A Digital School for Gaelic

[www.gaelicschool.scot](http://www.gaelicschool.scot)

This paper outlines a proposal from Education Scotland for the development of a digital school for Gaelic, to advance learning through Gaelic at the secondary stages.

**gaelicschool.scot- A digital school for Gaelic**

**Introduction**

This paper has been drawn up following discussions at a meeting of the National Gaelic Education Steering Group on 25 September 2015, and a subsequent meeting of a sub-group in late October 2015. It outlines the need for a Gaelic resource which takes the form of an online digital school. A digital school will enable learners of Gaelic, educators and their supporters to have opportunities to maximise the potential of digital technology for a range of educational outcomes, particularly surrounding Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This paper builds on the key messages outlined in the three Education Scotland commissioned papers, September 2015. These papers examined the use of digital technologies from different perspectives; that of a local authority, a senior manager and a teacher. This paper also draws on paper written by Bruce Robertson on 2013. A digital school for Gaelic will enhance opportunities for learners in GME secondary. It will draw educators together to benefit from a series of professional learning opportunities and enable parents and other partners in education to support Gaelic learners.

**Rationale**

Gaelic education has had; challenges regarding supply of qualified teachers, particularly those who can teach their specialist subject through the medium of Gaelic. As a result, schools have had challenges in providing progression in for a curriculum through the medium of Gaelic. Never the less, there are increasing numbers of GME learners due to the popularity of Gaelic schooling in different parts of Scotland. A significant solution is required if we are to give pupils in GME opportunities to access a curriculum that meets the needs of CfE and enables them to continue to develop their fluency.

The rapid development of digital technologies for learning offers more radical solutions to some of these challenges. While there will remain a necessity for the majority of core Gaelic learning to be delivered locally in a GME setting, we need to take advantage of the opportunities such technologies afford us. An active online Gaelic School will be a rich resource for all involved in the delivery of CfE through the medium of Gaelic.

**Staffing**

Leadership at national level is required to establish the digital school for Gaelic. We therefore propose that a full-time National Coordinator is appointed on a one- or two-year contract or secondment to Education Scotland. The post-holder should be GTCS registered at the secondary stages, have ICT skills, be able to teach Literacy and Gàidhlig and, ideally, one other subject. The National Coordinator will be responsible for establishing the digital school for Gaelic, working collaboratively with local authorities and staff in schools.

Education Scotland’s Senior Education Officer for Gaelic (SEO) will oversee and facilitate development opportunities with this project and will dedicate 0.2 FTE time to the project.

Education Scotland’s Digital Learning and Teaching team will allocate 20 days per year to provide technical advice for the project.

There is an opportunity for an additional leadership post to be created, for an existing Secondary teacher working in Gaelic Medium Education, to support this project. We propose that a Principal Teacher (PT) is appointed to work closely with the National Coordinator, partners and teachers in schools on the development and on-going updating of the content of the digital Gaelic school. The PT remit would include teaching their subject, the pulling together of resources and course materials, identifying resource gaps, identifying and sharing good practice, and identifying teacher CLPL needs. The PT would be based within their existing school with additional responsibilities for the digital Gaelic school and be accountability for high-quality delivery of courses.

Translator time will also be required. A translator will work with the National Coordinator and the PT to translate the digital school’s web-pages and assist with the language used. S/he will also ensure the consistency of language development across all areas of the school. The translator will also link and work closely with Stòrlann.

**What will the digital Gaelic school look like?**

The digital Gaelic school’s central base will be at Education Scotland, with the Coordinator having an option to work from anywhere in Scotland. They will link with local authorities and Stòrlann. The main focus, initially, for the digital Gaelic school will be S1- S3 Broad General Education, BGE, building into the Senior Phase (S4-S6). As a first step, the digital Gaelic school might work with CNES, as they are establishing an e-learning environment across 4 hub schools. There is an opportunity here for the digital Gaelic school to work in partnership with CNES, establish a ‘pilot’ programme of lessons to be delivered online live and which will build into programmes (with the facility to ‘watch again’), targeting one or two subject areas initially. Subject areas will be decided following consultation with; secondary schools and primaries to ensure progression and take account of local contexts. The forthcoming Guidance on Gaelic Education has advice on the delivery of subjects through the medium of Gaelic. The availability of subjects in GME will be decided on where the greatest needs and gaps are for learners. The National Coordinator will also have responsibility for organising and uploading support materials and teaching resources, organising and promoting learning events, and working with national partner agencies such as Stòrlann and SQA.

It should be noted that although there will be a focus on targeted courses initially, teachers will be encouraged to contribute resources to support other subject areas through the medium of Gaelic.

The digital Gaelic school will have different online learning areas which both teachers and learners can visit ‘anytime, anyplace, anywhere’. Access to the digital Gaelic school will be dependent on the visitor’s requirements. For example, the home page will essentially be the information page and will be open to the public. Learning areas will require a secure login.

*Home page*- This area will provide general information about the school. It will house access to the other learning areas, and will provide: information regarding live lesson broadcasts through timetables of participating schools; relevant announcements and updates regarding events; and new uploads via a newsfeed.

**Learning Areas**

*Education Scotland resources area*- This area will house all relevant learning and teaching resources relevant to Gaelic education. The area can be a ‘one stop shop’ for all Gaelic Education teaching and learning resources. This area will be open to the public.

*Resources from other partners’ area-* This area will house all relevant teaching and learning resources that support GME at Senior Phase from partners such as Stòrlann and SQA. This area will be open to the public.

*Courses and sessions resource area-* This area will house all information associated with the different courses and sessions on offer. Teachers and young people will be able to: view a schedule of live broadcasts; access pre-recorded broadcasts or archived broadcasts; and access a variety of differentiated supporting teaching and learning materials i.e. video, audio, pictorial or written exemplification used within the broadcast or session. Teachers will be encouraged to share resources, anonymously if they wish, and The Coordinator will provide quality assurance. This area will be a secure area for headteachers, teachers and learners, accessed through an authentication system such as GLOW. \*(See note below)

*Learner/ teacher area-* This area will be used by teachers and learners to input information relating to pupils’ progress and next steps. This area will allow learners to submit their course work, ‘talk’ to teachers across Scotland delivering courses online, ask for advice and share ideas. It will allow teachers to ‘talk’ to individual learners, and give them feedback and next steps in their coursework. An online tracking system will allow learners, teachers and parents to track, monitor and assess pupil progress through courses. Parents/Carers will also be able to ‘speak’ to the teacher. This will be a secure area. Learners and teachers will be required to have a specific login to access this area. This area will not be accessible to the public.

*Professional Learning Community Area-* This area will be for staff only. It will house a conversation area, where staff can ‘talk’ to one another through posting, share and signpost resources to one another, and provide information and links regarding professional learning opportunities such as leadership opportunities, general professional learning opportunities. This area will also provide a link to GTC Scotland website.

*Learners’ Community Area-* This area will be for learners to ‘talk’ to one another, work collaboratively on projects, hold discussion groups, study groups, invite teachers to discussions, supporting their learning and building their confidence and fluency with Gaelic language with their peers.

**\*Permissions**

Access to secure learning areas will be to authenticated learners and educators only. For this reason, we recommend that we use the Glow authentication system Parents would have the same access as they do at the moment through GLOW, via their child.

**Timescales**

This is not a short-term project and requires a considerable period of support and development. An initial 2-year project plan needs to be prepared with associated targets and costs included. It must run naturally alongside and inform CfE and Glow developments in Scotland and also reflect the emerging implementation plan for Teaching Scotland's Future to ensure the mainstream of education policy development is included.

**Costs**

Based on the specifications above, and not including the capital costs of connectivity requirements which will differ from establishment to establishment, it is **estimated** that the budgetary implications are:

National Coordinator 2 year secondment - £50,000-£75,000 per year

Principal Teacher - annual supplement to existing salary estimated at £10,000

Translator Days/Time- £12,500

Creation of materials - £5,000

**Maeve MacKinnon**

**Senior Education Officer, Gaelic**

**January 2016**