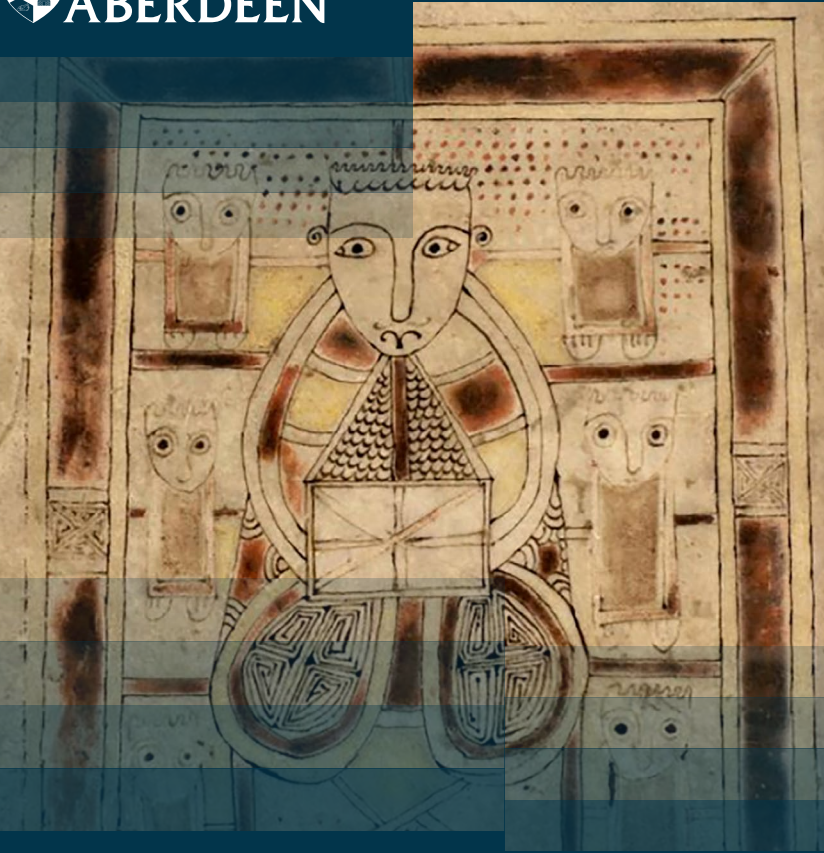




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Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE



Introduction

Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies is an innovative interdisciplinary degree programme, available as a single-honours MA or as part of a joint-MA degree with another subject, e.g. History, Archaeology, English, Linguistics, or a modern language.

The programme is very flexible in its honours options. Each academic year, a minimum of two special subject courses in comparative literature, comparative historical study, or practical skills will be taught, depending on staff availability and student demand, in addition to the honours language teaching.

Aberdeen is one of the very few universities in Europe where it is possible for a student to study the Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in comparison. Our modules cover literature, culture, history and languages. The emphasis is on the Dark Ages and Middle Ages, but looking back to ancient times and forward to the modern period as well. No prior knowledge is expected. Students can choose their own pathway based on a wide range of available modules, depending on their particular areas of interest. Aberdeen has been a centre for Celtic studies for more than a century, and our library resources are outstanding. The surrounding countryside is rich in archaeological and historic remains of Scotland's Celtic and Nordic past.

For further information please contact the Undergraduate Programme Coordinator, Dr Aideen O'Leary
a.oleary@abdn.ac.uk

Level 1 Courses

Programme requirement of 30 credit points from courses in the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon curriculum, plus 90 credit points from courses of your choice.

First term:

Optional Level 1 courses:

Barbarians, Romans, Gods and Warriors (15 credits)

This course gives you an exciting introduction to the Celtic and Germanic worlds. In lectures and small-group tutorials, we will explore the cultures of the Celtic and Germanic peoples who inhabited western and central Europe in the period of Classical Antiquity, their interactions with Graeco-Roman civilisation, 500BC-AD500, and their fates in the post-Roman world of the European early Middle Ages. Change over time will provide a major driver of the course: empire and its effect; the history and impact of the 'barbarian'; the successive impacts of Roman religion and of Christianity, and the ways in which they were represented in the 'heroic' literature of the Middle Ages.

Modern Irish Language for Beginners 1 (15 credits)

This course aims to give students an introduction to the modern Irish language. It covers basic conversation skills, and the structures of the language, through the use of songs, videos and speaking practice in class. The course is open to those with little or no knowledge of the language.

Second term:

Ancient Empires: Religion, Power and Politics (based in Divinity)

This course explores the rise and fall of Empires from the ancient world and beyond; examining to what extent religion, power struggles, conflict and politics impacted the shaping of an ancient Empire and the world today.

Modern Irish Language for Beginners 2 (15 credits)

This course gives students a continuation of their study of the modern Irish language. It will encourage conversations in Irish on more advanced topics, through the use of current news programmes and features, songs, literature, and speaking practice in class on fun topics of the students' choice.

More Level 1 Courses in the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies Degree Curriculum

At level 2, all students registered for Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies (single and joint honours) are required to take 30 credit points from courses considered to be part of the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon curriculum, plus 90 credit points from other available courses.

Magic, Mystery, Spells and Potions in the Ancient World (based in Divinity)
The Rise of Christianity (based in Divinity)
Latin 1 (based in Divinity)
Latin 2 (based in Divinity)

Level 2 Courses

Programme requirement of 60 credit points from courses considered to be part of the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon curriculum, plus 60 credit points from courses of your choice.

First term:

Arthur in Mediaeval Celtic and Scandinavian Literature (15 credits) (15 credits)

The course provides a survey of literature on Arthur in the Middle Ages, focusing on early Welsh and Gaelic sources, related Scandinavian literature and French, Welsh and English romances. It includes discussion of broader themes and questions posed by the literature, e.g. whether Arthur could have been a real person, how the Arthurian legend evolved over time and in different areas of Europe, and why the character has been elevated to iconic status.

OR (in alternate years)

Love, Loss and Revival: Gaelic Ireland, 1700 to the Present (15 credits)

This course provides an introduction to Gaelic Ireland from the eighteenth century to the present, a period of great historical trauma but also of unrivalled literary expression across many genres, from courtly poetry to the folk song, the autobiography and the novel. Reference will be made throughout to the political upheavals in which Gaelic Ireland was refashioned, alongside other key themes including the changing status of the Irish language, and Ireland's relationship with the rest of Europe. Although much Gaelic writing of this period closely reflects the bleakness of history, it has also been a vehicle for joyful affirmation, comedy, and tragic grandeur and resilience.

Second term:

The Celts, their Neighbours, and the Classical World (15 credits)

Greek and Roman interactions with, and perceptions of, Celtic and Germanic peoples will form the central theme of this course. It includes in-depth discussion of migrations, material cultures and pre-Christian belief-systems. We will also analyse individual Classical authors' motives and judgments in relation to Celts and Germani, and how these perceptions evolved against the background of the emerging Roman Empire. In addition the course involves discussion of broader themes and questions posed by the sources,

e.g. the portrayals of Celtic and Germanic peoples in Greek and Roman art, and the possible uses by Celtic and Anglo-Saxon literatures of Classical texts.

OR (in alternate years)

Vikings in Celtic and Germanic Scotland (15 credits)

In this course you will be introduced to the Viking Age (A.D. 800-1100), an era of vast economic and political change in western Europe. Scandinavian assaults and conquests changed many of the social norms of early mediaeval Europe, as did the development of urban culture and international trade associated with vikings' activities. Vernacular literatures developed with outstanding results in the Insular zone, attested by fascinating texts in English, Gaelic, Scandinavian, and Welsh. Scotland provides in microcosm an intense realisation of all these trends; the subject-matter of this course is, therefore, particularly useful and locally appropriate.

More Level 2 Courses in the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies Degree Curriculum

Saints, Demons and the Desert
(based in Divinity)
Gaelic Folklore
(based in Scottish Gaelic)

Honours Courses - Levels 3 & 4 (students taught together)

Language courses (no previous knowledge of Celtic languages is required)

Introduction to Old Gaelic (30 credits)

Introduction to Brittonic Language (30 credits)

Old English Language (30 credits)

Celtic Encounters: The Gaelic World in Irish and Scottish Literature (30 credits)

'Celtic Encounters' looks at the ways in which Irish and Scottish writers have reimagined texts of Celtic origin in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, from the Irish Literary Revival through the Scottish Literary Renaissance, to the present day. Writers have adapted Old Gaelic sagas and hero tales for modern consumption, reinvented themselves as latter-day bardic poets, and been inspired by the Celtic past to produce daringly modernist and experimental new work.

Saints, Sinners and Heretics in the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Worlds (30 credits)

This course will explore developments in religious beliefs and practices in the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon worlds (especially Scotland and Ireland) from 400 to 1200. Topics will include conversion to Christianity, saints and monasteries, the production of saints' Lives and other texts, heresies real and alleged, Culdee works and teachings, apocryphal texts and prophecies, the influence of canon law, effects brought about by Vikings, and the wide-ranging reforms of the twelfth century.

Celtic Scotland: Gaelic Cultural Moments from the Middle Ages to the Present (30 credits)

The course explores key cultural moments created through Scottish Gaelic, and more broadly Celtic, inspiration, at home and among the global Scottish Diaspora. We will interrogate the term 'Celtic' in Scottish and global contexts. This cultural study spans approx. 1600 years, from the early Middle Ages to the Scottish Languages Bill (St Andrew's Day 2023) and beyond. Topics include the cult of a universal Christian apostle, St Andrew, in Scotland; public engagement with mediaeval manuscripts; the ancient and mediaeval origins of shinty and hurling; festivals and their evolution; Celtic multicultural inspirations in modern film and music; the inaugural Celtic Forum (August 2023) in which the Scottish Government entered cultural and business agreements

with other Celtic nations. The Scottish Diaspora worldwide will be a focal point of the course. Comparative topics include St Patrick and traditional singing and dance styles. Films such as *Afro-Gàidheil* by Cass Ezeji provide crucial opportunities to engage with today's multicultural Scottish nation.

Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship and the Exercise of Authority in the Earlier Middle Ages (30 credits)

At the end of Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, Celtic and Germanic kingship had a perhaps superficial structural similarity. Germanic kingship had shallow roots, however. Celtic kingship, on the other hand, enjoyed a very long history and solidly established foundations. The post-colonial situation in Britain (and more generally in western Europe at large) brought great change. Christianity offered new (Jewish and Roman) methods of rulership. For the Gaelic world, on the other hand, in conjunction with a largely peaceful receipt of Christianity, continuity is the watchword. Both practice and theory of kingship in a changing world are abundantly attested in a rich variety of sources, documentary, linguistic, literary, and material: full advantage will be taken of these resources, with close attention given to the intercultural and interdisciplinary study of primary sources.

Decolonial England: Languages and Identities from 450 to the Present (30 credits)

This course covers the many cultures which contributed to what we call 'England', including Germanic colonisation; engagement with other areas of Britain, the European Continent, Ireland, and Scandinavia; Anglo-Norman literature and culture; and how reinterpretations of all these have developed. The course combines source classes and seminar discussions; original sources will be read in modern English translation. This decolonial study begins with the establishment of what we now call England, a polity founded on migration of Germanic peoples to Britain resulting in displacement and colonisation of Brittonic peoples. The surviving literary and documentary evidence is often interpreted through the inevitable establishment of the Kingdom of England; and the conceptualisation of 'England' too often downplays interactions of mediaeval kingdoms with e.g. mediaeval Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and Scandinavia. In this course we interrogate and deconstruct such misinterpretations.

Independent Study in Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies (15 credits)

This course will provide the opportunity for students to pursue in-depth study of a specific topic in Celtic and/or Anglo-Saxon Studies. It gives students an opportunity for intensive engagement in a specific area

within the research field of an individual staff member, and can be arranged as preparatory work towards a dissertation.

Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies Dissertation (30 credits)

Compulsory for single-honours students in fourth year. Joint-honours students write a dissertation in one or other of their subjects: your choice!

More Level 3 and 4 Courses in the Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies Degree Curriculum

Animals and Monsters in the Greek World and Beyond (based in Divinity)

Materialising Faith: Women, Art and Religion, 1150-1500 (based in Art History)

The Twelfth-century Renaissance (based in Art History)

Scottish Gaelic language/literature courses (based in Scottish Gaelic)

Cover image:

St John from the 'Book of Deer', a Gospel-book with connections to the North-East of Scotland, generally dated to the tenth century: Cambridge University Library, MS li.6.32, fol. 41v (copyright Cambridge University Library)









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