringing about these changes and bringing on board new stakeholders supporting this cause, like the Open University.

To help embed the Scots Language Policy in Scotland's education landscape, the Open University has very successfully collaborated with The Scots Language Centre, Dictionaries of the Scots Language, Scottish Book Trust and the Education Scotland Scots Language Coordinator on a range of initiatives from production of free online curriculum to a webinar series with renowned and emerging authors writing in Scots. We have produced curriculum that has been a game changer in making learning Scots, about the language and related

cultures accessible globally. Our [Scots language and culture](#) open course has seen over 40,000 visitors and 15,000 enrolled students, with 49% from Scotland alone, and people enrolling from 129 countries across the globe. This course was produced in the spirit of the Scots Language policy: a co-creation with the Scots language community. The second development, the first of its kind and mentioned as a best practice example in the Council of Europe's 5<sup>th</sup> evaluation report 2020, is a distance learning CPD course bringing together primary and secondary teachers from across the curriculum. Co-created with the Scots community and strongly supported by key Scots bodies it demonstrates that embedding Scots successfully in the life of a school leads to the language playing a central role in helping to recognise **all** pupils' entire range of linguistic and intercultural literacies in their education, enabling schools to reflect more fully the nature of modern Scotland as a multilingual and -cultural society. We are currently applying for the professional recognition award from the General Teaching Council for Scotland for this course.

The Open University's experience of working with some of the key Scots bodies has been excellent. In particular, the Scots Language Centre and the Education Scotland's Scots Language Coordinator have supported all aspects of the Open University's work in this area. Through their outstanding communication and network building, the key bodies have been able to achieve much with limited resources. The Scots Language Centre and Dictionaries of the Scots Language in particular, have fully embraced digital technologies to support the learning and teaching of and about Scots language as well as the related cultures across the many Scots speaking communities in different parts of the country. All bodies have successfully raised awareness of and supported harnessing the power of

including Scots in Scottish education to enhance speakers' sense of identity and the attainment and retention of pupils who grow up speaking Scots.

The Scots Language Centre has played a vital role in bringing together the various Scots dialect communities to collaboratively support the common cause of Scots language revitalisation. It utilised digital media exceptionally well to make the language and related cultures accessible across Scotland and beyond, even linking with often marginalised minority languages communities internationally, thus raising the profile and status of revitalisation activities in Scotland.

All key Scots bodies have achieved a great deal since their founding and have been able to raise awareness of and embed Scots language more fully in many aspects of Scottish society.

Experience has shown that all key Scots bodies have excellent plans in place to further promote Scots, but would require additional funding to enhance their capacity, impact and reach. It is our belief and that of organisations involved within the Scots Language community that the Scots Language Centre, with additional funding, be able to play an even more impactful role by extending its reach, the amount and quality of its provision as well its global impact – thus becoming a pioneering institution showcasing innovative and well-supported language revitalisation. It is the collective belief with additional funding, the Centre ought to become *the* hub for all things Scots in Scotland, coordinating activities, linking individuals as well as organisations keen to get involved, and crucially, leading on the growth of Scots revitalisation initiatives across all parts of society. Following collective discussion within the Scots Language community

we propose the creation of a physical location for the Scots Language Centre that can function as an events, meeting/conference, teaching and research space as well as a communications hub for Scots. This is in addition to the excellent online presence of the Centre at present.

The hub could enable novel research and Knowledge Exchange collaborations between primary, secondary and third sector organisations leading to pioneering outcomes for Scottish society. The hub should enable even closer links between primary and secondary schools with Universities and FE Colleges when it comes to working with the Scots language as well as the development of novel qualifications. Another important area of work for the hub will be supporting innovation in the teaching of and about the Scots language, including the teaching of Scots to non-native speakers.

## **Q12. What are your views on the next steps that should be taken to support the Scots language?**

The policy objectives of facilitation and encouragement of the use of Scots in speech and writing, in public and private life, as well as the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Scots have been met to a degree. However, Scots language revitalisation and recognition across society needs to embark on a new phase, normalising Scots as a key aspect of Scottish life including its use in all levels of education, the arts and all media. Key to the success of such an undertaking is the legal recognition of Scots through a Scots Language Bill including a related funding commitment to support the interventions outlined here.

To achieve full embedding of Scots in Scottish education requires, in our view, a range of free and paid-for curriculum with various forms of accreditation and recognition, as well as a range of interventions such as:

- Embedding Scots more fully in the life of all Scottish schools. This can happen through:
  - o Funding for teachers to study the existing Open University Scots teacher CPD course to build teacher skills and confidence in bring Scots into their classrooms
  - o Developing more CPD provision with recognition from the GTCS
  - o Building teacher confidence
  - o Supporting more research into the role and teaching of indigenous languages in school education, how they can be embedded in all curricular areas with Scots as a leading example

- We have seen the excellent work the Scots Language Coordinator at Education Scotland has done with ITE institutions. More capacity would allow the inclusion of Scots as a vital part of Initial Teacher Education for example as an option to develop a specialism in Scots.
- Supporting the teaching and learning of the language for non-native speakers and encouraging research into the needs and recognition of new speakers of Scots (in primary, secondary but also adult education).
- Supporting Scottish colleges in working with Scots through dedicated CPD offerings for which the Open University would be well-placed with its extensive links with the FE sector.
- The development of new qualifications, for example at secondary school, FE and HE levels, ideally with different education partners coming together creating joint degrees, so that existing expertise can be utilised most effectively.
- The development of further teaching resources that will help make Scottish classrooms multilingual spaces and influence how many schools will offer Scots language in various forms, be it incorporating aspects of Scots in all subject areas, linking teachers from across the curriculum in joint activities supporting the language, classes for non-native speakers of Scots, or curriculum taught in Scots medium. The Open University could collaborate with the Scots Language Centre and other organisations in developing digital resources in this area.
- The development and training of teachers in novel pedagogies and curriculum for teaching Scots as a language to non-native speakers to enhance inclusion, widening participation and equal opportunities. This

includes supporting various communities such as migrants and refugees new to Scotland. The Open University is already undertaking work in this area and would be well placed to add a Scots language and culture strand to their collaboration with third sector organisations and the Scottish Refugee Council.

- The development of easy access learning opportunities with global reach harnessing digital technologies like a Duolingo course in Scots.
- Continuing and enhancing the excellent work that has been done in secure environments to support the education of native speakers of Scots as well as bringing the language to non-native speakers in these environments. The Open University is already working closely with education officers in many secure environments across Scotland and could develop a short online upskilling course for this staff group developing their skills in harnessing the Scots literacies of the people they work with to enhance their education outcomes.
- The development of professional learning curriculum on Scots language and culture for people working in many areas of society, notably education, health and social care and other public services. This curriculum ought to be recognised by relevant professional bodies so that developing skills around Scots language and culture can become a viable career development opportunity. Building on the work the Open University has done in Scottish care homes in collaboration with the social enterprise Lingo Flamingo upskilling staff in using language learning as a non-medical intervention for wellbeing in care, we would be well placed to upskill staff in social care. This CPD would address pressing issues in



society such as dementia, where people often lose their second language, i.e. English, and revert to only speaking their native language, like Scots.

- Ensuring awareness of and staff skills in Scots in early years education through dedicated CPD provision, which the Open University could develop through revisioning the existing Scots teacher CPD course.

### **Q13. Are there any further points you would like to make about the commitment to support the Scots language?**

The Scottish Government's commitment to supporting the indigenous languages of Scotland is a best practice example of support for linguistic and cultural diversity. The measures outlined above provide practical examples that highlight how much we can build on existing work to normalise Scots language as a key part of Scottish society – all with a view to ensure we do not marginalise speakers of the minority language with the largest numbers of speakers in Scotland.

From the point of view of the Open University, embedding Scots more fully and comprehensively in Scottish education at all levels will be crucial to ensure the revitalisation and survival of the language, enhance full recognition of Scottish culture related to the language as well as the skills of its speakers, who in speaking Scots and English are bilingual.

In these efforts we are able to build on excellent existing expertise and relationships, for example:

- We could harness the Open University's reach and teaching/academic expertise to create further free and paid-for accessible curriculum through co-creation with our existing network in the Scots community. This curriculum would be delivered by means of digital technologies enabling particularly flexible approaches to learning Scots. This would be supported by the ongoing collaboration with Education Scotland that has brought about widely praised provision supporting Scots.

- We would build on the Open University and other universities' work supporting Scots language revitalisation to add status and recognition to bringing Scots into all areas of education. Universities could collaborate in creating innovative joint provision and degrees utilising existing structures and know-how.

We also consider it important to:

- further explore whether standardising Scots as a language in its own right can add legitimacy and make learning the language more streamlined, while at the same time preserve the idiosyncrasies of the different Scots dialects and cultures.
- embed Scots more fully in all aspects of Scottish media through dedicated programmes, inclusion in news bulletins etc.
- move beyond the focus on the Scots-speaking community of native speakers and undertake efforts in teaching Scots as a language in its own right to non-native speakers. The Open University is the first institution to undertake research into new speakers of Scots and is well placed to develop teaching materials and pedagogy in this area.

