

Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (The Gaelic Books Council)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version history

- Originally adopted by the Gaelic Books Council board in September 2018.
- Reviewed without amendment in September 2019.
- Reviewed and amended in March 2021.
- This version of the policy, with minor amendments, was approved by the board in March 2022.

This policy forms the basis for the Gaelic Books Council's annual EDI Action Plans. The EDI Action Plan for 2022-23 is available on our website under "Policies".

EDI Policy: Background

The Gaelic Books Council is the lead organisation for Gaelic literature in Scotland. The Board of the Gaelic Books Council has a clear development strategy – to invest as much money as possible in direct services to enhance the provision of writing and publishing in Gaelic, and to establish effective collaborations to achieve maximum benefits for Gaelic literature, language and culture. To this end, the GBC has three strategic objectives:

- (i) Supporting Gaelic Writers
- (ii) Supporting Gaelic Publishers
- (iii) Supporting the development of the Creative Industries

The Gaelic Books Council advances the development, production, sale and distribution of Gaelic books from its base in Mansfield Street in Glasgow. Gaelic writers and publishers are given sound advice on all aspects of writing and publishing and are supported by a quarterly grants programme which funds the development of new Gaelic literary content. New writing talent is encouraged and nurtured through skills development programmes and professional mentoring. The Gaelic Books Council delivers a broad range of book-based reading activities in communities and schools across Scotland, and Gaelic books and writers are well represented on the programmes of a growing number of local, national and international book festivals and arts events. The

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organisation is now a key player in delivering accredited Gaelic writing training of the highest quality for writers, editors, media personnel and Gaelic Medium teachers.

Introduction

The Gaelic Books Council is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and to eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our staff, freelance artists, audiences and customers to feel respected and valued and to create a working environment in which all staff are able to achieve their potential without bullying, harassment or discrimination and where all decisions are based solely on merit.

In providing goods, services, facilities and activities, we also completely oppose any unlawful discrimination against our customers or audiences and will work closely with partner organisations to achieve an inclusive and welcoming environment for all people.

The Gaelic Books Council supports a diverse culture in Scotland and is committed to maximising opportunities for all people to engage with Scottish Gaelic literature and to participate in Scottish Gaelic literary events throughout the country.

The policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all our stakeholders and all in our employment, whether freelance, temporary, part-time or full-time.
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. In addition to these characteristics, the Gaelic Books Council also seeks to address inequalities that may result from rural isolation and socio-economic deprivation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

The Gaelic Books Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy commits to:

- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in work-related environments

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- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation
- Ensure that all decisions concerning staff are solely based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- Ensure that all decisions concerning commission/publishing grant applicants and entrants to literary awards administered by the Gaelic Books Council are solely based on the merit of the work submitted (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups defined by the Equality Act 2010 by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered due to their protected characteristic and by ensuring that all public events and activities organised by the Gaelic Books Council are as accessible as possible to those from the aforementioned groups as well as those who suffer from rural isolation and socio-economic deprivation
- Ensure that the Gaelic Books Council's website and online communications are fully accessible and meet the needs of all users
- Provide the conditions, where possible, for all people and communities to be able to engage with Scottish Gaelic literature in the way that they want to and ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- Follow best practice and Government guidance such as "Fair Work First"¹ on matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion in employment, and ensure that the Gaelic Books Council's approach is aligned with that of its public sector funders
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce and board of directors regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy
- Assess how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering necessary actions to address any issues

The Gaelic Books Council's Anti-Bullying Policy commits to:

- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in which all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual contributions valued. This commitment involves making all staff aware of their rights and responsibilities under the equalities policy. Responsibilities include ensuring that the organisation provides equal opportunities in employment and preventing bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-support-implementation/>

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- Ensure that all staff, managers and board members can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, service providers and the public.
- Take seriously all complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, audiences, service providers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the Gaelic Books Council's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- Recognise that sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations and that, in addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Gaelic Books Council is a national organisation working in a unique minoritized language. The needs of this unique language community are very diverse and the GBC provides services and support for fluent speakers, young and adult learners of the language and the international diaspora.

The GBC faces the difficult task of raising awareness of Gaelic in the wider arts sector while also making our own work more accessible and inclusive. The Gaelic Books Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan is underpinned by a number of the Scottish Government's 2016 10-year National Outcomes:

- 'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'²

Gaelic is a unique minoritized language. The Gaelic language speech community has long suffered as a result of prejudice, discrimination and structural bias. Therefore, in promoting the writing and reading of Gaelic, the work of the Gaelic Books Council is a vital component of the move to create 'equal respect' for Gaelic in Scotland (Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005). Thus, the council's Gaelic promotion work on Gaelic literature and literacy is itself a major contributor to equality, diversity and inclusion on the Scottish national stage. The Gaelic Books Council's contribution to the Scottish promotion of diversity – in this case, linguistic diversity – is of course part of a global effort within differing legal frameworks, to secure the future of endangered or minority and minoritized or lesser-used languages in the face of increasing language obsolescence.³

² <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome>

³ See, for instance, Robert Dunbar, 'Minority Language Rights in International Law', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), pp. 90-120.

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Furthermore, given that a large proportion of Scotland's Gaelic speakers live in areas with declining and aging populations, with high unemployment and low activity rates and low GDP per head⁴, the promotion of Gaelic-language opportunities, including employment opportunities, provides a way to further fight against the complex issues of poverty and inequality in Scotland.

- 'We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity, defined by our sense of place, sense of history and sense of self'.⁵

The Scottish Government further identifies influential components of a strong, fair and inclusive national identity as including: 'Our heritage and our diverse and vibrant cultural life; Our languages and the place of Gaelic within our communities'.⁶ Therefore, it is easy to demonstrate that the mission of the Gaelic Books Council is hugely significant in contributing to the maintenance of Scotland's diverse linguistic and cultural heritage. The work of the Council with Gaelic learners, including complete beginners, as well as existing fluent speakers, allows for a broad level of engagement with those interested in Gaelic who might otherwise suffer discrimination as a result of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Collaborations and partnerships with other national arts organisations ensure the inclusion of Gaelic in national arts and literary initiatives. These collaborations raise awareness of Gaelic to a much wider audience outwith the Gaelic audience. Extensive use of digital interpretation equipment ensures that no-one is excluded from Gaelic Books Council events because of their lack of fluency in the language. The GBC works with other Gaelic arts organisations to include performances and readings from poets and authors at music events across Scotland, and online events allow access to Gaelic literature regardless of geographical location or people's ability to travel.

The Gaelic Books Council conducts all of its business through the medium of Gaelic and this could be perceived as a challenge in trying to ensure that the staff complement and composition of the Board of Directors is as diverse as those of other national arts organisations. Oral fluency and high-level literacy skills are essential requirements for all GBC employees. The gender balance in the staff complement is good, although men are currently (March 2022) underrepresented on the board. Vacancies for board members are advertised nationally and board members are selected on the basis of their skills and

⁴ Philomena de Lima, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas: Final Report (Scotland)* (European Communities, 2008), p. 424. This report can be accessed online via <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=22> through a search for 'Scotland'.

⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome>

⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome/natidentity>

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experience, their personal interest in Gaelic books and literature, and their fluency in the language. All communications with the board are through Gaelic and board meetings are also conducted entirely in Gaelic. Gaelic learners are welcome to apply to become GBC board members.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly. It forms the basis for GBC's annual EDI Action Plans. The Action Plan for 2022-23 can be found on our website under "Policies".