



University
of Glasgow

Gaelic at the University of Glasgow: Interest, Abilities and Attitudes

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FOREWORD

This report contains a full analysis of the responses to a survey of students and staff at the University of Glasgow which took place between 13 October and 10 November 2009, to assess the following:

- Gaelic speaking ability and Gaelic classes
- Interest in Gaelic cultural events
- Perceived importance of Gaelic language and culture

The survey and report was commissioned by the Gaelic Language Officer (Celtic and Gaelic, College of Arts). The post of Gaelic Language Officer is jointly funded by the Scottish Funding Council, The Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The main purpose of the role is to raise the profile of Gaelic throughout the University of Glasgow and to create opportunities for learners of Gaelic, native speakers and those with an interest in the language and culture, to engage in a variety of Gaelic cultural events. The main purpose of the survey and report is to provide the Gaelic Language Officer with the information necessary to appropriately support and promote Gaelic within the University. In addition, also to provide the three main funders of the Gaelic Language Officer post, with an insight into Gaelic and interest in Gaelic at the University of Glasgow. It is also hoped that this report will benefit other third level institutions in planning towards developing Gaelic.

The methodology used for data collection was an online questionnaire which was sent to all students and staff. At present the University of Glasgow has over 24,400 students and employs over 6,000 staff.¹ Out of a potential 30,000 responses, 2,329 were received, representing approximately 7.8% of the total number of students and staff.

On the basis of the data drawn from the responses, this report makes recommendations towards increasing the level of Gaelic spoken, the number of learners and participation in Gaelic cultural activities at the University of Glasgow, and potentially other third level institutions where Gaelic is taught.

A complete set of data tables and graphs is contained in the appendix.

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August 2010

¹ Source: University of Glasgow Planning Services - www.glasgow.ac.uk/services/planning/

SUMMARY

The following is a brief summary of the findings of the survey. Figures are approximated to the nearest per cent.

- 8% of all staff and students responded to the survey; the majority of responses came from undergraduate students
- 14% of respondents are currently engaged in learning or speaking Gaelic
- 55% of respondents are interested in learning Gaelic; 85% would request a beginners class
- Times most suitable for classes would be weekdays during the academic term between 12 and 1pm and between 5.30 and 7pm
- Barriers to learning and uptake of classes include time constraints, accessibility, attitudes to learning Gaelic and costs
- Gaelic cultural events: Students and staff expressed a preference for music concerts and information about place-names
- Preferred times for events would be from 5.30pm on weekday evenings
- A general interest in languages is what attracts the majority of the interested respondents to Gaelic
- Importance of Gaelic to native speakers included a sense of ownership, cultural and personal identity, heritage, community, a love of the language itself and the perceived advantages of multi-lingualism.
- 56% of all respondents felt that Gaelic is important to Scotland's cultural life
- Less than 50% of students and staff expressed an awareness of the current status of Gaelic in Scotland
- 55% of all respondents felt that the revival of Gaelic in Scotland is important
- Comments in response to questions 13, 14 and 16 express strong feelings in support of and in opposition to Gaelic within the University and in Scotland. Out of approximately 250 comments roughly 230 (92%) were in support of Gaelic and 20 (8%) in opposition to preserving or reviving the language.

ANALYSIS

SECTION A: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1. Gender (see Table 1.0)

Approximately 40% of respondents to the survey were male; 60% female.

2. Age Band (see Table 2.0)

There are currently over 24,000 students (including post-graduates) enrolled at the University of Glasgow and over 6,000 staff. This survey gained a response from approximately 7.8% of the combined number of students and staff currently enrolled in and working at the University (a total of 2,329 respondents).

Approximately 50% of responses came from the 16-20 and 21-5 year old age band which would suggest that the strongest uptake of and response to the survey was among undergraduate students recently out of secondary school.

The 26-30 age group represented 10.5% of respondents. Among the 31-0 year old age band this figure dropped to 8.2% and to 6.2% of 41-5 year olds. There was a slight increase in responses in the 46-50 age band (6.8%) but this figure dropped by 1-2% for the age bands over 51 years. The slight increase in the 46-50 age band could be indicative of staff response.

From the data supplied it can be estimated that roughly 65% of respondents were undergraduate students, 25% postgraduates and 10% staff. However, it must be borne in mind that some students (postgraduate in particular) are also university staff and many staff members are also registered as students. As the questionnaire did not request this specific information it is not possible to give an exact breakdown of the staff/student ratio among the responses. The majority of respondents, who clearly indicated they were staff, were employed in University Services.

3. Students: Year Group (see Table 3.0)

Of the students who responded indicating their year, postgraduates represented 26.1%, followed by first year undergraduates (20.3%). The second year undergraduate response represented 13.5%, third year undergraduate 14.5%, fourth year undergraduate 11.2%. There was a sharp fall in responses of fifth year undergraduates (1.5%) but this corresponds to the fact that the majority of undergraduate programmes are no longer than 4 years in duration. 12.9% of undergraduate students did not supply information regarding their year, so these figures may be higher for each undergraduate year.

4. Students and Staff: Faculty and Department (see Tables 4.0 and 4.1)

The Faculty of Arts yielded the highest number of responses, 24.5%. This was followed by the Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences at 13.3% and the Faculty of Medicine at 11.1%. The faculty yielding the lowest number of responses was Veterinary Medicine with 1.9%. The majority of respondents who supplied information about their faculty also identified themselves as students, though it is possible that some respondents were also members of staff. A total of 6.6% of respondents did not supply information regarding faculty/department so these figures may be slightly higher.

SECTION B: SPEAKING ABILITY AND INTEREST IN LESSONS

5. Level of Ability in Gaelic (see Tables 5.0 and 5.1)

A total of 86.1% of students and staff responded that they were neither learners nor speakers of Gaelic. Among the 13.9% of respondents who stated that they were learners and/or speakers of Gaelic, 5.7% declared themselves fluent in Gaelic – either a native speaker, a lapsed native speaker (no longer using Gaelic other than occasionally) or a fluent learner. Other comments reflected an issue with confidence when speaking Gaelic:

“I am from a native speaking family, I understand but am not a confident speaker.”

“I am from the west highlands and have some Gaelic, but not enough to count as fluent or very proficient.”

Among those who responded as learners, 5.8% classified themselves as beginners with 2.4% at an intermediate level. Some comments suggested that ‘lapsed learner’ should have been included as a category in this question to include those who had taken lessons in the past but were no longer learning:

“I think you need a category for ‘lapsed learner’. I have done endless beginners and post-beginners classes and never get further.”

“I have a basic grasp of the essentials. I also sing in Gaelic.”

The highest proportion of respondents learning Gaelic was among the undergraduate students; 6.2% beginners, 2.2% intermediate and 2.7% fluent learners. This group had the highest percentage of native speakers, 2.7% fluent and 2.5% lapsed fluent speakers, which may correspond to the increased availability of Gaelic-medium education over the past twenty-five years.

Among postgraduate students 5.7% were beginners, 3.0% at intermediate level and 2.7% fluent learners. This group displayed increased articulation from beginners to intermediate level and fluency. There were fewer fluent native speakers and lapsed native speakers among this group (1.5% and 1.2% respectively).

The lowest proportion of learners was among the staff: 4% beginners, 2.3% intermediate and 0.6% fluent learners. This group also had the lowest proportion of fluent native speakers (0.6%) and lapsed native speakers (1.7%)

6. Interest in Lessons (see Table 6.0)

Just over half of the respondents (55.3%) declared that they were somewhat, quite or very interested in Gaelic language lessons. 44.7% responded that they were not very or not at all interested. Comments suggested that although some respondents would not be interested in taking a language class, there were other aspects of the language and culture which would interest them:

"I would like a class that bridges both Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaeilge as both are quite similar."

"Not necessarily interested in classes to learn to speak Gaelic but very interested in how to pronounce names, particularly hill names (I am a very keen hill-walker)."

"As I am foreign (Dutch), Gaelic language lessons as such would not be very useful but I would be very interested in some seminars or lectures on Gaelic language and culture."

Comments from respondents not interested in learning Gaelic included:

"I feel that the Gaelic language is out dated and is very rarely used in today's society, therefore I believe that the money being spent on these university classes would be better used elsewhere."

"It's a dead language. Greek or Latin would be far more useful for students to learn as they are actually still used extensively in technical terminology."

7. Level of Class (see Table 7.0)

Of those who responded positively to Gaelic lessons, an overwhelming majority indicated an interest in beginner level classes (84.5%). Intermediate level classes and informal conversation classes registered an equal interest (6.5%) with just over 2% of respondents suggesting 'other' types of classes.

Comments reflect an interest in 'refresher' courses on particular aspects of the language, a discussion forum and an advanced Ulpan course; (a methodology which encourages learning by listening and repetition), for example:

"I studied beginners Gaelic for 1 year but have forgotten a lot of it so a refresher course could be useful."

"Advanced Ulpan."

"Class for brushing up certain grammatical points, e.g. the correct use of 's e, impersonal forms, etc."

"Advanced forum for fluentish speakers?"

8. Suitable Class Time (see Table 8.0)

Weekdays between 12 noon and 1pm were identified as the most suitable times for classes for the majority of respondents (31.9%). Evenings between 5.30pm and 6.30 pm were the second most popular option (27.9%), evenings between 6 and 7pm were slightly less popular (21.4%). This suggests that students and staff have more flexible time at lunchtimes and at the end of their day.

Only 12% of respondents selected weekends as an optional class time. Comments suggest that most students and staff are very pressed for time and have a lot of other commitments (work, family, etc.) outside of university hours. Time constraints would pose a challenge to scheduling Gaelic classes. Another issue is that students based on other campuses find it difficult to attend classes held elsewhere in the University. Some respondents suggested online or distance learning options:

"A taster session for complete beginners on a drop in basis could be a good idea."

"Half-hour lunchtime sessions as I only have a half hour lunch so that I can leave early for family responsibilities."

"Difficult to access central classes during the week because we are off campus (East Kilbride) and over committed with family at the weekend."

"Lunch times would be great but only if a class could be arranged at Garscube. Otherwise weekdays 5.30-6.30 probably best."

"Ideally, due to demanding work position, and long distance away from work, I'd follow courses online, in my own time."

"Some sort of distance learning would be nice - I live in the Highlands!"

9. Comments Relating to Section B: Speaking Ability and Interest in Lessons

The comments in response to this section raised a number of issues for consideration; access to learning, costs, awareness of Scottish Gaelic and attitudes to learners.

Access to Learning

Some respondents have commented that the location of classes is unsuitable and that it is difficult to find the time to attend classes:

"I have mobility difficulties so would need the classes to be held in a reasonably accessible building."

"Summer classes would be most useful for me personally as I am very busy during term-time."

Costs

Some students find the cost of classes prohibitive, in spite of interest and enthusiasm. Free classes would be a positive incentive to learning and also attract overseas students who are curious about Gaelic but often receiving small stipends while they are abroad:

"I recently attended Gaelic classes that were free - funded by the Scottish Government - this was a great incentive!"

"Classes at the University have been prohibitively expensive in the past and has put me off."

"Great idea. However, I would like to highlight that since I am student and I might need work part-time; also it should be affordable (the best - free; otherwise almost free)."

Awareness of Scottish Gaelic

There is some confusion about what is meant by Gaelic. Many responses display a lack of clarity understanding the distinction between Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Some comments have even been written in Gaeilge (Irish Gaelic):

"It's not clear what you're taking 'Gaelic' to mean."

"Would it be the Scottish Gaelic or Irish Gaelic and is there a difference?"

"As I'm an Irish student, I've studied Gaeilge at school."

Attitudes of and to Learners

Some respondents have experienced negative attitudes to learning Gaelic from peers or have had a negative learning experience themselves:

"Friends who have studied Gaelic have noted it's difficult to move on from beginner's classes as 'stage 2' courses are rare. This puts me off starting somewhat."

"I was in a beginner level class at lunchtime but lost touch because the next year got cancelled due to lack of class members."

"Gaelic is often taught by well-meaning native speakers who have no idea how to teach and the result is that students feel patronised and overwhelmed and give up."

"I have tried in the past to learn Scottish Gaelic from the Speaking our Language TV programmes but found the inconsistency of pronunciation and obscurity of spelling major hurdles to learning."

Response from Overseas Students

Some comments from overseas students reflect a curiosity about Gaelic language and culture:

"I am an Italian student of Comparative Literature and would love to learn Gaelic and be able, one day, to read its literature and compare it with others. So I really appreciate this initiative."

"I am here on a postdoc and am from New Zealand. I am returning to New Zealand next year. Although I do not intend to learn the language, I am supportive of the initiative in general."

SECTION C: LEVEL OF INTEREST IN GAELIC CULTURE AND EVENTS

10. Types of Events and Workshops Desired (See Graphs 10.0 and 10.1)

Responses displayed a wide range of interest in different types of events, with music concerts and information about place-names as the most popular.

Undergraduate students rated music concerts most highly, followed by place-names and information sessions on Gaelic. Creative writing workshops and drama workshops registered least interest.

Postgraduate students displayed a more or less equal interest in music concerts and place-names, followed by information sessions on Gaelic. Postgraduates also expressed an interest in literary events, information sessions on Gaelic education and talks by Gaelic personalities. Creative writing and drama workshops registered least interest.

Place-names registered most interest among the staff, followed by music concerts and literary events. Interest was also shown in information sessions on Gaelic and talks by Gaelic personalities. Creative writing and drama workshops registered least interest.

11. Comments and Suggestions for Other Types of Events and Workshops

Out of approximately 200 suggestions, 30% were for music or performance related events including ceilidhs and concerts; 29% were for events relating to history of the language, history of Scotland, genealogy, place-names or historical field trips; 35% were for language learning related events and the remaining comments related to a mixture of events for children, traditional arts and crafts, literature and story-telling, film and media, sport, cookery and food:

"Hill names which originate from Gaelic, their meaning but most importantly their pronunciation. Like the beginning of the "Munro Show" that was on the TV presented by Muriel Gray."

"I guess a Gaelic film club wouldn't have much to go on, but if there was access allowed to BBC archive a kind of film club showing their best documentaries/short films with sociable discussion afterwards."

"Children's (pre-school) events - story telling, reading or songs. Info. on Gaelic books for babies/toddlers and how to encourage language development pre-school."

"A trip to one of the Gaelic speaking areas so that we could work on our Gaelic speaking."

"Talks or workshops on the relationship between English, Scots, and Gaelic in Scotland, historically and now."

"Down the line, it might be interesting to organise some Gaelic/Irish (and perhaps other Celtic languages) exchange evenings (i.e. musically, on language planning, student trips, etc)."

"Talks on Gaelic career opportunities."

12. Suitable Times for Events (see Table 12.0)

The response here echoes the response to question 8: Suitable Times for Classes. The majority of respondents would favour an early evening event (5.30 – 6.30pm) or from 7.30pm onwards. Just over a third of respondents expressed a preference for lunchtimes (31%). Weekends and times outwith the teaching semester were the least popular options.

SECTION D: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF GAELIC

13. Attraction to Gaelic (see Table 13.0)

Of those respondents who declared an interest in Gaelic, the main attraction to Gaelic is a general interest in language (12.9%). This was closely followed by family connections (10%) and an interest in music (6.3%). Literature and having children in Gaelic-medium education attracted 4.4% and 1.3% of respondents, respectively.

The attraction to Gaelic through music reflects the interest in Gaelic musical events demonstrated in response to question 10. Comments also picked up on the strong interest in Gaelic place-names, culture and heritage. Travelling throughout Scotland has also produced a curiosity about the language, as has the cultural connection between Ireland and Scotland:

"I frequently travel to and work in Stornoway and the Scottish Highlands and would like a better understanding of the language."

"Ireland-Scotland links and differences were what impelled me to have a try."

"Whisky" was one comment, which reflects the use of Gaelic in product branding.

Other comments expressed a concern for the future of the language; and a sense of ownership:

"I'd hate to see a venerable language of at least part of my country go the same way as Manx and Cornish; Interest in languages, Literature"

"It's OUR language."

Another respondent noted the availability of scholarly resources in Gaelic:

"As a student of Scottish history I have become aware of the rich and varied source material available in the language, though have so far only been able to use it in translation."

Career opportunity in Gaelic was also noted as an attraction:

"To become a teacher."

14. Importance of Gaelic to Native Speakers

Respondents who identified themselves as native speakers were asked to state what they felt was important to them about Gaelic. Their responses reflected a range of different concerns for the future of the language as well as feelings of ownership, cultural and personal identity, heritage, a sense of community, a love of the language itself and the perceived advantages of multi-lingualism:

"Keeping it alive, and passing on to future generations."

"It's always good to speak more than one language, and if at least one of them is a minority language that makes life a bit more interesting."

"It's part of who I am."

"It's the native language of my country."

"I think the most important things about Gàidhlig are the strong culture and traditions which are attached to it, as well as the strong sense of community derived from being among other Gàidhlig speakers."

"I think it's a beautiful language and that speaking Gàidhlig helps you to understand the other aspects of highland culture better."

"Dismissing the image that it is an insignificant and ancient, or even 'dead' language."

"It's very important for me to be able to speak Gàidhlig to my elderly family."

"Vocabulary and slang."

15a. Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland (See Tables 15a1, 15a2 and 15a3)

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates 'not important,' and 5 indicates 'important,' 56.1% of students and staff stated that Gaelic was important to Scotland's culture. Just under 20% felt that Gaelic was not important to Scotland's culture, with 24.6% respondents feeling that it was neither important nor unimportant.

Out of the total number of respondents, among those who indicated an interest in Gaelic, 75% felt that Gaelic was an important part of Scotland's culture and 6.3% felt that it was not an important part of Scotland's culture.

Approximately 60% of undergraduate and postgraduate students indicated that they felt Gaelic to be important to Scotland's culture, and approximately 50% of the staff. Roughly 25% of undergraduate and postgraduate students felt that Gaelic was neither important nor unimportant. This figure was slightly higher among the staff reaching just under 30%.

About 18% of undergraduates, 16% of postgraduates and 21% of staff felt that Gaelic was not important to Scotland's culture.

15b. Awareness of the Status of Gaelic in Scotland (see Tables 15b1, 15b2 and 15b3)

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 and 2 indicate 'lack of awareness,' 3 indicated 'some awareness' and 4 and 5 indicate 'a high level of awareness,' 21.8% of all respondents stated that they had a high level of awareness of the status of Gaelic in Scotland today. 29.6% were somewhat aware, and 48.6% indicated that they lacked awareness of Gaelic's current status.

Among the respondents who stated an interest in Gaelic, awareness was higher at 27.8%. A slightly higher percentage of this group were somewhat aware (32.1%) with 40.1% indicating a lack of awareness.

Approximately 24% of undergraduates, 18% of postgraduates and 19% of staff indicated that they were aware of the current status of Gaelic in Scotland. A total of 28% of undergraduates, 36% of postgraduates and 35% of staff were somewhat aware. The proportion from all groups who lacked awareness of the current status of Gaelic in Scotland was considerably higher; 48% of undergraduates, 52% of postgraduates and 51% of staff.

15c. Importance of the Revival of Gaelic in Scotland (see Tables 15c1, 15c2 and 15c3)

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 and 2 indicate 'not important,' 3 indicated neither 'important' nor 'unimportant' and 4 and 5 indicate 'important,' 55% of all respondents indicated that they felt the revival of Gaelic in Scotland was important. 23% felt that revival was neither important nor unimportant and 22% felt that the revival of Gaelic was not important.

Of the respondents who stated an interest in Gaelic, 73.7% indicated that the revival of Gaelic was important. 19% of this group felt that revival was neither important nor unimportant, and 7.3% felt that revival was not important.

Just over half of all students (57% of undergraduates and 54% of postgraduates) who responded indicated that the revival of Gaelic in Scotland was important. 48% of staff indicated that revival was important.

Approximately 20% of undergraduates, 30% of postgraduates and 30% of staff felt that the revival of Gaelic was somewhat important.

Approximately 23% of undergraduates, 16% of postgraduates and 22% of staff felt that the revival of Gaelic in Scotland was not important.

Some comments made elsewhere in the questionnaire reflect strong support of the revival and preservation of Gaelic:

"Preservation of culture/way of life, Gaelic is in my view a valuable asset for Scotland, so keeping it in use is important."

"It is one of Scotland's languages and Scottish people should be able to speak their own languages. It is also a connection to some parts of our history."

"Keeping Gaelic alive, more needs to be done at grass roots level i.e. at school and in the home."

Other comments made throughout the questionnaire were strongly against the maintenance and revival of Gaelic:

"How much money is this all wasting?"

"I feel that the Gaelic language is out dated and is very rarely used in today's society, therefore I believe that the money being spent on these university classes would be better used elsewhere!"

"Why is Gaelic being given special status and treatment when it was never the dominant language of 'Scotland'?"

SECTION E: 16. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS WHICH MAY BE OF USE TO THE GAELIC LANGUAGE OFFICER

The following are a selection of comments and suggestions which may be useful to the Gaelic Language Officer in light of the findings of this survey:

Attracting Learners

"A lot of eager learners can be sought through the International Society."

"E-learning where those with little time on their hands can dip in and out of topping up their knowledge would be nice."

"Please try to develop some Gaelic learning opportunities near the Crichton. It is unlikely to be possible to travel to the main campus for classes."

"A couple of free beginner lessons. The Gaelic lessons are too expensive for me at the moment, but I would really love to learn the language."

Raising Awareness

"I didn't even know the office existed until the email we got. Awareness raising is necessary!"

"Advertising campaign needed which is better than all the other departments put together to make folk come and take up Gaelic. Enthusiasm spreads enthusiasm. Cash prizes for crash course."

"More should be done to promote Irish and Welsh and make the (Celtic and Gaelic) department stronger and integrated on all three. Perhaps language lessons and comparative classes."

"I am sure you are familiar with other Gaelic initiatives in the Glasgow area and it would be worth establishing communications with the various bodies to maximise the interaction of GU staff with this."

"Try and promote any reasons as to why learning Gaelic could actually come in use, or how it could bolster your knowledge of Scotland and Scotland's culture."

"It would be great to have some kind of hook up and have Gaelic and Scots promoted as the languages of Scotland, alongside the emerging languages such as Polish."

Events/Workshops

"Anything that's informal but involves speaking Gaelic would be helpful and fun."

"Perhaps a workshop that could focus on potential research links between university staff in Gaelic and others in the university - no doubt there already are links but others could well be created."

"I think more cèilidhs would be a good idea, not only because they are good fun but also because I think that they would attract more non-Gaelic speakers to the culture (and therefore the language)."

"Slightly disappointed so far in that events are aimed at more or less just students and just beginners."

"A Gaelic student club would be great!"

"I'm content director at Eye For Film (www.eyeforfilm.com) and would love to hear about any film-related events or programmes you may run."

"How about events for children of staff & students?"

Facilities

"Drop in Gaelic learning centre might be useful if properly advertised (and with free tea and biscuits, people might come along.)"

"A Gaelic medium staff crèche/ preschool might be interesting."

"Expanding the Gaelic section in the Hetherington library would definitely aid the cause."

"We could have a web based forum or even lunchtime meet up for UoG Gaelic learners to allow us to share information and work together learning the language."

Resistance to Gaelic

"I think it's worth considering that the wish to learn Gaelic stems largely from either nostalgia (at best) or perhaps nationalism (at worst). I don't see the point really."

"Too much money is being spent on this and this is yet another venture wasting university money when cutbacks are about to hit departments and faculties."

"How about dealing with Scots - which is not a dialect of English. Gaelic has never been the national language of Scotland, it was just one of many regional languages."

"How about not going backwards? Gaelic should be maintained like Latin - as a curiosity, an artefact of what we once were. Scotland has moved on since then."

"This is an absolute waste of time, and resources and any attempts to force this on the university, and Scotland in general are very unethical."

"I am very much against attempts to keep this language alive."

"There should be NO specifically Gaelic events."

"Gaelic may be deemed important in terms of keeping alive our old language/heritage, but is it really important to the world we live in today?"

"The university should not be spending time or money on Gaelic. It is not the teaching language of the university and is of no practical use to it or its students."

"I am concerned, and always have been, about the conflation of Gaelic-speaking with 'Scottishness'. To southern Scots, Gaelic is a foreign language."

CONCLUSIONS

SECTION A: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There are approximately 24,000 students and 6,000 staff at the University of Glasgow. This survey yielded a response of about 7.8%, of whom 40% were male and 60% female, approximately 65% undergraduate students, 25% postgraduates and 10% staff.

SECTION B: SPEAKING ABILITY AND INTEREST IN LESSONS

Learner Levels

The number of students and staff currently engaged in learning Gaelic throughout the University is low. The highest proportion of learners is among undergraduate students. The majority of learners are beginners. This suggests an initial enthusiasm which falls off after a short period of time. The highest proportion of fluent learners is among undergraduate students which could reflect the increasing availability of Gaelic-medium primary and secondary education over the last twenty-five years.

Articulation

There was a drop of about 4% in the number who articulate to intermediate level and fluency. Postgraduate learners progress to these levels at a greater rate than undergraduates or staff. There is potential to increase the rate of articulation from beginner to intermediate level and fluency, in particular amongst undergraduate and staff learners.

Fluent and Native Speakers

There is a small number of fluent native and lapsed native speakers in the University, though comments suggest that there is potential to encourage those who have 'lapsed' or are lacking in confidence towards resuming their learning and speaking of Gaelic.

Interest in Lessons

There is a range of interest in Gaelic among those who responded positively. Most among these respondents would be interested in making a start in the language, though some requested enhancing existing or lapsed skills.

There was some confusion expressed as to whether Irish or Scottish Gaelic is being offered. Some comments reveal a lack of understanding of the distinction between the two languages. Comments also revealed some negative feeling towards Gaelic when asked about interest; some respondents did not see a use for Gaelic or a reason why the University should be promoting it.

Timing of Classes

Time constraints due to course work, employment and family were identified as the main factors prohibiting learning. For classes to attract a greater level of interest they would need to take place at lunchtimes (between 12 and 1pm) or early evening (between 5.30 and 7pm) in the evening on weekdays during the academic term. Online and distance learning would also be popular options.

SECTION C: LEVEL OF INTEREST IN GAELIC CULTURE AND EVENTS

Respondents expressed greatest interest in music concerts, place-names and information sessions on Gaelic. The popularity of music concerts could reflect the increasing popularity of Gaelic and traditional music in general and its increased profile through festivals and events. The majority of comments mentioning place-names mentioned that this was driven by an interest in hill walking or outdoor activities.

Both music and outdoor activities have a wide appeal to all ages and backgrounds and have the potential to attract more people to Gaelic in a friendly and inclusive manner.

Interest expressed in information sessions about Gaelic suggests a desire for increased knowledge and awareness of the language and culture.

SECTION D: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF GAELIC

Comments in response to questions 13, 14 and 16 express strong feelings in support of and in opposition to Gaelic within the university and in Scotland. Out of approximately 250 comments roughly 230 (92%) were in support of Gaelic and 20 (8%) in opposition to preserving or reviving the language.

Importance to Scotland's Culture

The higher number of students who feel that Gaelic is important to Scotland's culture could reflect trends in primary and secondary education which has led to a greater awareness of Gaelic among younger generations. Over the last twenty-five years Gaelic-medium primary and secondary education has become more widely available and Gaelic has been included in the school curriculum. The development of Gaelic cultural incentives such as Fèisean nan Gàidheal would also contribute to this, as would political incentives such as the Gaelic Language Scotland Act (2005).

Some respondents commented that they considered Gaelic to be irrelevant to Scotland's culture today, should not be prioritised over other minority languages, e.g. Scots or learning modern foreign languages.

Awareness of the Status of Gaelic

In spite of more than half of the respondents indicating that Gaelic is an important part of Scotland's culture, there is still a considerable lack of awareness of the current status of Gaelic in Scotland. Awareness of the status of Gaelic is slightly higher among those actively interested in Gaelic (learners, speakers and potential learners). It is likely that this group would be more inclined to actively inform themselves about the status of Gaelic in Scotland. However, these figures also suggest that more could be done to raise the general public's awareness of Gaelic.

Importance of Revival

These responses suggest that in spite of an average level of support of over 50%, the issue of Gaelic maintenance is one that polarises people and arouses strong feelings about how its preservation and development is funded and prioritised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase Awareness

- Hold information sessions about Gaelic which would cover issues such as its place in Scotland's history and culture, similarities and differences with Irish Gaelic and the current status of Gaelic in Scotland today
- Offer free Gaelic 'taster' sessions

Encourage Learning at all Levels

- Consider classes aimed at complete beginners
- 'Brush-up' classes for native and lapsed speakers
- Specialist classes on grammar, vocabulary, literature, etc.
- Conversation groups
- Ulpan classes

Making Time for Learning

- Consider scheduling lunchtime and early evening classes on weekdays during the academic term

Flexible Learning

- Liaise with University IT services to offer a suite of online lessons accessible to off-campus and distance students who are enrolled at the University but unable to attend classes

Build a Learning Community

- Link learners through online networks
- Host events which bring learners and tutors together to share their experiences
- Develop the existing 'buddy' system between fluent/advanced learners and beginners

Celebrate Gaelic Culture

- Hold more Gaelic music concerts
- Liaise with University hill-walking and outdoor activities clubs to set up 'Gaelic days' which would teach participants about place-names and features on the landscape
- Offer Gaelic singing and music lessons
- Offer Gaelic cookery/craft events

Positive Marketing

- Be aware of hostility to and sensitivity around Gaelic - particularly when universities are under financial pressure. Tackle this by focusing on things that are inclusive and informative: sense of community, positive learning experiences, unique culture
- Gaelic promotional campaigns within the University should embrace other minority languages and cultures.

APPENDIX

Table 1.0 - All Respondents: Gender

All Respondents: Gender	No.	%
Female	1367	59.9
Male	908	39.8
Transperson	6	0.3
Total	2281	100.0

Graph 1.0 - All Respondents: Gender

Respondents: Gender (No. = 2281)

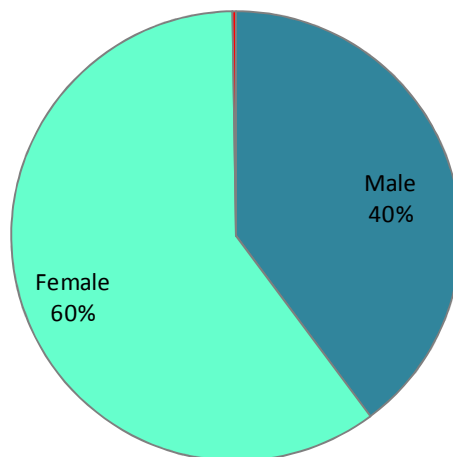


Table 2.0 - All Respondents: Age Band

All Respondents: Age Band	No.	%
16 to 20	571	25.0
21 to 25	567	24.8
26 to 30	241	10.5
31 to 35	187	8.2
36 to 40	187	8.2
41 to 45	141	6.2
46 to 50	155	6.8
51 to 55	104	4.6
56 to 60	80	3.5
61 to 65	44	1.9
66+	8	0.4
Total	2285	100.0

Graph 2.0 - All Respondents: Age Band

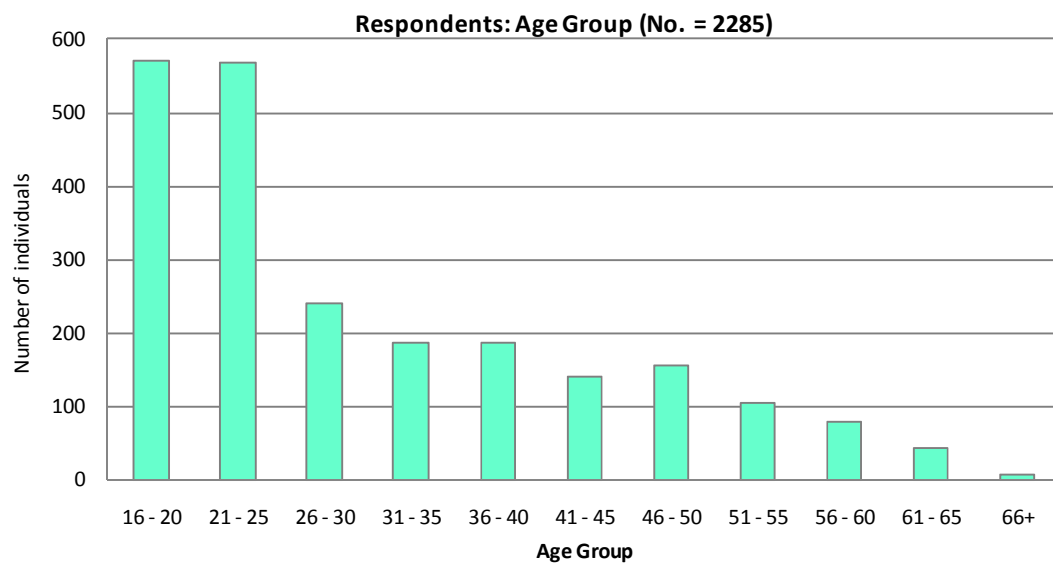


Table 3.0 - All Respondents: Year Group

All Respondents: Year Group	No.	%
Postgraduate	402	26.1
Fifth year undergraduate	23	1.5
Fourth year undergraduate	172	11.2
Third year undergraduate	223	14.5
Second year undergraduate	208	13.5
First year undergraduate	313	20.3
Undergraduate (undifferentiated)	198	12.9
Total	1539	100.0

Graph 3.0 - All Respondents: Year group

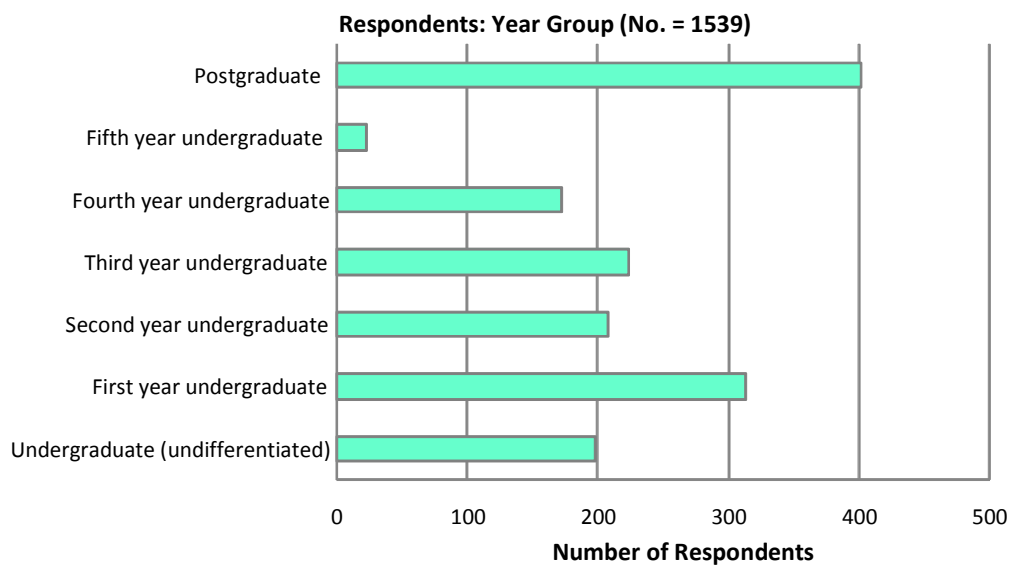


Table 4.0 - All Respondents: Faculty

All Respondents: Faculty	No.	%
Arts	526	24.5
Law, Business & Social Sciences	286	13.3
Medicine	239	11.1
Physical Sciences	206	9.6
Biomedical & Life Sciences	199	9.3
Education	186	8.7
University Services	177	8.3
Information & Mathematical Sciences	175	8.2
Engineering	110	5.1
Vetinary Medicine	41	1.9
Total	2145	100.0

Graph 4.0 - All Respondents: Faculty

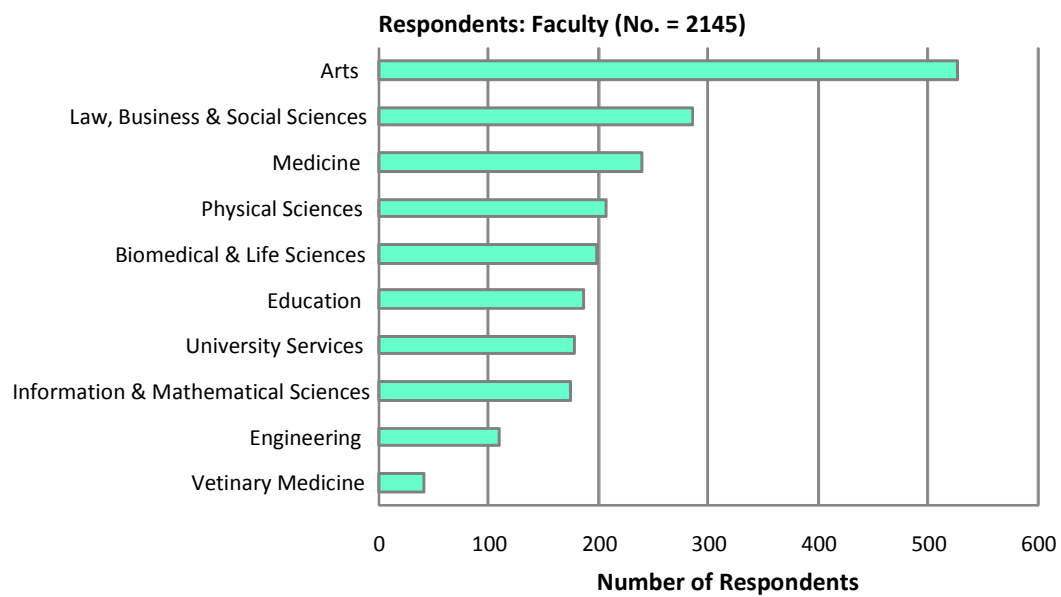


Table 4.1 - All Respondents: Status

All Respondents: Status	No.	%
Undergraduate Student	1137	66.3
Postgraduate	402	23.4
Staff	176	10.3
Total	1715	100.0

Graph 4.1 - All Respondents: Status

Respondents: Status (No. = 1715)

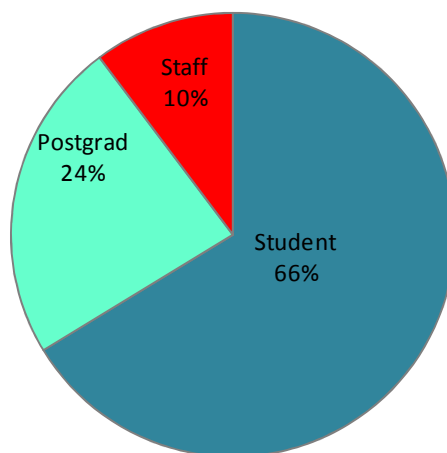


Table 5.0 - All Respondents: Level of Ability in Gaelic

All Respondents: Level of Ability in Gaelic	No.	%
Currently learning (beginner)	133	5.8
Currently learning (intermediate)	55	2.4
Fluent learner	42	1.8
Fluent native speaker	40	1.8
Lapsed native speaker	47	2.1
Not a speaker or learner	1963	86.1
Total	2280	100.0

Table 5.1 - All Respondents: Level of Ability in Gaelic (Status)

All Respondents: Level of Ability in Gaelic	Undergraduates		Postgraduates		Staff	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Currently learning (beginner)	70	6.2	23	5.7	7	4.0
Currently learning (intermediate)	25	2.2	12	3.0	4	2.3
Fluent learner	25	2.2	11	2.7	1	0.6
Fluent native speaker	30	2.7	6	1.5	1	0.6
Lapsed native speaker	28	2.5	5	1.2	3	1.7
Not a speaker or learner	953	84.3	344	85.8	159	90.9
Total	1131	100.0	401	100.0	175	100.0

Table 6.0 - All Respondents: Level of Interest in Gaelic

All Respondents: Level of Interest in Gaelic	No.	%
Not at all interested	541	23.7
Not very interested	479	21.0
Somewhat interested	573	25.1
Quite interested	392	17.2
Very interested	296	13.0
Total	2281	100.0

Graph 6.0 - All Respondents: Level of Interest in Gaelic

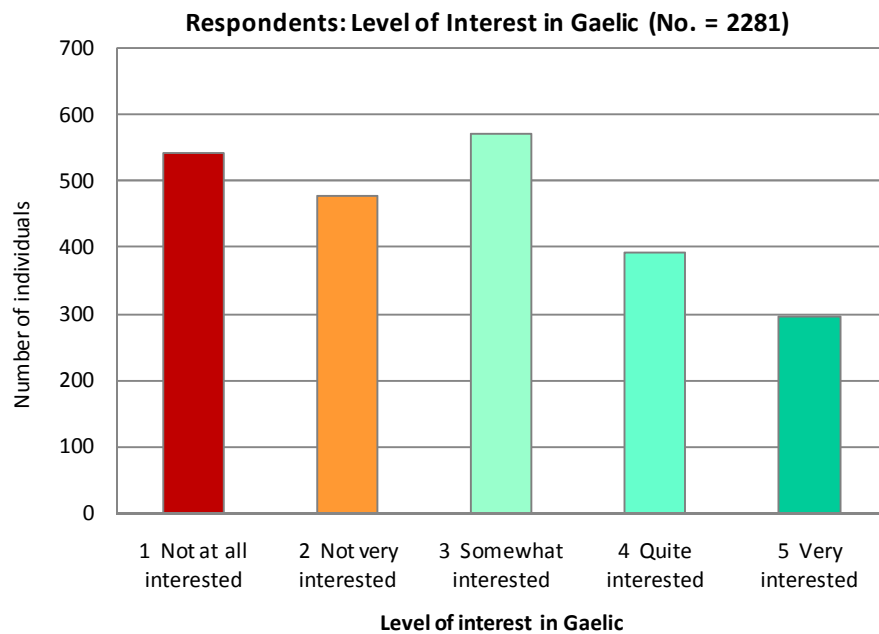


Table 7.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Class Level Requested

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Class Level Requested	No.	%
Complete beginner class	1058	84.5
Intermediate	82	6.5
Informal conversation class	82	6.5
Other	30	2.4
Total	1252	100.0

Graph 7.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Class Level Requested

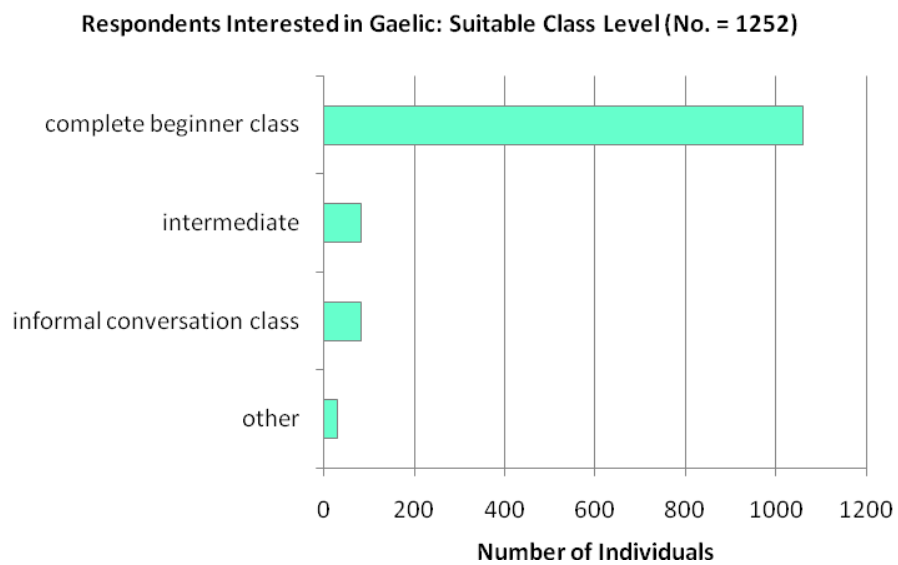
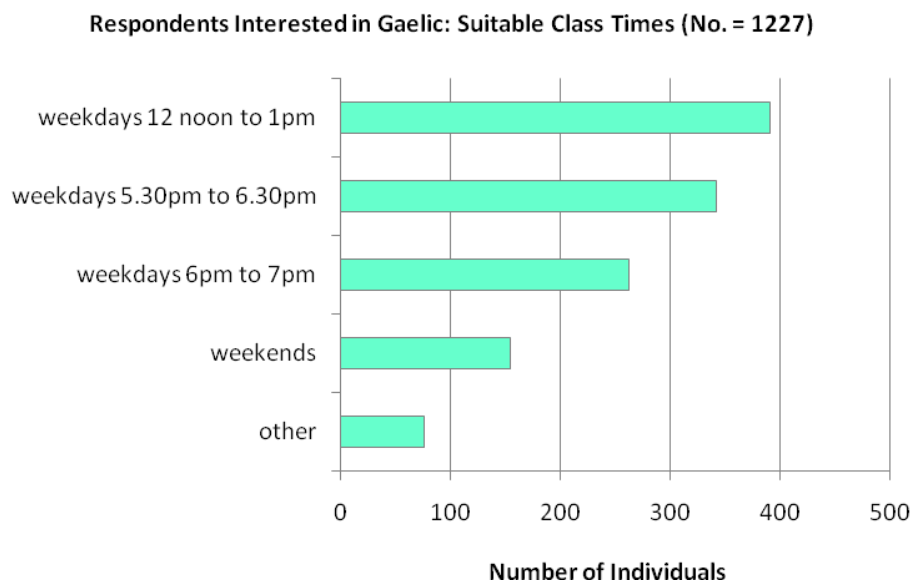


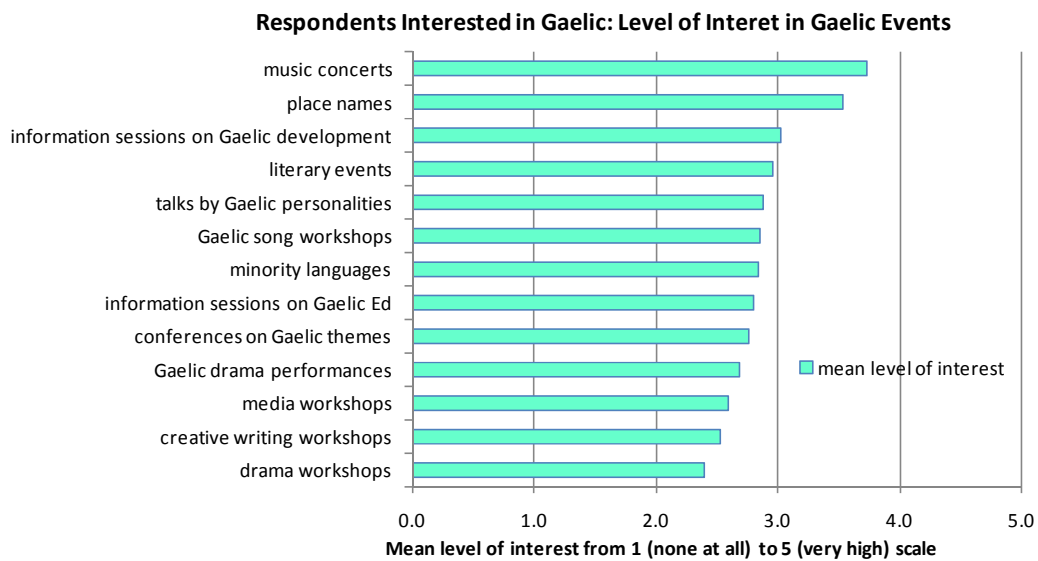
Table 8.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Class time

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Class time	No.	%
Weekdays 12 noon to 1pm	391	31.9
Weekdays 5.30pm to 6.30pm	342	27.9
Weekdays 6pm to 7pm	263	21.4
Weekends	155	12.6
Other	76	6.2
Total	1227	100.0

Graph 8.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Class Time



Graph 10.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Level of Interest in Gaelic Events



Graph 10.1 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Level of Interest in Gaelic Events (Status)

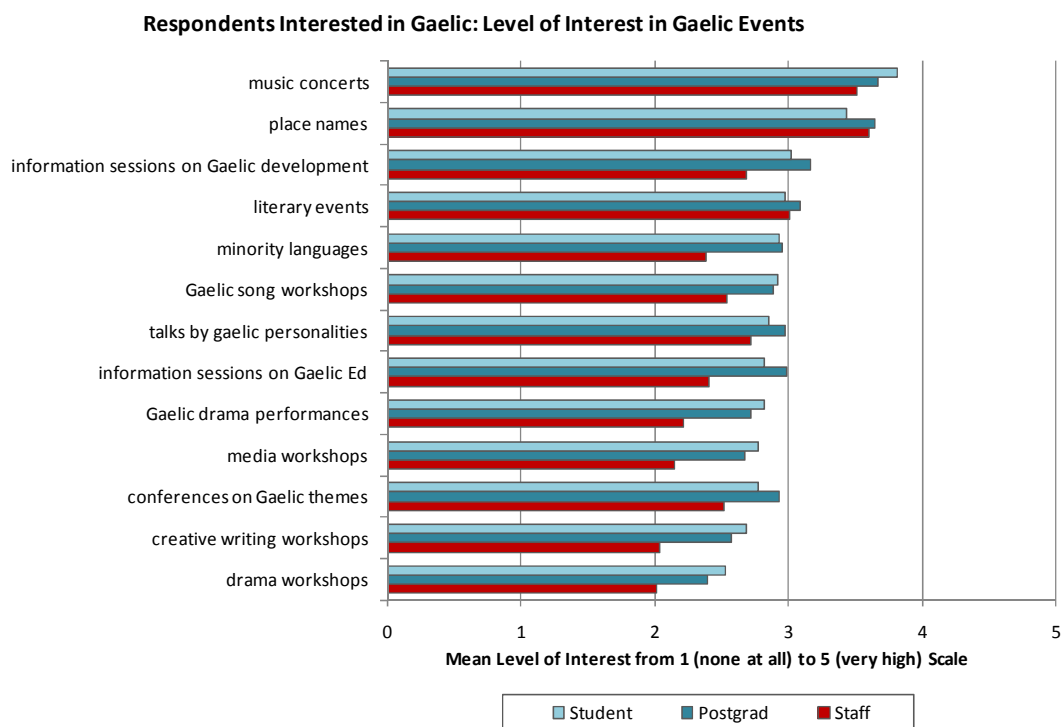


Table 12.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Times for Events

Respondents Interested: Suitable Times for Events	No. (1197)	%
Early evening 5.30pm to 6.30pm	589	46.7
Evenings 7.30pm onwards	417	33.0
Lunchtime	361	31.0
Weekends	324	25.7
Out-with teaching semester	174	13.8

Multiple response table: respondents could give more than one answer.

Graph 12.0 - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Times for Events

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Suitable Class Times (No. = 1197)

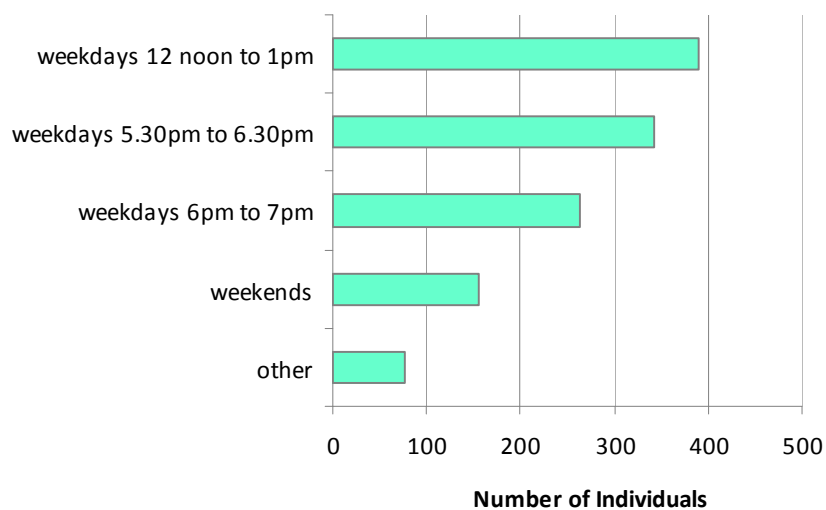
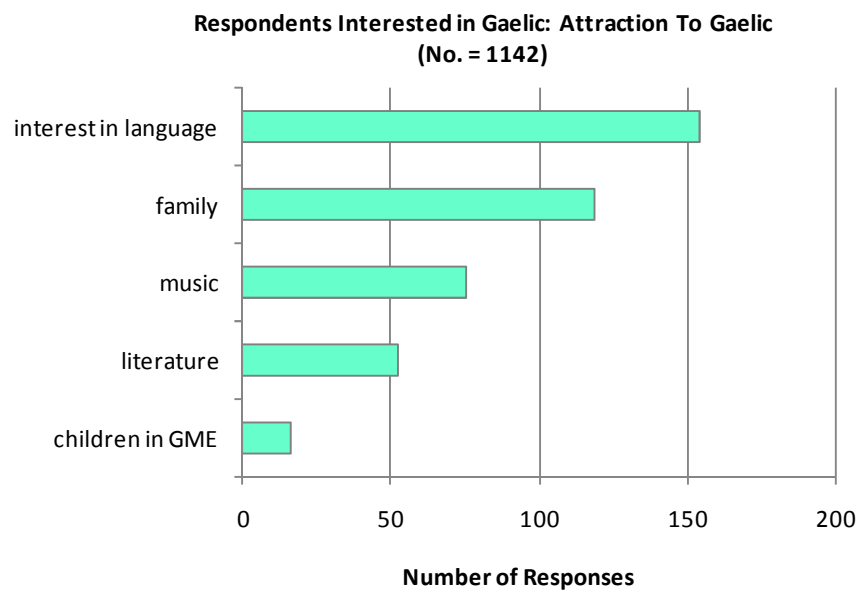


Table 13.0 - Respondents Interested: Attraction to Gaelic

Respondents Interested: Attraction to Gaelic	No. (1142)	%
Interest in language	154	12.9
Family	119	10.0
Music	75	6.3
Literature	52	4.4
Children in GME	16	1.3

Multiple response table: respondents could give more than one answer.

Graph 13.0 - Respondents Interested: Attraction to Gaelic



Graph 15 - Respondents Attitudes to Gaelic Issues (Status)

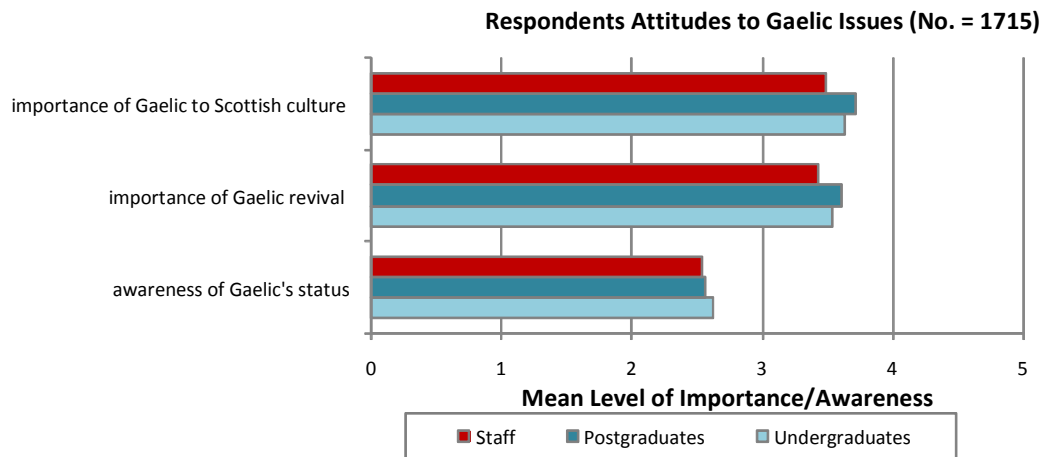


Table 15a (1) - All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland

All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland	No.	%
Very important	620	27.7
Fairly important	635	28.4
Somewhat important	551	24.6
Not very important	301	13.5
Not at all important	130	5.8
Total	2237	100.0

Table 15a (2) - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland	No.	%
Very important	516	41.5
Fairly important	417	33.5
Somewhat important	233	18.7
Not very important	66	5.3
Not at all important	12	1.0
Total	1244	100.0

Table 15a (3) - All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic to Scottish Culture

All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic to Scottish Culture	Undergraduates		Postgraduates		Staff	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	323	29.0	119	30.0	38	22.6
Fairly important	318	28.6	121	30.5	45	26.8
Somewhat important	269	24.2	94	23.7	49	29.2
Not very important	138	12.4	49	12.3	31	18.5
Not at all important	64	5.8	14	3.5	5	3.0
Total	1112	100.0	397	100.0	168	100.0

Graph 15a - Importance of Gaelic to the Cultural Life of Scotland

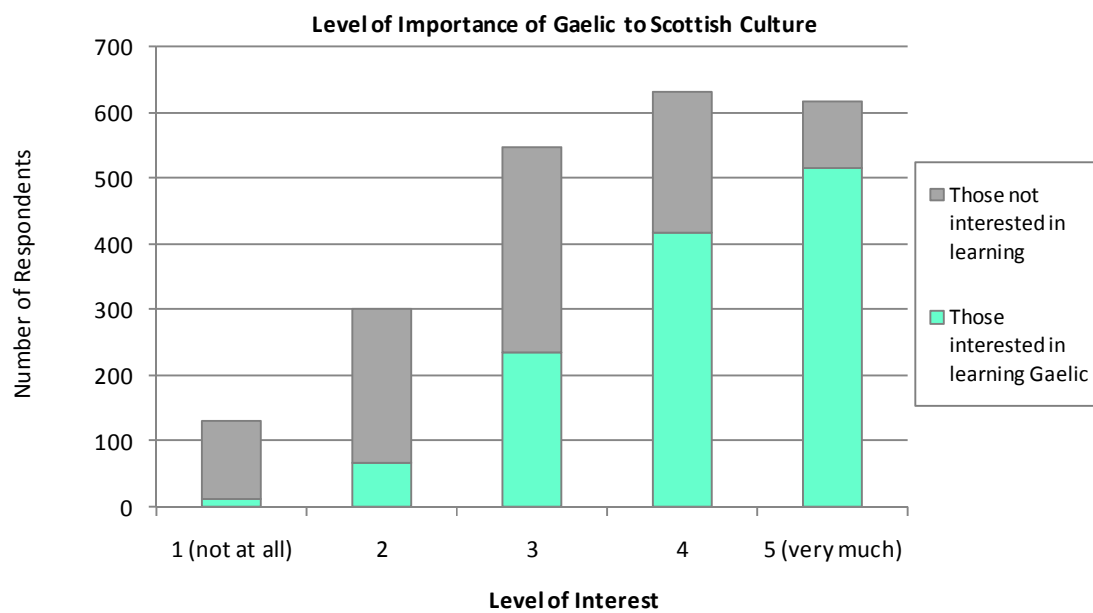


Table 15b (1) - All Respondents: Awareness of the Status of Gaelic

All Respondents: Awareness of the Status of Gaelic	No.	%
Very aware	123	5.5
Fairly aware	364	16.3
Somewhat aware	663	29.6
Not very aware	689	30.8
Not at all aware	399	17.8
Total	2238	100.0

Table 15b (2) - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Awareness of the Status of Gaelic

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Awareness of the Status of Gaelic	No.	%
Very aware	82	6.6
Fairly aware	264	21.2
Somewhat aware	400	32.1
Not very aware	355	28.5
Not at all aware	144	11.6
Total	1245	100.0

Table 15b (3) - All Respondents: Awareness of Status of Gaelic

All Respondents: Awareness of Status of Gaelic	Undergraduates		Postgraduates		Staff	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very aware	71	6.4	23	5.8	4	2.4
Fairly aware	193	17.3	50	12.6	28	16.7
Somewhat aware	314	28.2	116	29.3	50	29.8
Not very aware	314	28.2	143	36.1	59	35.1
Not at all aware	221	19.9	64	16.2	27	16.1
Total	1113	100.0	396	100.0	168	100.0

Graph 15b - Awareness of the Status of Gaelic

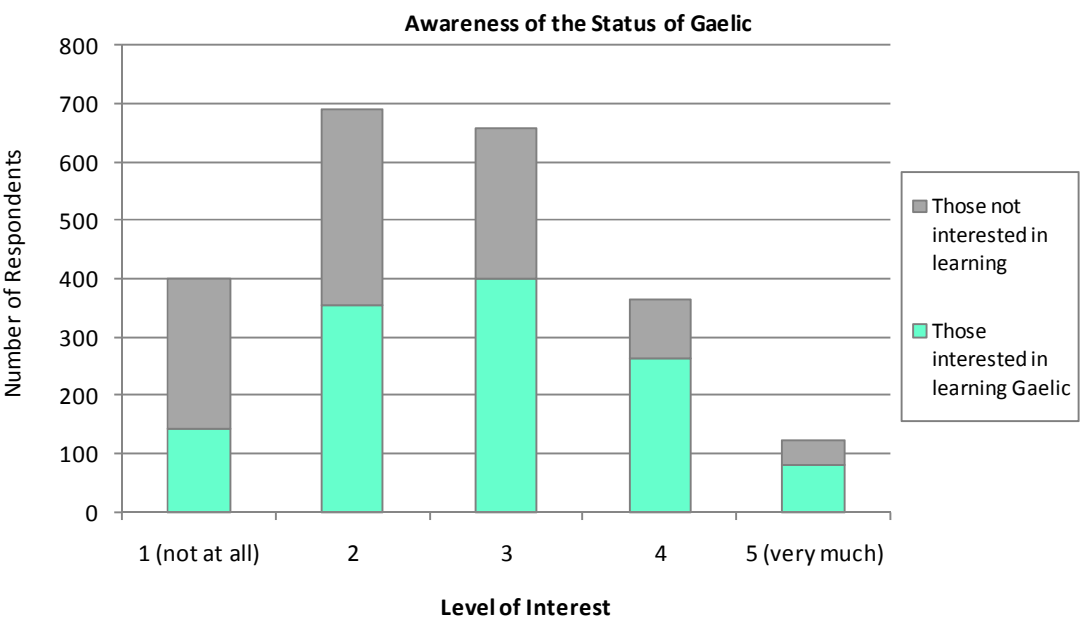


Table 15c (1) - All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic Revival

All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic Revival	No.	%
Very important	392	27.2
Fairly important	400	27.8
Somewhat important	332	23.0
Not very important	168	11.7
Not at all important	149	10.3
Total	1441	100.0

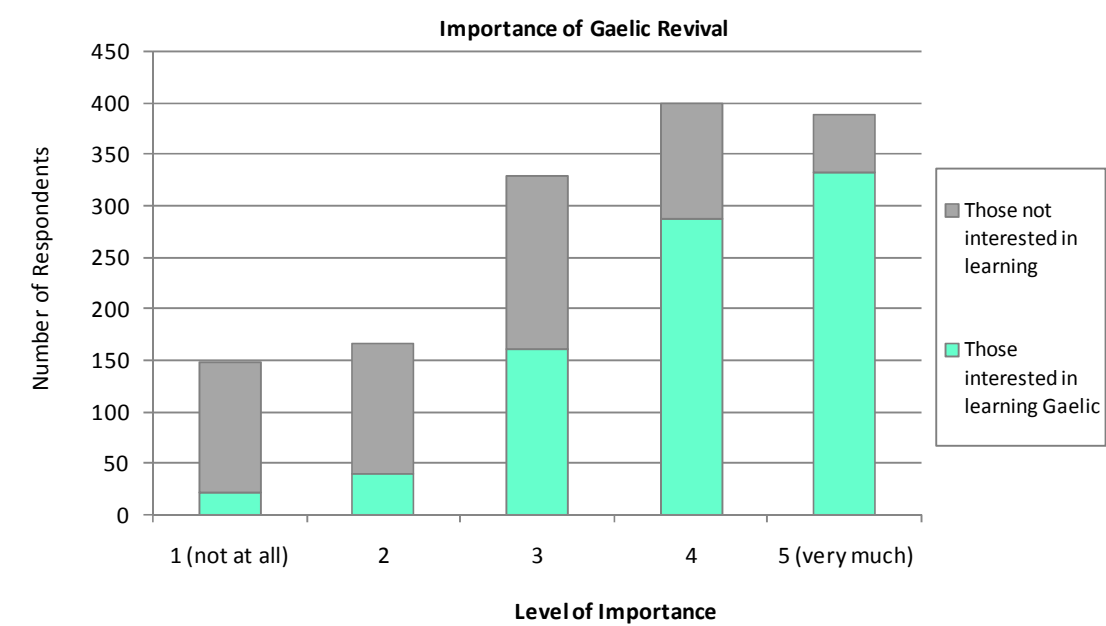
Table 15c (2) - Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Importance of Gaelic Revival

Respondents Interested in Gaelic: Importance of Gaelic Revival	No.	%
Very important	333	39.6
Fairly important	287	34.1
Somewhat important	160	19.0
Not very important	40	4.8
Not at all important	21	2.5
Total	841	100.0

Table 15c (3) - All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic Revival

All Respondents: Importance of Gaelic Revival	Undergraduates		Postgraduates		Staff	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	211	28.8	80	29.7	22	23.7
Fairly important	210	28.6	66	24.5	23	24.7
Somewhat important	146	19.9	80	29.7	28	30.1
Not very important	88	12.0	22	8.2	13	14.0
Not at all important	78	10.6	21	7.8	7	7.5
Total	733	100.0	269	100.0	93	100.0

Graph 15c - Importance of Gaelic Revival



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