

Equality Mainstreaming Report and Employee Information Sabhal Mòr Ostaig - April 2023

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Tha Sabhal Mòr Ostaig na charthannas

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Foreword by Principal

The Board of Directors, Staff and Students of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Scotland’s National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture – are delighted to present this report for 2022-23. We recognise and celebrate the principles and values embodied in equality and we continually strive to reflect them in our practices and work.

Over the past year, supporting and developing the physical and mental health of our students and staff, as well as of visitors, has been a priority. With the return to campus and regular activities, following two years of Covid, from 1st of August 2022, and preceded in May 2022 by the creation of a dedicated, full-time post of HR Manager, we have embarked on an extensive programme of staff policy renewal and improvement, and have developed new policies also; this development work is scheduled to continue over the next 18 months.



First referred to in the last equalities update, the new, additional post of Head of Student Services will be continued post-Covid in order to provide high quality student services. We continue to monitor demand for counselling services in the aftermath of Covid and note that demand has abated in the past year to the levels seen in 2020/21.

We continue to try and address the lower numbers of males applying for college courses, by, for example, using imagery in marketing materials that are expected to be of interest to potential male students.

We are pleased to report that work done to improve accessibility has resulted in service and infrastructure improvement, with, for example, a lift now being available in all buildings used for teaching, and in the availability in all buildings of toilets which are accessible to all users.

I would like to thank our students and staff for their commitment to the principle of equal opportunities, and for their hard work in taking forward the initiatives described in this year’s report, 2022-23.

Dr Gillian Munro

Introduction

Background

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which has continued as an independent educational institution since it was founded in 1973, is unique in that it is the only college of FE/HE in the United Kingdom offering advanced courses solely through the medium of Gaelic. As such, it has a critical role to play in ensuring the development and support of the Gaelic language, culture and heritage through educational, cultural, promotional and economic programmes and activities.

Though a relatively small and new institution, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has been characterised by rapid expansion of activities over the years. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig became a founding member of the UHI project in 1994 resulting in university title being awarded in January 2011. Since its inception, the College has welcomed learners from varying backgrounds and lifestyles and it is our aim to ensure that this continues and is built upon.

Our Mission

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is committed to being a centre of excellence for the development and enhancement of the Gaelic language, culture and heritage, by providing quality educational, training and research opportunities through the medium of Scottish Gaelic; and by interacting innovatively with individuals, communities and businesses, to contribute to social, cultural and economic development. The College is an all-Gaelic educational institution and business, and the College's prime objective is to defend, support and develop the Gaelic language.

Our Mainstreaming Vision

Our mainstreaming vision is to be an inclusive community in which everyone, whatever their background, age, nationality or identity is able to participate without constraint.

Commitment to Equality

We at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig believe that discrimination on any grounds is unacceptable in our College. We welcome the duties introduced by the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) and will continue to work towards improving our performance as an Equalities employer and education provider within the relevant legislative framework.

We will continue to seek to make equality a central part of the way we work, by putting it at the centre of our policy-making, service delivery, and employment practice.

We will strive to improve the information which we collect about our staff and students and to become more effective at monitoring and reviewing data accordingly.

We are always conscious of the positive nature of equality duties and we wish to be proactive, and prevent discrimination before it occurs – that is, from the outset we consider our decisions and policies to make sure that they are fair for everyone – staff and students alike.

The systematic way in which we do this is by producing Equality Impact Assessments, which thoroughly analyse our practices, and establish whether the practice affects different groups of people in different ways.

The assessments involve gathering information to help identify the effect of a policy or practice and taking action to eliminate any actual or potential discrimination or disadvantage which is identified. Impact assessments also look for opportunities to promote equality.

This report highlights the progress that the College has made in mainstreaming equality against our Equality outcomes, published in April 2017. It also refers to our revised outcomes and Action Plan which will lead us into a cycle of improvement and progress which enables us to meet and, we hope, to exceed, the general and specific duties imposed upon us by the Act.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011)

The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are:-

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Examples of Good Practice

Gender Based Violence Awareness and Training

<i>Equality Duty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination</i>➤ <i>Advance Equality of Opportunity</i>
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Gender</i>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has prioritised and participated in initiatives aimed at raising awareness of Gender-based violence amongst students and staff.

The following activities are in addition to those noted in 2021.

GBV continues to be an important topic within Student Services, with the appointment of a dedicated GBV officer in UHI who can be called upon for any questions or advice.

Student Services staff now have a GBV banner on their e-mail signatures highlighting the importance of this topic, and with a link to the training module for all staff/students.

Other members of staff (out-with Student Services) attending a session on “Responding to GBV disclosures” in October.

Staff such as College Wardens and members of the short courses team attending this training and found it very valuable.

Cùrsaichean Goirid /Short Courses

<i>Equality Duty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Advance Equality of Opportunity</i>➤ <i>Foster Good relations</i>
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>All</i>

Now in our 50th year of vocational short courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig we welcome over 1000 students annually, on-line and on-campus. Our students are both National and International, from all age ranges, with a variety of personal requirements which we strive to address in an open and welcoming manner at all levels of engagement.

Each student is treated with respect and dignity and any additional requirements are dealt with in a responsive manner.

Each student is offered an end-of-course evaluation to inform us on how they felt their needs were addressed.

Upon booking, applicants are offered an opportunity to provide information on any specific requirements. An opportunity to discuss these further is offered. Any information is shared with tutors and other members of staff in an appropriate and sensitive manner and will be used in allocation of accommodation and learning environments.

Anonymised dietary requirements are shared with SMO catering provision and continually revised in response to feedback.

Working with tutors, learning resources are amended where possible e.g., seating arrangements, large print, coloured paper, materials provided in screen-reader format.

We deliver a variety of courses with an outdoor element. These can be helpful for students who are uncomfortable with a classroom environment. All outdoor activities are tailored to meet mobility requirements.

Our subsidised *Family Learning Week* aims to remove financial and practical barriers around childcare for parents in GME. Online language courses and conversation opportunities are offered to parents and carers of young children tailored to appropriate times of day and in a child friendly manner to support learners and strengthen the community of Gaelic learners.

Online courses promote equality of opportunity by removing barriers of travel, both physically and financially. Online courses run at various time to enable greater participation and provide employment opportunities for tutors unable to travel to SMO.

We offer a reduction in course fees for self-declared care experienced attendees. We plan to develop a bursary system to help remove financial barriers to course attendance.

Our working methods continue to be flexible and tailored to individual requirements to remove barriers to learning. Our team will always work closely with students and tutors to ensure the best learning experience possible.

Fèill nan Oileanach air loidhne/Freshers' Fayre (online)

<i>Equality Duty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Advance Equality of Opportunity</i>➤ <i>Foster good relations</i>
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Sexual Orientation</i>➤ <i>Age</i>➤ <i>Gender</i>➤ <i>Disability</i>

After 2 years of holding this event online, *Freshers' Fayre 2022* was an on-campus event on the Wednesday afternoon during Freshers' week with busy stalls for student interaction.

There were representatives from local Hotels and businesses, Gaelic companies, Community groups, Activity groups, Mental Health groups, Fire Safety officers and many others.

The college ensures that the event is of interest to all students, and it continues to generate positive feedback.

Iomairtean Slàinte Inntinn/Mental Health Initiatives

Equality Duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Advance Equality of Opportunity</i>➤ <i>Foster good relations</i>
Protected Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Disability</i>

Training

Student services staff completed the Two Roads Suicide Prevention training this year.

A cohort of about 40 staff completed a training day, offered in both Gaelic & English, by Dr Rachel Allan – a clinical psychologist – on burnout & stress. SMO were aware that there were staff who were feeling the effects of being back on campus post-covid and this training/information sharing day was organised as a result.

Time to talk day

Time to Talk Day is a national campaign to help end mental health stigma and discrimination. The day is about creating supportive communities through having conversations with friends, family, or colleagues about mental health. We all have mental health, and by talking about it we can support ourselves and others. Talking about it reduces stigma, which helps to create supportive communities where we are able to talk openly about mental health and feel empowered to ask for help when we need it.

Taking place on **Thursday 2nd February**, staff and students were given free bacon rolls, tea and coffee and invited to the café on campus to encourage talking about mental health. We gave some wooden dice to each table and asked attendees to write on each side something that helped them when they were feeling low, and they kept the dice and could keep it on their desk to remind them of helpful things/distractions.

Taking part in the Nationwide ‘*Action For Happiness*’ monthly Calendars. We particularly encouraged students and staff to take part in ‘Nas coibhneil sa Ghearran’.

Weblinks

Nas Càirdeil sa Ghearran

Time to talk day

Random act of kindness day – We invited both staff & students again for some cake and tea/coffee as a nice thing to do on Random Act of Kindness Day on a Friday afternoon.

These events encourage informal Gaelic conversation between students and staff and in addition to being beneficial to mental health and welfare, they help students to improve their spoken Gaelic skills and bring together groups of staff and students, who would not normally meet, outwith classes.

Taking part in the Nationwide ‘*Action For Happiness*’ monthly Calendars. We particularly encouraged students and staff to take part in ‘Nas coibhneil sa Ghearran’.

Other Events which brought students and staff together

An Tac an Teine (Gaelic storytelling) and Music Sessions– An opportunity for students to socialise together, tell stories, play music or just listen etc.

Comann Nàiseanta nan Oileanach (National Students Gaelic Society) – Inaugural meeting which involved Inclusive Activities (including both on and off-campus) and discussions throughout the weekend. Beneficial to students’ mental health to meet with other students from different colleges and universities in Scotland.

Fèill na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Community Open Day) – Lots of different activities for both staff, students and the local community. This is always a popular event, and a boost to the students’ mental health. Different range of activities throughout the day including sports and races and, staff v students, bookbug for younger children and fayre-like activities for all to get involved in.

Seachdain na Gàidhlig (World Gaelic week)– Online, Face-to-Face and Social Media aimed at bringing people together and celebrating Gaelic. This is a Nationwide Gaelic Language and Culture and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig encouraged students and staff to take part.

The college also provided financial support and staff capacity.

While these events have not been formally evaluated, anecdotal evidence suggests that students are appreciative of the events being publicised, organised at convenient times, being supported by academic and other staff.

Leudachadh ann an Seirbheisean Oileanach/Expansion of Student Services

<i>Equality Duty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Advance Equality of Opportunity➤ Foster Good Relations
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ All

In 2021 Student Services were expanded with the appointment of a Student Services Head to work alongside the Student Services co-ordinator. This appointment allows both staff members more time to undertake formal and informal training as well as online meetings with individual students and face-to-face meetings when this is permissible again. This will also provide more capacity for promoting student engagement, particularly with those students who are part-time and choose to study by distance-learning.

2022 & 23 have continued to be busy academic years within the Student Services department both in terms of engagement with students and the return of face-to-face support sessions. The small but dedicated team have been busy working back on campus as has the College counsellor, with healthy numbers of students again making use of this valuable service within the College campus, therefore decreasing the pressure on NHS Services. As with most institutions, we are still dealing with certain post-pandemic mental health issues and continue to support our students with these issues. Student engagement continues to be a priority in our small campus and events which bring the College community together are planned regularly.

The Head of Student Support has now completed her Certificate in Counselling Skills and will be looking to progress further formal training in the coming year. Both members of student services staff have attended a variety of CPD training this year including training on Gender awareness, GBV, Autism & ADHD and Students and the sex industry. Policy work has been updated and relevant changes made for the last academic year and the summer months will be spent again making any relevant changes to policies and helping to plan our student induction week, which both student engagement staff and support staff are heavily involved in.

<i>Equality Duty</i>	➤ <i>Promote Equality of Opportunity</i>
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	➤ <i>Disability</i>

Counselling Service at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig 2021/22 and 2022/2023

A confidential and professional counselling service is available, free of charge, to all college students and staff in both English and Gaelic.

The counselling service is part of the wider Student Services which aims to support students to complete their studies successfully and to help all students and staff to achieve changes which they have identified and to improve and sustain their wellbeing.

The service is well-publicised, throughout the college in posters and leaflets, on the website and by word of mouth. Students and staff members may self-refer or seek referral through a tutor, Student Services, their line manager or Human Resources.

Counselling is offered both face-to-face and online via video, voice only by phone and in writing by email, or text. The majority of students and staff access the counselling service in person but occasionally video and audio services are used when clients are working from home.

In 2021/2022 there was a 150% increase in clients accessing the counselling service compared to the previous year, 2020/2021. Currently, as of March 2023, the number of clients accessing counselling is similar to the numbers seen in the previous year. There is no significant increase or decrease at this time.

All but two students who accessed the counselling service in 2021/2022 either graduated successfully or progressed as continuing students in 2022/23.

The majority of service users in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 were aged 18-25.

The following comments were received from clients in response to a question on how the counselling service in 2021 -2023 had helped them:

- Counselling has helped me to stay at a college to a large extent. Also to a great extent it has helped me focus on my work as I've had a place to deal with complicated overwhelming feelings.
- I feel more confident in class and often use techniques I've learned from counselling to overcome emotions when I feel overwhelmed. I also feel I have a better work / life balance now and can find time for hobbies and socialising without feeling that I should be studying or working. Overall, my outlook on life has improved.

- Tha comhairleachadh air mo chuideachadh gu mòr. Tha mi fada nas toilichte an seo a-nis, agus chan eil mi ag iarraidh a' cholaiste fhàgail tuilleadh/*Counselling has helped me, greatly. I am now far happier, here and I no longer want to leave college.*
- Counselling has helped me get better sleep by giving me someone to talk to about my thoughts and feelings without feeling like I'm burdening them or it's not their job to listen.

Fallaineachd is Eacarsaich/Fitness and Exercise

<i>Equality Duty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Foster good relations</i>➤ <i>Advance Equality of Opportunity</i>
<i>Protected Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Race</i>➤ <i>Age</i>➤ <i>Gender</i>➤ <i>Disability</i>

As part of Healthy Living week this year we invited staff & students to take part in a step challenge together, with data collected on Strava, which was very successful. As we wanted this to be an inclusive and accessible event for all, we also incorporated a photography competition into it also with the theme “50” – as SMO is celebrating its 50th year anniversary this year. There were also other categories, such as funniest photo.

We continue to provide kayaking sessions to students and staff as well as pilates and yoga.

The pilates and yoga session are also available via Zoom, enabling those students, who are based outwith the college, to participate.

Bhideothan is Brathan Màrgaidheachd/Marketing Posts and Videos

Equality Duty	➤ <i>Promote Equality of Opportunity</i> ➤ <i>Foster good relations</i>
Protected Characteristics	➤ <i>Race</i> ➤ <i>Gender</i> ➤ <i>Disability</i>

The following events are examples of social media posts from our Marketing Department.

EVENT	DATE	WHERE	WHAT	PEOPLE REACHED
University Mental Health Day	2023-03-09	Social media	Deasbad Diardaoin on self-care practices	261
International Women's Day	2023-03-08	Campus + social media	Meet-up in Café Ostaig + photos from meet-up on social media	3.3k
European Day of Languages	2022-09-28	Social media	Posts asking followers Qs about language learning	2.6k
Post about Nika Naliota, Ukrainian student	2022-07-22	Social media	Photos + link to blog post	3.4k
Visiting group from Hawai'i	2022-07-15	Social media	Post + photos	4.2k

Governance and Accountability

The Principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is responsible for the efficient running of the College and has overall responsibility for the delivery of its Strategic Plan. The Principal is also accountable to the Board of Directors in ensuring the College meets its statutory obligations.

Oversight of Equalities matters was handled on behalf of the Senior Management Team by the College's Care and Equalities Committee. Since then, the Chair of this committee sits on the Management Team. Further information on Board level engagement can be found in the Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Board of Directors section further down. These are positive recent developments, to help increase the equalities profile at the College, and we look forward to reporting on further progress in the next reporting cycle. The Equalities lead is also invited to present information to the Senior Management Team as and when appropriate. All staff complete Equalities training, in either Gaelic or English, as part of their induction to the College.

Procurement

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig works in partnership with APUC – Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges – to ensure that best practice in terms of equality, diversity, sustainability, ethics and value for money, is maintained throughout the procurement process. The College complies with its legal obligations regarding regulations on competitive tendering for purchases and contracts which fall under the requirements of APUC. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is responsible for meeting its legal obligations even when an external contractor provides its functions.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Gender Pay Gap Information

2020/21

Department	Male	Female
Corporate Services	3	13
Education	17	22
Facilities	14	8
Life Long Learning	4	5
Projects	8	9
ICT	3	0
Totals	49	57
	45.79%	53.27%

Academic Staff	Male	Female
Education	17	22
Life Long Learning	4	5
Totals	21	27
	43.75%	56.25%

Non-academic Staff	Male	Female
ICT	3	0
Corporate Services	3	13
Facilities	14	8
Projects	8	9
Totals	28	30
	48.28%	51.72%

Mean Hourly Rate by Gender	Male	Female
£	19.45	19.84

Mean Gender Pay Gap	-2.01%
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Median Hourly Rate by Gender	Male	Female
£	18.88	19.00

Median Gender Pay Gap	-0.64%

2021/22

Department	Male	Female
Corporate Services	3	12
Education	18	24
Facilities	11	10
Life Long Learning	4	6
Projects	7	6
ICT	3	0
Totals	46	58
	47.42%	59.79%

Academic Staff	Male	Female
Education	18	24
Life Long Learning	4	6
Totals	22	30
	48.89%	66.67%

Non-academic Staff	Male	Female
ICT	3	0
Corporate Services	3	12
Facilities	11	10
Projects	7	6
Totals	24	28
	46.15%	53.85%

Mean Hourly Rate by Gender		Male	Female
£		20.47	19.64

Mean Gender Pay Gap	4.05%
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Median Hourly Rate by Gender		Male	Female
£		20.45	18.31

Median Gender Pay Gap	10.46%
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Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has made significant progress in reducing the Gender Pay Gap from a high point of 28.85% in April 2013 to its present position where there is a negative Gender Pay Gap.

The College introduced the Living Wage during 2015 and this had a very positive impact on the hourly rate for women. However, although historically there was a higher number of women in the Hospitality department, there has since been a marked increase in males working within these departments which has also impacted on the reduction of the Gender Pay Gap. Support staff received national increases agreed by the Employers' Association under the aegis of Colleges Scotland. Lecturers have also benefited from a harmonisation programme which brings them all on to a National Pay Scale.

The Senior Management Team is made up of 3 males and 5 females and the broader College Management Team is a larger group with 5 males and 8 females. It is encouraging to have additional female representation on the Senior Management and the College Management teams.

Equal Pay Statement

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig supports the principle that all employees should receive equal pay for the same or like work or work rated as equivalent or of equal value. We aim to eliminate any sex bias in our pay system. We understand that equal pay between men and women is a legal right under both domestic and European law.

The Board of Directors

The Board has signed up to the 50:50 by 2020 pledge and had previously (in 2018) been at 50:50. Changes on the Board has meant that we are currently sitting at 50:50 (non-executive members) and there are 2 vacancies.

The breakdown which is recorded by Colleges Scotland annually is as follows:

Board of Directors	M	F
Non-exec	6	5
Staff	1	1
Student	0	0
SMT (excl. Principal)	3	3

We have undertaken Unconscious Bias training in 2019 and have co-opted a member of the Board from our Alumni which we hope will add to the diversity of the Board and reduce the average age. All Board members undertake Equalities training as part of their induction and Equalities is a standing item on Board agendas.

Conclusion

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig continues to work towards creating a more diverse workforce within the context of Gaelic speaking applicants and we are proud of the broad range of learners studying the language around the world, many of whom come to the College for a Short Course.

We fully recognise the importance of taking proactive steps to address areas of concern and hope to achieve even greater progress in the next two years. We are grateful for all the assistance and training provided to us via *AdvanceHE* and other bodies and organisations who are always able and willing to support us in this endeavour.

