

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig-National Centre for the Gaelic Language Culture and the Arts

(Background notes)

A Track Record of Excellence

The Queens Anniversary Prize 2002

The innovative and holistic approach of the College to serving its unique national constituency was recognised in 2002, with the award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Excellence in the field of Higher and Further Education, placing SMO in the highest rankings of UK educational institutions, alongside Oxford, Cambridge, University of London and the London School of Economics and one of only two Scottish institutions to have been thus recognised.

Dynamic Place Award 2006

The College received the Dynamic Place Award in recognition of the pivotal role it plays within the process of the regeneration of the Gaelic language and culture and community.

Since its inception, the College has drawn strength and support from its links with other agencies and organisations within the Gaidhealtachd and further afield and through its support of, and co-operation with, the local community and business. The College is recognised as having a critical role to play in Gaelic related developments, in economic and development issues affecting the Gaidhealtachd and in its innovative use of Information Communications Technologies (ICT).

The College is an active and initiating partner in the new University of the Highlands and Islands UHI, Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean OGE which provides university-level education and research through a partnership of 15 colleges and research institutions from across the Highlands and Islands and is the responsible partner for the origination, management and delivery of the network's Gaelic and Related Studies programme (all through the medium of Gaelic). The University of the Highlands & Islands has over 5000 students currently undertaking university-level education or are involved in research.

Creative Scotland -Creative Futures Residency Programme

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, has a residency programme for Visual Artists (in association with The Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh), Gaelic Writers, Musicians and Gaelic Drama Artists (in association with The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), funded by Creative Scotland.

The Visual Artists have featured regularly in the exhibitions at the RSA in Edinburgh with many of our associated artists exhibiting there.

Sabhal Mòr since its inception has placed the arts at the centre of its cultural life and has had many outstanding artists and writers associated with the college including the late and internationally renowned Poet, Sorley Maclean one of the first Writers in Residence and one of the founding Trustees. The educational experience for students at SMO and the wider community is greatly enhanced through contact with the skills and expertise of the Writer in Residence, Musician in Residence, Drama Artist in Residence and Visual Artist in Residence all of whom work from the FÀS Centre for Creative and Cultural Industries.

Sabhal Mòr has also been involved in the commissioning of various public art works most notably the stunning sculptural work, 'Crannghal' by Prof Will Maclean RSA and Arthur Watson RSA and a specially commissioned portrait work by Steven McKenzie.

Sabhal Mòr is also in the process of building a significant and interesting visual art collection.

Furthermore SMO manages and runs Skye Space, a state-of-the-art broadcast and recording studio, provides training opportunities for trainees and professional in the media industry and is developing a dedicated Radio Drama Unit. <http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/seirbheisean/stiuidio-fas/>

Linked to the BAHons Gaelic and Traditional Music Programme, SMO now has created a sound recording facility of the highest quality for use by the students and also for musicians and recording artists throughout Scotland. <http://www.stiuidio.co.uk/>

Sabhal Mòr also acted as the base for two innovative visual arts programmes for young children, an Dealbh Mòr and Air Iomlaid (with The Fruitmarket Gallery), both interdisciplinary programmes involving children from both Skye and Edinburgh, resulting in large scale exhibitions in both Skye and Edinburgh and a dedicated publication.

AHRC Award

In 2005, the College, in conjunction with the University of Dundee Visual Arts Research Centre and supported by an AHRB research grant, commenced 'Window to the West' - Towards a Redefinition of the Visual within Gaelic Scotland, a major project in the field of visual arts. This culminated in the production of a number of dedicated publications, conferences and seminars and a hugely successful exhibition in the City Art Centre in Edinburgh and a genuine re-stating of the distinct visual art history of the Gaidhealtachd.

National Collections

SMO has collections of the national and international significance with the 'MacCarraig' and 'Celtica' Collections, together creating one of the most important collections of antiquarian books of Gaelic and related materials in existence anywhere in the world.

National Digital Archive Project HLF

SMO is the lead/managing partner in Tobar an Dualchais / Kist O Riches (the largest heritage digitisation project of its kind in the UK), a project which has conserved, digitised and made available on-line, 12,000 hours of important sound archive material from the BBC, the Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies and the NTS John Lorne Campbell Cànan Collection. The project at its peak created 40 posts throughout the Highlands and Islands with digitisation centres in Uist and Edinburgh and with the project management team and Director based at SMO. Along with the National Library of Scotland, the Tobar an Dualchais programme team is developing proposals, for the setting up of a National Scottish Sound Archive and also working with a significant number of key educational initiatives and local history Societies to continue to develop this immensely rich national resource. SMO and the University of Edinburgh are also working to develop a post graduate Masters Programme utilising the digital archive as a central resource in the MSc in Scottish Cultural Studies. This is a supported on-line provision aimed particularly at the international student.

International Projects

In providing and supporting educational, training and research opportunities the academic, administrative and management staff are greatly assisted by the presence on campus of complimentary College projects and initiatives. The work of Colm Cille, (the Government's Columba Initiative, making links between Scotland and Ireland) has been highly significant over the past 10 years with SMO having played a major role in its initiation, and the work of the fast growing company Cànan Ltd. is also highly significant in forming further links with the wider community and strengthening ties with the business community in particular. The experience and expertise of staff from the Lèirsinn Research Centre and Soillse Research has been invaluable in supporting the development and delivery of full-time programmes and in providing placement opportunities and supervision for research graduates along with providing a wide client base with research services. June 2013 saw the launch of the ConnectG project at the Celtic Neighbours international arts conference held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The project seeks to maximise collaboration between Scotland and Ireland and make stronger connections between businesses using Gàidhlig and Gaeilge. The three project partners – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Scotland, Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiach, N Ireland and Údáras na Gaeltachta, Republic of Ireland – signed the partnership agreement which sets in train the million pound project to support enterprises grow their businesses through making more use of their language asset.

Soillse

is an inter-University programme consisting of the Universities of Aberdeen, Stirling, Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Glasgow, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Highland Council, Comhairle nan Eileanan Siar, Argyll and Bute Council, the Scottish Government and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in a major research

development which provides international-quality research capability, to inform contemporary Gaelic development in the context of minority language maintenance and revitalisation.

European Award and Routledge Prize

The College's acclaimed Access to Gaelic course, An Cùrsa Inntigidh, has been accorded two significant awards; the CILT European Language Award 2004 and the Routledge Prize for Adult Learners in recognition of its innovative approach to 'distance delivered second language learning'.

New Centres

SMO has also been responsible for developing the education, heritage and language centre in the island of Islay, 'Ionad Chaluim Chille', which operates independently but as a 'sister' campus with its own independent Board of Trustees and provides educational opportunity, linguistic cultural, economic and community development on Islay with the support of SMO staff. This has significantly drawn together two Island communities now working together innovatively to strengthen the economic, linguistic, social and cultural resource of both communities.

Major Architectural Award

College campus Àrainn Chaluim Chille was awarded the National Regenerating Scotland Award.

2013 - 40 Years of SMO

2013 marked Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's 40th Year and a series of key events, such as the international arts conference, Tional, and the special performance at Celtic Connections in Glasgow in January with national and international musicians who have been associated with the college over the years, celebrating reaching this milestone.

National MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards 2015

Venue of the Year 2015 SEALL @ Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Donnie Munro (Director of Development & The Arts) Sabhal Mòr Ostaig