

Embedding the Scots language into Scottish education – the story

Policy and practice

Sylvia Warnecke (OU in Scotland)

Bruce Eunson (Education Scotland)

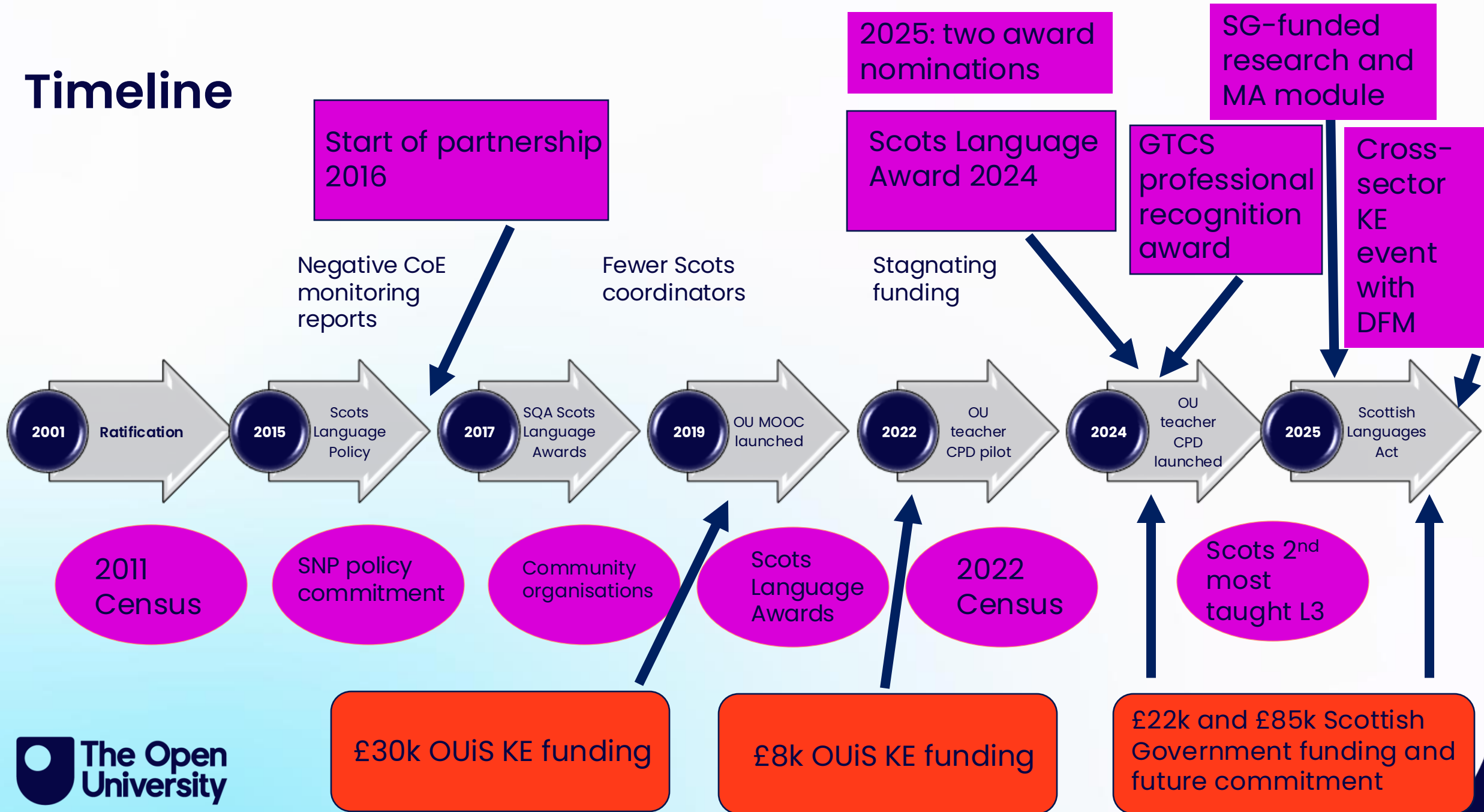


Addressing societal challenges in partnership

Not teaching Scots in Scottish classrooms and communities is doing a disservice to the linguistic landscape of Scotland and its people.



Timeline

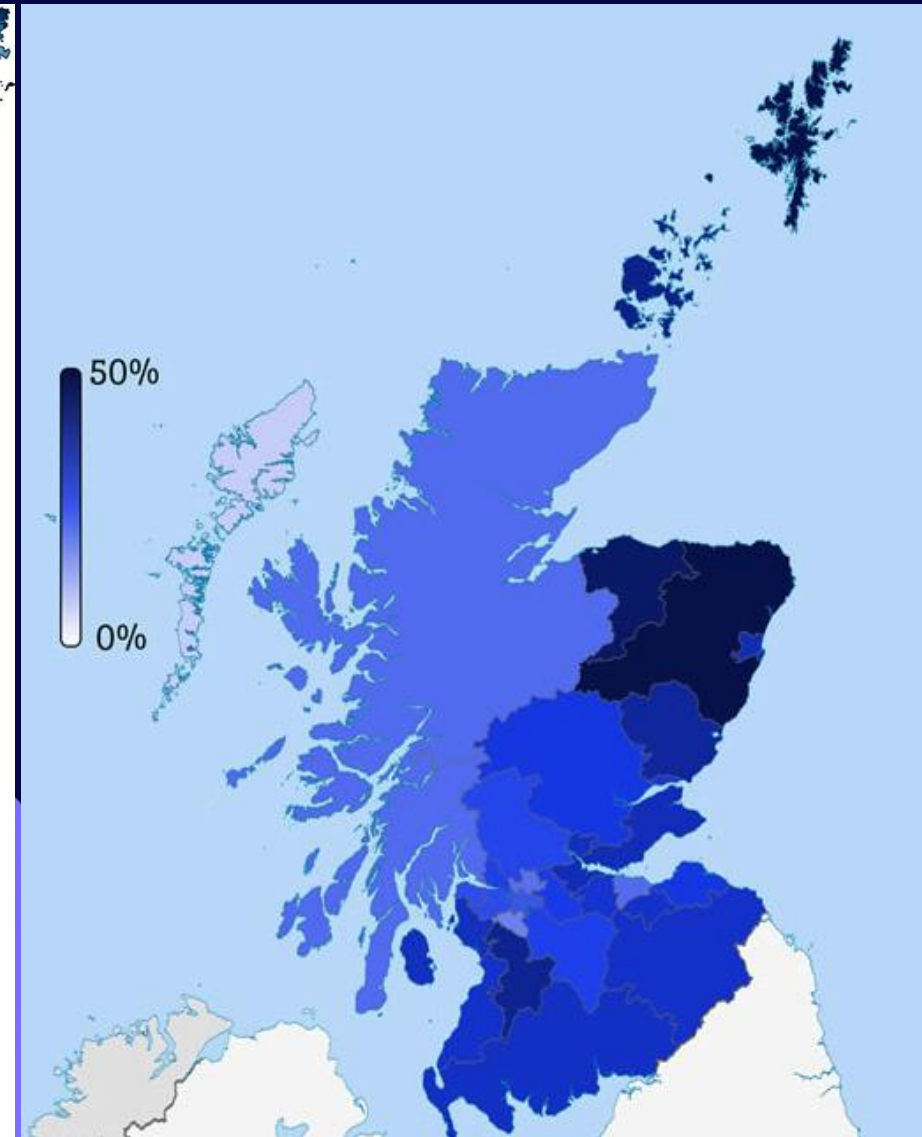
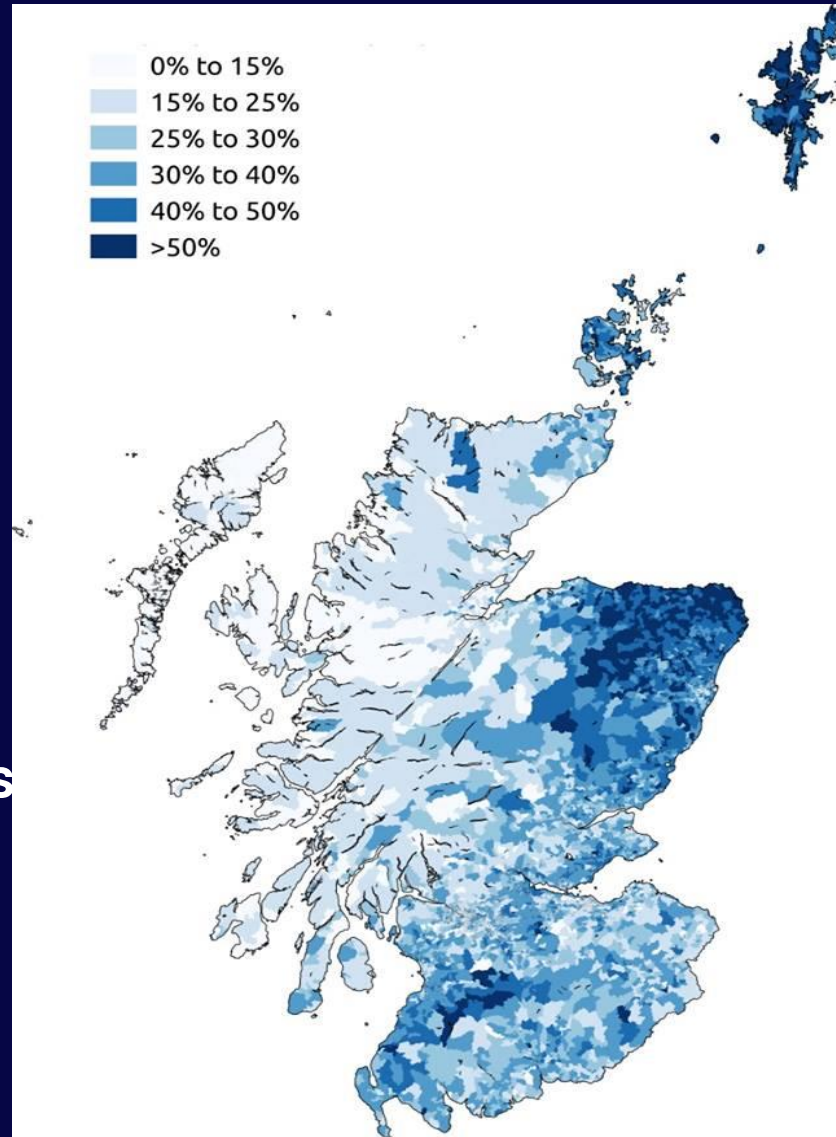


Scots Language today 2011

Census Results

For centuries Scots has been a stigmatised and minority language in Scotland. In 2011, it was the first time the Census asked the Scottish population what their skills in Scots were. About 1 in 3 said they could speak Scots.

2022



Engagement with policy makers (1)

- Cross-Party and SG advisory groups
- Working with civil servants
- Sharing expertise through public consultation
- Giving evidence to ECYP committee
- Meeting targeted MSPs for Bill amendments

Informing policy makers (2)

- Drop-in event at the Scottish Parliament 14/11/24
- Parliamentary motion celebrating the work of the OU supporting Scots 25/11/24
- Members debate in the Scottish Parliament chamber with cross-party support 4/12/24
- Stage 2 amendments for Bill 11/12/24



Delivering outcomes

- The coherent partnership
- The reach of the programme
- The programme recognises the lives and work of teachers
- The programme places Scots language and culture in a multilingual setting



Scottish Languages Act 2025

Throughout the lifetime of CfE thus far, the data and evidence gathered both formally and informally has done a great deal to explore the educational benefits of Scots language to children and young people in education, as well as to learners of all ages across Scottish society. All of this fed into the writing of the Scottish Languages Act, which gave official status to Scots language in Scotland for the first time.

Scottish Languages Act 2025

Specific guidance and standards for the future of Scots in education will be based upon key statements made in the Act:

- ▶ The Scottish Ministers must promote, facilitate and support Scots language education in schools.
- ▶ The Scottish Ministers must in particular promote, facilitate and support the provision of adequate education resources in the Scots language for use in school education by teachers and pupils.
- ▶ An education authority must promote, facilitate and support Scots language education in the schools under its management.

Scottish Languages Act 2025

Scots is a language of dialects, and the Scottish Languages Act promotes each equally:

- ▶ “An education authority may discharge its functions relating to Scots language education through teaching and learning in the dialect of the Scots language most relevant to its area.”
- ▶ In practice, this means Orkney Islands Council, for example, can focus their resources specifically on teaching Orcadian. In both local authorities and schools, Scots Language policy should always respond to the local context and the individual needs of the children and young people.

Scottish Languages Act 2025

The Scottish Languages Act is being used as the policy foundation upon which to base the role of Scots in education as part of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle which is refreshing CfE guidance

- ▶ Scots Language provides a rich context for learning in a number of Curriculum Areas, and is particularly well-suited to cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning. There are 4 key curricular areas for Scots within CfE: Literacy, Languages, Social Subjects and Expressive Arts.
- ▶ Scots is a language we use in education to engage learners and engage *with* learners because it is a valued part of their culture, heritage and identity. We will provide opportunities for learners to build upon their skills in Scots, and knowledge of Scots, as they progress through their education – particularly in literacy contexts – ensuring language rights for every child are respected, with every educator being an advocate for Scots language.

Data and Evidence from practitioners

Who provides evidence as part of Scots language professional learning?

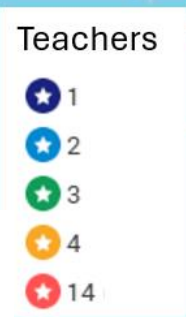
Teachers from all across the country.

The numbers split roughly into thirds:

- Primary teachers
- English teachers
- Secondary subjects from across the curriculum and ASN



Engagement with the Scots Language professional learning programme.



What kind of data does Scots language professional learning collect?

The course is divided into 7 Unit. For 6 Units the teachers must plan, deliver and reflect upon a Scots language lesson with their class.

Each of those 6 Units focusses on a different topic:

- Early Years
- Across the BGE
- Literacy
- Social Studies
- Creativity & Expressive Arts
- Scots as a Language option

SG-funded research project on multilingual indigenous language education pedagogies

CPD alumna secures WELS PhD place for Scots education and policy study on 2025 Act embedding

OU/ES invited to help shape standards and guidance for embedding 2025 Act

ICS for REF 2029 with potential for 4* on Scots work and teacher training in online/digital technologies-supported L&T

2025

First ever study of adult learners of Scots completed - OU PhD Linda Bruce

2026

- Scots is included in the Scottish CIC/development of first ever curriculum
- becomes a school subject in its own right

2026

We are embedding Scots in other sectors, i.e. social care

£90k Scottish Government funding

NEXT STEPS

OU-ES Partnership

1. Developing Scots curriculum and qualification(s)
2. Developing the Scots teaching workforce
3. Undertaking pioneering research on Scots learning and teaching in mainstream education (and beyond)
4. Widening participation in Scots language education across Scottish society