

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday May 24 2013

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Celtic and Gaelic held on 15 February 2013

Mrs Lesley Fielding, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Andrea Nolan, Senior Vice Principal (Convener)
Professor Jerry Hunter, Bangor University, External Subject Specialist
Ms Natalie Mosson, Students Representative
Dr Kirsteen McCue, Scottish Literature, Cognate Member
Dr Marie Freel, Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Lorenzo Vigentini, Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Lesley Fielding, Senate Office, Clerk to the Review Panel
Mrs Janet Fleming, Senate Office, Observer

1. Introduction

1.1 *Background Information*

Celtic and Gaelic is one of six subject areas within the School of Humanities. The School of Humanities is one of the four schools within the College of Arts. The Department of Celtic and Gaelic had previously been part of the Faculty of Arts prior to restructuring in 2010. The Subject Area moved to its present accommodation in 2009 further to a recommendation in the last internal review which took place in February 2007.

- 1.2 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) had been prepared by Dr Sheila Kidd, Head of Subject, with the support of all Research and Teaching colleagues in Celtic and Gaelic. It had been revised and amended following feedback from student representatives, Honours, taught postgraduate students and Graduate Teaching Assistants.
- 1.3 The Review Panel considered that the SER was well-written, clear and truly reflective. The Panel found within the document ample evidence of good practice and innovation.
- 1.4 The Review Panel met with the Head of Subject, Dr Sheila Kidd, the Convener of the School of Humanities' Learning and Teaching Committee, Dr Stuart Airlie and the Dean for Learning and Teaching, College of Arts, Professor Alice Jenkins. The Head of School had been due to attend the meeting with the Head of Subject however, due to unforeseen circumstances, this was not possible. The Review Panel also met with eight members of staff, seven Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), two postgraduate students and thirteen undergraduate students representing all levels of provision. The undergraduate students were split into two groups of similar composition and each group met with half the Review Panel.
- 1.5 The Review Panel was happy with the Subject Area's positive engagement with the PSR process, the open and reflective outlook adopted in the SER, the

helpful preparation for the review visit by the Head of Subject, and the cooperation and the positive attitudes displayed by staff and students in discussions with the Panel during the review visit.

1.6 Celtic and Gaelic has nine staff (7.75 FTE).

Students	Headcount
Level 1	238
Level 2	83
Levels 3 and 4	35
Undergraduate Total	356
Postgraduate Taught	19
Postgraduate Research*	20

*(for information only - research is not covered by the Review)

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Subject area.

- MA Hons in Gaelic, Single and Joint Hons
- MA Hons in Celtic Civilisation, Joint Hons only
- MA Hons in Celtic Studies, Single and Joint Hons
- MLitt in Celtic Studies

The Subject area also contributes to the following degree programmes offered by other Schools or other institutions

- MA Hons Comparative Literature
- MLitt Scottish and Celtic Cultural Studies
- MLitt Medieval and Renaissance Studies

2. Overall aims of the Department's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

The SER clearly set out the overall aims of the School of Humanities provision and how Celtic and Gaelic achieved these aims. The Review Panel was satisfied that the aims were appropriate and aligned well with the University Strategic Plan particularly in relation to research, teaching and interdisciplinary teaching.

3. An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

3.1 Aims including final sub-section below:

The aims of the School's undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes were clear and broad. They reflected the interdisciplinary nature of the subject

area and the importance of research-led teaching. The subject area's innovative and pro-active approach to the Gaelic Language was evident.

The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, **confirms** that the programmes offered by the School remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline and practice in its application.

3.2 *Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*

The Intended Learning Outcomes for programmes and courses were all laid out in the relevant programme and course specifications. At the meeting with students, the students confirmed they were aware of the inclusion of the ILOs within the handbooks and on Moodle. The Panel considered that, whilst the ILOs within the programmes' handbooks were well structured, there was a lack of consistency and terminology in handbooks. The Panel **recommends** that the subject area should review its handbooks for all courses to make them more c in terms of presentation of general student information.

3.3 *Assessment, Feedback and Achievement*

Assessment

- 3.3.1 The SER clearly set out the forms of assessment used by the Subject Area and the Review Panel was satisfied that diverse methods of assessment were offered.

Assessment - Levels 1 and 2

- 3.3.2 The Review Panel discussed the time spent by staff on marking student assessments. The Panel was subsequently advised that in recognition of the time to mark assessments, GTAs were paid on the basis of two essays per hour.

The Panel noted the Subject Area's commitment to the retention of the assessment method which required two essays per semester to be submitted at Levels 1 and 2. Staff contended that, in view of declining student writing ability, this mode of assessment enhanced the students' overall experience and provided them with the opportunity to develop this skill.

The Subject Area has shown commitment to this labour-intensive activity and the obvious benefits that offering the opportunity to write two different styles of essays provided to the students in terms of experience and skills. At the meeting with the undergraduate students the Panel discerned that students appreciated the feedback provided by these assignments in support of their learning process and the students expressed their gratitude for the support provided by staff. The Panel noted that this process placed a considerable strain on the staff team particularly in view of additional pressures resulting from staff research leave.

The Panel discerned there was a significant amount of essay work undertaken in both examinations and course work and, in view of this, the Panel considered it would be beneficial to streamline the process utilising different assessment types in this area. One example of this would be the "show and tell" exercise undertaken by students in Celtic Civilisation Level 1. From discussions with the GTAs the Panel learned that the students invested a considerable amount of work in this exercise and, therefore, it may be suitable for formal assessment. The Panel recognised that the staff were reluctant to change successful teaching practices, but in view of the demands this form of

assessment placed on staff, there was an evident need to identify other methods of assessment for Levels 1 and 2.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area review their forms of assessment for Levels 1 and 2 to ensure variety which aligns with the ILOs.

3.3.3 Turnitin

The Review Panel had noted from the SER that Turnitin was being piloted in Celtic Civilisation 1A and two Honours courses during session 2012-13. At the meeting with the undergraduate students, the Panel had asked the students about their experience of Turnitin which had been variable. The students considered there was a lack of standard practice with regard to its use, with some students submitting work electronically whilst others submitted their work directly to the lecturer. Other comments included reference to a case where no feedback had been provided electronically and the student had to eventually meet with the tutor in person. The delay was attributed to a technical difficulty but there appeared to have been a lack of communication over the issue. The Panel appreciated that this was the first year that Turnitin had been piloted and teething problems should be expected. However, the Panel suggests that, in future, care should be taken to ensure that there is adequate communication regarding unforeseen delays. In addition, the Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area clarify its policy in relation to the electronic submission of work and convey this clearly to the students.

Feedback

3.3.4 The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area for their very rigorous marking procedures which provide thorough and extensive feedback to the students.

The Subject Area acknowledged in the SER (3.3.9) that the return of feedback had been identified as an area for concern by students in the NSS results. At the meeting with the Panel, the undergraduate students had expressed their satisfaction with the high quality of feedback provided by the Subject Area. However, the students had raised concerns regarding the delay in the return of work which, in the case of some Honours students, had taken between two to three months. Through discussions with staff, the Panel learned that there were particular tensions arising from the timing of the submission of essays at Levels 1, 2 and Honours.

The Panel noted the staff's commitment to maintaining the detailed level of feedback currently provided. However, the Panel considered that, whilst there was the issue of reasonable expectation of the return of work, communication was the key to ensure that students were kept informed of proposed dates for the return of work and any subsequent delays.

The Panel welcomed the introduction of a feedback timetable form by the School of Humanities Learning and Teaching Committee. The Panel considered that this should assist in the reduction of delays in the return of feedback. Nevertheless, the Panel considered that this innovation, in isolation, would not sufficiently address the issues associated with the return of feedback which were linked to the essay time table for Levels 1, 2 and Honours. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area review the submission dates for work at Levels 1, 2 and Honours with a view to staggering these dates to alleviate the pressure on staff in providing feedback on a large quantity of work.

3.4 Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- 3.4.1 The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area for the broad and impressive range of courses offered and the level of research-led teaching conducted by staff which allowed for diversity and flexibility within the Honours programme.
- 3.4.2 The Subject Area enjoyed close teaching links with History and Archaeology and the Panel **commends** the interdisciplinary aspects of the curriculum.
- 3.4.3 The taught postgraduate students on the MLitt Celtic Studies who met with the Review Panel had commented on the difficulties they had experienced with the core course which was not directly relevant to the taught postgraduate students. The Panel learned that staff were aware of this and there were plans to change the core course. Accordingly, the Panel suggests that the Subject Area should examine the current provision for taught postgraduate students.

The Panel also determined that for some of the postgraduate students who were progressing to PhD level, the MRes programme would have been more appropriate than the MLitt programme. The students had advised the Panel that they had not been aware of the MRes programme prior to enrolling on the MLitt programme. Therefore, the Panel would encourage the Subject Area to ensure that the MRes programme is adequately advertised.

3.5 *Student Recruitment*

- 3.5.1 The Review Panel recognised the challenges that the Subject Area encountered in the area of student recruitment and the steps that the Subject Area has introduced to address this. The Panel would encourage the Subject Area and the Gaelic Learning Officer (GLO) to continue to maintain communication with the Gaelic Departments in secondary schools by offering engagement that enabled local Gaelic-speaking pupils to experience the University through a Gaelic medium. The SER had referred to a variety of future developments which it was hoped would attract students to the University including the publication of a Gaelic-only leaflet outlining the programmes available in conjunction with the Recruitment and International Office (RIO). The Panel **recommends** that the School of Humanities and RIO support this initiative to ensure prompt delivery of the leaflet in order to maximise the potential audience reached by the University.

MyCampus

- 3.5.2 The Subject Area reported within the SER that there appeared to have been some benefits from the increased 'visibility' of their courses through MyCampus. This was evident for Celtic Civilisation Level 1, in particular, which had increased numbers of students from the College of Science and Engineering and from the Adam Smith Business School since session 2011-12.

Entry Tariff

- 3.5.3 From the SER and discussions with the staff, the Review Panel discerned that, further to the College of Arts' raised entry tariff, there had been an increase in the numbers of pupils/parents/teachers contacting the Subject Area regarding unsuccessful applications. Whilst the Subject Area considered this had now evened-out, the staff expressed concern that fluency as a Gaelic speaker as a skill was not recognised in the entry criteria. The Panel sympathised with this viewpoint, but, in view of the number of applications to the University each year for relatively few places, considered it would not be desirable nor practical to have different entry requirements for this programme. The Panel supports the project between the College of Arts and RIO outlined in the SER (3.5.7) to ensure that secondary pupils are made aware of the entry tariff for the College of Arts.

School of Modern Languages and Cultures (SMLC)

- 3.5.4 The Review Panel explored the idea of closer links with SMLC with both students and staff. Both groups were receptive to this idea and the Panel considered that the beginner's Gaelic class, should be promoted to SMLC students. This could assist in the promotion of Gaelic across the University and attract a cohort of students who may be unaware of this option. The Panel noted there were existing collaborative links between the Subject Area and SMLC. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area explore options to promote the beginner's Gaelic class specifically to SMLC students.

Taught Postgraduate Provision

- 3.5.5 The Review Panel noted from the SER, the small number of taught postgraduate students enrolled on the MLitt Celtic Studies programme. At the meeting with staff the Panel discerned that the programme was introduced in 2008 and the staff considered that this was relatively new. The staff noted that there had been difficulties with the maintenance and accuracy of the web site marketing the programme, which had recently been addressed. Since the website was updated in December 2012 there had been five separate email enquiries (all international – three US and two EU). There had been no email enquiries pre-dating the website update this academic session. The Panel noted that staff were eager to maintain the MLitt Celtic Studies and, whilst the Panel appreciated this viewpoint, would countenance caution on continuing to invest considerable time and resources into a programme that recruited only a handful of students. The Panel **recommends** that if there was no marked improvement in recruitment to the MLitt for entry in 2013/14, the Subject Area should review the programme.

3.6 Student Progression, Retention and Support

Progression

- 3.6.1 The Review Panel **commends** the work undertaken by the Subject Area in providing a supportive Gaelic environment for the students. The Panel noted that the Subject Area, particularly Celtic Civilisation, attracted a substantial number of visiting international students at Level 1. As indicated in the SER, these students were not in a position to proceed to Level 2 which had an impact on the figures reflecting progression

At the meeting with the Head of Subject, and as noted under item 2, the Review Panel observed that the Subject Area had existing interdisciplinary links with the other subject areas of History and Archaeology within the School and also the Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies. The Panel suggests that the Subject Area explore the expansion of these links with a view to encouraging increased student movement particularly at Honours level.

3.7 The Quality of Learning Opportunities

- 3.7.1 The students who met with the Review Panel expressed satisfaction with the quality of their learning opportunities and their experiences as students of Celtic and Gaelic. The enthusiasm for their subject was evident. The Panel noted that in the 2012, 2011 and 2010 National Student Surveys, the positive responses to the statement 'Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course' were 97% 93% and 94% respectively.
- 3.7.2 At the meeting with the postgraduate students, the Panel was pleased to note the students' positive attitude to the programme and to learn that they would recommend the programme to other students. The students expressed their

satisfaction with the sense of community that the 'building' offered. The students had confirmed they had been provided with the opportunity to read the SER. The students were content with the contact with staff and considered that being part of a small subject area was a particular strength of the programme.

3.8 *Resources for Learning and Teaching*

Staffing – Research Leave

3.8.1 The Review Panel noted the staff's dedication to the delivery of quality teaching on their courses. The Panel **commends** the high level of research activity that staff undertake and the Subject Area's commitment to Strategic Research Allocation, which apportioned individual staff members a semester of research leave every three to four years. The benefits of this system were evidenced in the diverse range of courses offered at Honours level. The Panel noted that staff also undertook additional activities such as media interviews which, whilst demanding in terms of time, were beneficial to student recruitment.

Within the SER it was acknowledged that the level of research leave placed a considerable burden on staff, particularly when faced with unplanned circumstances, such as extra research funding and staff absences. The Review Panel shared these misgivings and had concerns about the challenges that managing staff research plans presented to the Head of Subject.

The Panel appreciated that, in a Research Excellence Framework (REF) year, the importance of research was paramount. However, the Panel considered that the Subject Area was vulnerable to unplanned events particularly in relation to staffing. The Head of Administration advised that a College workload model was under development which would take into account the other roles that staff held, such as convening a large course with sizeable numbers of GTAs. It was expected that the College workload model would address the need to recompense staff in terms of time and mentoring of GTAs. However, the workload model would not be able to address the matter of the time required to mark a language essay.

The Panel identified the current forms and timing of assessment at Levels 1 and 2 as a contributing factor to pressures on staff time. This issue was discussed in depth at 3.3.2.

Whilst the Panel appreciates the value of the current research leave strategy, the Panel considered that, in its current form, it placed considerable pressure on the Head of Subject and the Teaching staff. The Panel deemed there were changes that could be made to relieve the pressures on staff whilst not compromising staff research. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area reflect on the current research leave strategy in order to identify potentially difficult periods and to ensure that a relatively even balance between teaching commitments and research level is maintained.

3.8.2 The Review Panel considered that there was a substantial range of courses offered, particularly in view of the small numbers of students. Through discussions with staff the Panel learned that, due to the practice of team teaching, courses were often administered by Archaeology and History with staff changing on a yearly basis. The staff advised that the courses ran on a two year cycle hence the courses offered each year would be less than the list suggested.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

3.8.3 The Review Panel was pleased to note that the Subject Area GTAs were viewed as an integral part of the teaching team and were included in the subject handbooks. The Panel met with the GTAs who expressed their satisfaction with their role within the Celtic and Gaelic. One GTA considered that Celtic and Gaelic was “an amazing place to teach”. The GTAs reported that staff were supportive and communication was open with frequent contact. The GTAs were content, overall, with their workload.

Moodle

3.8.4 The Review Panel had deemed from the SER that Moodle was widely used by staff and viewed positively by the students, particularly in relation to the on-line tests. Through further discussion with the GTAs, the Panel gained the impression that the use of Moodle was more variable than suggested in the SER, particularly within the different tutorial groups. Additionally, the Panel learned that the students used email in preference to Moodle to communicate with staff and peers. At the meeting with the undergraduate students the Panel learned that the students preferred to undertake tests in class rather than on Moodle. The Panel suggests that the Subject Area review the use of Moodle in relation to the students and attempt to identify other ways in which students could be encouraged to use it more extensively.

Physical Resources

3.8.5 The Review Panel noted that the Subject Area had substantial digital resources which both undergraduate and postgraduate students considered to be excellent. The Panel noted from the SER, some students had requested that more material be made available in hard copy as opposed to digital. The Panel explored this issue with both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The postgraduate students advised of some difficulty in accessing more specialised texts and the undergraduate students informed the Panel there was a problem with the availability of short-loan books. The Panel discussed this matter with staff who advised that the Library held books based on student numbers, and in view of the small numbers of students in the Subject Area this was an on-going problem. Additionally, the Panel learned that library policy determined if a book was not checked out of Short Loan over a period of time the book was classified as dormant and removed. This was a particular problem for those courses that did not run annually. Furthermore, there had been instances where relatively new books had been removed and sold off at considerably reduced prices. An agreement had been reached whereby prior to a “dormant” item being removed from the Short Loan Celtic collection, the Subject Librarian contacted the Subject Area Library Committee representative to offer the book to the Subject Area before being made available for sale. However, a further problem had been identified with regard to books that, although pertinent to the Subject Area, were not catalogued as such and had been removed without consultation with the Subject Area. The Panel concurred that this situation was unsatisfactory and the Panel **recommends** that the Library should, in conjunction with the Subject Area, identify a process whereby a more effective method of classification should be implemented in order that no books utilised by the Subject Area should be removed without their approval.

Subject Area’s Administrator

3.8.6 At the meeting with the Review Panel, the undergraduate students expressed their appreciation of the presence in No 3 University Gardens of the Gaelic

administrator. The students considered that the presence of an administrative member of staff who also spoke Gaelic contributed towards providing a sense of community. The students considered that the building acted as a hub and that the imminent departure of the administrator to another office outwith the building would alter the ethos of the subject area. The Panel **recommends** that the School reflects on how to ensure that the Gaelic-speaking environment developed and nurtured by the Subject Area continues to be adequately supported, particularly in view of the relocation of the office of the Gaelic-speaking administrator.

Questionnaire Analysis

3.8.8 The Review Panel had determined from the SER the difficulties associated with the collation of data from student questionnaires which was conducted in the final week of teaching. The Panel learned that for Celtic Civilisation 1A and 1B questionnaires were completed online via Moodle. This enabled feedback for Celtic Civilisation 1A to be distributed to all students in the final week of the course. However, for those questionnaires completed in paper form there was inadequate time for staff to discuss pertinent issues with the students in depth. However, the Panel was pleased to note that, due to the excellent relations between students and staff with their open door policy and general supportive approach, any issues of concern tended to be identified at an early stage.

Whilst this issue was not discussed in depth at the PSR, the Panel was made aware of a pilot programme in which the College of Arts was participating, for EvaSys, an internet based survey management system that provided course evaluation. Possible benefits were that the system was designed to maximise automation and was integrated with VLE, including Moodle and provided both on-line and paper based questionnaires. EvaSys stated that the main benefit of the system was the speed questionnaires could be scanned and analysed, producing timely and accurate reports, allowing more time to monitor quality and implement changes.

The Panel suggests that the Subject Area engage with the College of Arts Secretary for further information to identify potential benefits for the School/ Subject area.

Teaching Room 202

- 3.8.9 The Review Panel discerned from the SER that the bulk of the Subject Area's teaching was done in No 3 University Gardens, however, the availability of the teaching room 202 (booked through Central Room Bookings) had created difficulties on several occasions due to reservations by other subject areas. The Panel recognised that the issue of room bookings was complex, and that the University sought to maximise the efficiency of its room usage; the Panel **recommends** that the Head of School Administration discuss the use of this room with Estates and Buildings to identify how improvement in access could be made to Room 202

4. Maintaining the Standards of Awards

Benchmarking

- 4.1 The Review Panel noted, as outlined in the SER, that there were no subject benchmarks for Celtic Studies as a discipline or for Scottish Gaelic. Accordingly, when the Subject Area requires to reflect on their practices, the

benchmarks for Welsh, History and Languages and Related Studies were used.

4.2 External Examiners

The Review Panel noted the External Examiners' reports to be entirely positive pertaining to research, teaching, feedback and assessment.

5. **Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience**

5.1 Gaelic Summer School

The SER had referred to the uncertainty surrounding the future funding of the inter-university Gaelic Summer School due to the likely withdrawal of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) contribution in future. The future of the Summer School was dependent on all the universities involved contributing to the funding. The Summer School was a three week course in Skye or Lewis, aimed at non-fluent Gaelic students progressing from second to third and third to fourth years. The SER advised that the College of Arts had provisionally agreed to provide its share of the costs, contingent on the same being forthcoming from the other institutions involved. At the time of writing, the Subject Area was still awaiting the decisions of the other Higher Education Institutions with regard to their contributions.

The Review Panel discerned through discussions with both staff and students this was an important element in the language development of those students studying the Gaelic language and an option that should, ideally, continue. The Panel explored various possibilities with the staff regarding the funding of the Summer School including possible student financial contributions. The staff were reluctant to introduce contributions from students and considered that it was a matter for the Board of Celtic Studies Scotland. The Panel learned at the staff meeting that, currently, students were able to take an extra Further Education Course for language study at no additional cost. This was not an official pathway but could be something that the University should consider institutionalising.

The Panel explored the possibility of formalising the language immersion element of the programme. Both staff and students advocated against introducing a compulsory language immersion element to the programme. They considered that such a structure would be too rigid for many students, particularly those with family commitments and believed it could impact on student recruitment. In view of this, the Panel encourages the Subject Area to promote the benefits of the summer school and explore alternative ways to offer a language immersion experience similar to that offered to students of other languages.

Native Language Speakers

- 5.2 The Review Panel had discerned from their discussions with undergraduate students, the importance of frequent dialogue with native Gaelic speakers. In order to maximise this source, the Review Panel explored the subject of identifying Gaelic speakers' in the wider University student population. The Panel learned that the GLO had identified a number of Gaelic speakers within the University and that a number of University-wide classes had been organised for all to attend. The Panel would encourage the GLO and Subject Area to continue to develop this area.

Mentoring System

- 5.3 The Review Panel learned through discussion with the Head of Subject that a 'Language Buddy' system had been helpful in assisting beginners improve their Gaelic language abilities. However, the system did not run every year due to insufficient numbers of fluent language speakers. The Panel learned that it would be helpful to roll this out in First Year as it would help progression and the confidence of the students. The Panel considered that it would be beneficial to encourage further involvement of other Gaelic speakers' outwith the Subject Area as outlined in Item 5.2.

Link to SMLC

- 5.4 As outlined at 3.5.4, the Review Panel considered that it would be beneficial to students and staff alike for closer cooperation with SMLC to raise the profile among the SMLC students of the Gaelic-beginners class. This would widen the appeal of the subject outwith the subject area.

Student Liaison Committee (SSLC)

- 5.5 The Review Panel enquired regarding the student experience with the SSLC. The undergraduate students reported that the system operated well and they were confident that the student voice was heard.

With regard to the postgraduate students there did not appear to be a taught postgraduate representative on the SSLC. If this was the situation, the Panel **recommends** that this be addressed and a taught postgraduate student representative be appointed to ensure that there is parity in the representation of all students at the SSLC.

6. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching

The following key strengths were noted:

- Research-led teaching
- Flexibility and choice of courses
- Level of detailed feedback provided to students
- Strong Gaelic environment and community
- Dedicated staff to student provision
- Interdisciplinary teaching
- The Subject Area has displayed a strong sense of self reflection throughout the PSR process

Areas for Improvement

- High teaching workloads
- Balance of research leave
- Student recruitment
- Assessment methods

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Review Panel highly commends the Subject Area for the overall quality of its provision and the dedication of the staff team in providing a rewarding and supportive student environment. The research work of the Subject Area is also to be commended which provides a wide and varied range of courses for the students;

however, the Panel had concerns regarding the high workload of some staff team members as a result of strategic research leave and the work-intensive assessment methods.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends the School on the following, which are listed in order of appearance in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area for their very rigorous and thorough marking procedures which provide thorough and extensive feedback to the students. [paragraph 3.3.4]

Commendation 2:

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area for the broad and impressive range of courses offered and the level of research-led teaching conducted by staff which allowed for diversity and flexibility within the Honours programme. [paragraph 3.4.1]

Commendation 3:

The Subject Area enjoyed close teaching links with History and Archaeology and the Panel **commends** the interdisciplinary aspects of the curriculum. [paragraph 3.4.2]

Commendation 4:

The Review Panel **commends** the work undertaken by the Subject Area in providing a supportive Gaelic environment for the students. [paragraph 3.6.1]

Commendation 5:

The Panel **commends** the high level of research activity that staff undertake and the Subject Area's commitment to Strategic Research Allocation, which apportioned individual staff members a semester of research leave every three to four years. [paragraph 3.8.1]

Recommendations:

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs to which they refer in the text of the report. They are listed in order of priority.

Recommendation 1:

Whilst the Panel appreciates the value of the current research leave strategy, the Panel considered that, in its current form, it placed considerable pressure on the Head of Subject and the Teaching staff. Therefore the Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area reflect on the current research leave strategy in order to identify potentially difficult periods and to ensure that a

relatively even balance between teaching commitments and research level is maintained for staff. [paragraph 3.8.1]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area review their forms of assessment for Levels 1 and 2 to extend the range of assessments at Levels 1 and 2. [paragraph 3.3.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 3:

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area review the submission dates for course work at Levels 1, 2 and Honours with a view to staggering these dates to alleviate the pressure on staff in providing feedback on such a large quantity of work. [paragraph 3.3.4]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 4:

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area explore options to promote the beginner's Gaelic class specifically to SMLC students. [paragraph 3.5.4]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Head of School of Humanities

Head of School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Recommendation 5:

The Panel **recommends** that, if there was no marked improvement in recruitment to the MLitt Celtic Studies for entry in 2013/14, the Subject Area should review the programme. [paragraph 3.5.5]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 6

The Panel **recommends** that the School reflects on how to ensure that the Gaelic-speaking environment developed and nurtured by the Subject Area continues to be adequately supported particularly in view of the relocation of the office of the Gaelic-speaking administrator staff member. [paragraph 3.8.7]

For the attention of: **Head of School**

Recommendation 7:

The Panel **recommends** that the subject area should review its handbooks for all courses to make them more consistent in terms of presentation of general student information. [paragraph 3.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 8

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area clarify its policy in relation to the electronic submission of work and convey this clearly to the students. [paragraph 3.3.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Recommendation 9:

The Panel **recommends** that the Library should, in conjunction with the Subject Area, identify a more effective method for the classification of books in order that no books utilised by the Subject Area should be removed without their approval. [paragraph 3.8.6]

For the attention of: **Subject Area Librarian**

Recommendation 10:

The Panel **recommends** the School of Humanities and RIO support the publication of a Gaelic-only leaflet outlining the programmes available in order to maximise the potential audience reached by the University. [paragraph 3.5.1]

For the attention of: **Head of School**
Director of RIO

Recommendation 11:

The Panel **recommends** that the Head of School Administration discuss the use of room 202 with Estates and Buildings to identify how improvement in access could be made. [paragraph 3.8.9]

For the attention of: **Head of School Administration**
Director, Estates and Buildings

Recommendation 12:

Panel **recommends** that a taught postgraduate student representative should be appointed to the SSLC to ensure that there is parity in the representation of all students. [paragraph 5.5]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**