

Online MA in Gaelic Literature and Culture

2025-2026

***Department of Modern Irish
University College Cork***

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This is 90-credit course comprising six (10-credit) taught modules, two of which are compulsory (GA6013 and GA6012), and a dissertation (GA6019: c. 12,000 – 15,000 words) which is valued at 30 credits. The taught modules are described here.

SEMESTER 1

GA6013 The Transmission and Interpretation of Gaelic Literature

COMPULSORY MODULE

Semester 1 [*Module duration: 8 September – 19 October*]

Module Objective: To explore Gaelic literature as transmitted and interpreted in the written medium.

Module Content: For much of Gaelic literary tradition, the manuscript - vellum and paper - constituted the staple accessory of the man of letters, and this module will address Irish manuscript tradition in the context of literary production. The print medium will also be treated of, particularly with regard to the literature of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and to the re-discovery and re-interpretation of Gaelic literature at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Texts such as Eleanor Hull, *The Cuchulain saga in Irish literature* will be referenced.

GA6012 The Social and Cultural History of the Irish language, 1200-2000

COMPULSORY MODULE

Semester 1 [*Module duration: 29 September – 9 November*]

Module Objective: To examine how the Irish language functioned in society over the centuries. It discusses the composition of the Irish-speaking community, and how that changed with time.

Module Content: Some sociolinguistic theory is introduced in order to provide a framework for the presentation. The module focuses on the interrelation between Irish and English as a result of the colonization of Ireland by England. Sources in both Irish and English are drawn upon to give flesh to the narrative. This module will be of particular interest to students who wish to find out more about the history of Ireland. Texts include Aidan Doyle, *A history of the Irish language: from the Norman Invasion to Independence*.

GA6033 Fionn mac Cumhaill in Gaelic Tradition

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 1 [*Module duration: 20 October – 30 November*]

Module Objective: To learn about the development of the Finn Cycle, centred around the legendary heroic figure of Fionn mac Cumhaill, from its origins to the present day.

Module Content: This course will provide a survey of the Finn Cycle, the substantial body of literature and lore based around the heroic figure of Fionn mac Cumhaill, from its origins to the present day: this will include the mythological origins of Fionn and his Fiann, the representation of Fionn in the manuscript texts and folklore of both Ireland and Scotland over the centuries, and the growth of interest in Fionn beyond the Gaelic world especially from the time of James Macpherson (1736-96) onwards. Close readings will be made of a number of representative texts, both poetry and prose, covering important developments in the Finn cycle and students will also be familiarised with current scholarly investigations in this field

SEMESTER 2

GA6010 Beginners' Irish Language

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 12 January – 22 February*]

Module Objective: To instruct students in the basic vocabulary and grammatical structures of the Irish language

Module Content: Language exercises for beginners, involving reading, writing, speaking and listening.

GA6040 Literature in Translation

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 12 January – 22 February*]

Module Objective: To examine and evaluate the varieties of texts that were assimilated into Gaelic literary tradition through translation at various stages of the history of the language.

Module Content: Translation plays a vital role in the transmission of texts and ideas in virtually all literatures. In the Gaelic context, translation from Latin sources (scholastic, scientific, classical etc.), and from other vernacular languages (e.g. French, Spanish) in later times, was one of the natural mechanisms through which Ireland maintained a place in European civilization that belied its peripheral geographical location. In this module, basic aspects of translation theory are introduced to provide a context and a framework for the lectures and discussions.

The diverse material of the intervening periods (from religious to medical, romantic, educational, and travel literature) will also be examined. Gaelic as a source language for translation will also be considered, such as the case of the influential 'Ossianic' compositions of James Macpherson in Scotland in the 1760s, and the current reception of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's 20th century masterpiece *Cré na Cille* in continental Europe.

GA6016 Place Names and Sense of Place in Gaelic Literature

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 2 February – 15 March*]

Module Objective: To study Irish language place names and their anglicised forms, and to examine how these are used in depictions of landscape and sense of place in Gaelic literature.

Module Content: The vocabulary of Irish place names will be discussed and the process of anglicisation of Irish forms will be examined in detail. The collection and study of Irish place names will be analysed with particular reference to literary sources.

GA6042 Modern Gaelic Poetry

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 2 February – 15 March*]

Module Objective: To explore a selection of texts - both literary and oral - from Modern Gaelic tradition.

Module Content: This module examines different aspects of the rich Gaelic poetic tradition, beginning with an account of the vibrant oral culture that continues to invigorate poetry to the present day. The modernist sensibility introduced in Gaelic poetry in the mid-twentieth century will be discussed in both an Irish and European context. It will also consider the innovations in poetry which resulted in a significant revival of poetry in late twentieth century. The module will be taught through the medium of English, and translations of Gaelic texts will be provided.

GA6014 The Phases of Gaelic Literature

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 23 February – 5 April*]

Module Objective: To explore the diversity and development of Gaelic literature over time.

Module Content: Emphasis will be placed on continuity and diversity in literary production from the medieval to modern periods: from the poetry and saga literature of early Christian times, through the bardic era (1200-1650), the poetry and song of conquest, plantation and penal times, to the re-affirmation of Gaelic literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. This module will incorporate case-studies of texts, authors and genres. Texts to include samples of bardic poetry, saga literature, nature and love poetry.

GA6032 Women's Poetry in Gaelic Society

ELECTIVE MODULE

Semester 2 [*Module duration: 23 February – 5 April*]

Module Objective: To study women's poetry in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland, and to place this poetry in its social and historical contexts.

Module Content: This module presents the evidence for women's poetry in Gaelic society, including: the (fairly scanty) pre-1600 evidence; the lament tradition; women's praise-poetry; the nature of poetic expression in Gaelic society; the suppression of women's poetry; and the oral nature of most of our sources. The module will conclude with an examination of the major present-day Irish and Scottish Gaelic women poets and the extent to which they draw from tradition. The module will be taught through the medium of English, and translations of Gaelic texts will be supplied.

MA in Gaelic Literature 2025–2026 Course Schedule												
Sept ¹	8	GA 6013 (C)										
	15											
	22											
	29		GA 6012 (C)									
Oct	6											
	13											
	20			GA 6033 (E)								
	27											
Nov	3											
	10											
	17											
	24											
Dec	1				EWS ²							
	8											
	15											
	22											
Jan ³	5											
	12					GA 6010 (E)	GA 6040 (E)					
	19											
	26											
Feb	2							GA 6016 (E)	GA 6042 (E)			
	9											
	16											
	23											
March	2									GA 6014 (E)	GA 6032 (E)	
	9											
	16											
	23											
	30											
April	6											GA 6019 (T)
	13											
	20											
	27											
May												
June												
July												
August												

Notes

1: Semester 1 begins September 8, 2025

2: EWS: Essay Writing & Submission (submission dates as per each individual module)

3: Semester 2 begins January 12, 2026

Key

(C) = Core module

(E) = Elective module

(T) = GA 6019

GA 6019, the dissertation (thesis) module, applies only to full-time students in 2025-26; part-time students (2025-27) will complete this module in year two of the programme. Submission of dissertations is usually in the first week of September. The course coordinator will contact students taking GA 6019 before the end of semester one to explain the process fully.