Chapter 4

Partnership Agreement between the CDVEC/DIT and the University of Dublin (1976–present)

Among the elements of the Burke proposals, outlined in Chapter 3, was one that promised no capital investment in the engineering science area in the University of Dublin. This alarmed the university. The relative isolation of the university from general Irish society, highlighted in the 1967 report of the Commission on Higher Education, and its political weakness and vulnerability to the Burke proposals, probably added to this alarm. These factors and the element in the Burke proposals indicating that the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) in Dublin might become a recognised college or constituent college of one of the Dublin universities, coupled with the general understanding that the NIHE would be the implementation of the Ballymun Project of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC), all formed the background and facilitated the urgent discussions on co-operation that began between the CDVEC and the University of Dublin in early 1975.

BACKGROUND TO THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CDVEC/DIT AND THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

A substantial area of common interest had developed between the University of Dublin and the CDVEC colleges. There had been already considerable contact between the two parties, e.g. the sharing of laboratory resources and staff between the university and the engineering departments at the Colleges of Technology in Bolton Street and Kevin Street. In the words of F. S. Lyons, Provost of TCD, in 1976,

Our long previous experience of friendly relations between our En-

engineering School and their opposite numbers in Bolton Street and Kevin Street suggests that in teaching and research, in the sharing of facilities and of people, there is valuable common ground.

By that time some fifty engineering diploma graduates from the Bolton Street and Kevin Street colleges had been admitted to postgraduate engineering courses of TCD and had successfully graduated with master's degrees. Some of them were continuing their studies to doctoral level. They had shown by their performance on these courses that their academic standards were at least comparable with those of graduates of Irish university engineering schools. This confirmed a decision already taken by the Institution of Engineers of Ireland and some of the British engineering institutions to accredit the Bolton Street and Kevin Street courses as meeting in full their academic requirements for corporate membership. Some members of academic staff from each of the colleges had contributed to the TCD postgraduate courses, acting as lecturers and tutors, and some elements of these postgraduate courses had been conducted in the Bolton Street and Kevin Street colleges.

In the light of the Minister's announcement that degree awards in the NIHEs in the immediate future would be provided by the Irish universities, informal discussions between representatives of the university and the CDVEC colleges led to a proposal that the award of the University of Dublin (Trinity College Dublin, TCD) degrees be made to engineering diploma holders, the standard of which was already familiar to TCD. This proposal was given added urgency when the UK based Institution of Electrical Engineers announced about that time that in future the normal academic requirement for corporate membership would be an engineering degree award which in turn would adversely affect the position of the Kevin Street college diploma graduates who aspired to membership of that institution.

In May 1975, following a formal accreditation visit by TCD representatives to the Bolton Street and Kevin Street colleges and a review of their engineering courses, a proposal was presented to the university's Council for the award of BSc (Eng) degrees with honours classification to those successful in the final Diploma in Engineering examinations in 1975. The approval was given on an ad hoc basis pending the development of a more formal arrangement as part of what was to become a longer-term relationship between the two institutions.

There were other courses in the CDVEC colleges which already enjoyed recognition from the appropriate professional bodies as meeting in full the academic requirements for corporate membership or were other-
wise recognised as being of honours degree standard. Rather than pro-
ceeding on a course by course basis, it was agreed that it would be more
prudent to develop an overall operational framework between both insti-
tutions for processing any courses that the CDVEC would propose as ap-
propriate for degree awards of the university. This led to the partnership
agreement between the university and the CDVEC that was formalised in
April 1976 and has provided the basis for the ongoing relationship be-
tween the two institutions since then.²

Implementing the Partnership Agreement

The partnership agreement formalised the relationship between the uni-
versity and CDVEC and in particular the third level colleges under its
aegis. It established the underlying principle of equal partnership, parity
of esteem and respect for the separate autonomy, identity and ethos of
each partner. The formal recognition of the CDVEC colleges as "recog-
nised colleges" was considered to be inappropriate, because this would
have involved a degree of control over the CDVEC colleges and a client
status for the colleges that would not provide a suitable basis for the abso-
lute parity which was to be the cornerstone of the partnership. While it
would be appropriate for the degree level courses in the colleges, it might
undermine the important non-degree courses. Also it was felt that a part-
nership based on close personal contacts in the different discipline areas
would be likely to lead to the development of a better relationship in the
longer term.

In October 1976, the Liaison Council representing the two institutions
approved two key policy documents which set out the framework and
operational procedures under which the agreement was intended to func-
tion. The first of these was the Guideline in Relation to the Award of
Degrees.³

In this framework the CDVEC colleges would continue to maintain
control over all matters pertaining to the administration and conduct of its
courses, namely:

• the admission of their students

². University of Dublin/City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, Agreement
between the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee and the University of
Dublin (Dublin), April 1976.
³. University of Dublin/City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee Liaison Coun-
cil, Guideline in Relation to the Award of Degrees (Dublin), October 1976.
• the conduct of the courses and the assessment of their students
• the academic standards of the courses
• the nomination and appointment of external examiners, in consultation with the university.

It was acknowledged by the CDVEC that the university equally had a concern for the academic standards of the courses concerned and of the graduates eligible for its degree awards. In consequence, provision was made for the university to have the right of access on request to information about the operation or other aspects of the courses that were involved.

Forms of co-operation envisaged

The range of forms of co-operation envisaged in the partnership agreement included sharing of staff and facilities, co-operation in course design and operation, promoting the mobility of students and staff, co-operation in research and consultation on more general matters. The initial assessment of each course by the university, together with the joint approval of external examiners, provided the university with a means of satisfying itself as to the academic standards of the courses. External examiners drawn from senior levels in academic and/or professional practice reported to both the university and the appropriate college in the CDVEC/DIT. The DIT’s system of five-yearly course reviews allowed for participation by the university, thereby providing it with further and continuing assurances in respect of quality, standards and the operation of the courses on an ongoing basis.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMMES UNDER THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The second key policy document agreed by the Liaison Council in October 1976 was the Procedural Guidelines for Inter-Colleges Committees.4

As a development of the ad hoc arrangements for the engineering courses under the procedures for the operation of the agreement, prima facie cases were established in 1976 for existing DIT diploma courses in architecture, construction economics and environmental economics and a new option in structural engineering. After full evaluations, graduates of these courses became eligible for degree awards of the university. In the

same year similar degree recognition was accorded, following similar evaluations, in respect of the diploma courses in applied sciences (Kevin Street), business studies (Rathmines), marketing techniques (Mountjoy Square), and hotel and catering management (Cathal Brugha Street).

Other CDVEC/DIT diploma courses subsequently recognised by the university for degree awards were:

- human nutrition and dietetics, Kevin Street (1982) (a joint course)
- building services, Bolton Street (1983)
- environmental health, Cathal Brugha Street (1984)
- music education, College of Music (1985) (a joint course, which also involves the Royal Irish Academy of Music).

Still more recently the processes were completed for the recognition of diploma courses in biomedical sciences (1990) in Kevin Street, management law (1990), communications (film and broadcasting) (1992), communications (journalism) (1995), management services (1994) and health services management (1996) in Aungier Street, music performance (1991) in Adelaide Road, and administration and marketing (1995) in Mountjoy Square. Additional options have been introduced in the Kevin Street applied sciences and engineering courses and approved during the five-yearly reviews.

A full listing of the DIT courses which were approved by the university under the terms of the partnership agreement is given in Table 8.1.

The development of each of these honours degree courses across the Institute was predicated on many years of conducting successful certificate and diploma courses in related topics. Such courses served to test the market and to develop the competencies of staff, so that the emergence of degree level courses was an organic process.

Table 8.2 shows the numbers of graduates classified by discipline area who having received DIT diploma awards also became eligible for appropriate degree awards of the university. In 1975, a total of twenty-eight engineering graduates from Bolton Street and Kevin Street became eligible for degree awards. In 1999, the number of graduates eligible for degree awards was 946. Since the inception of the partnership agreement in 1975, 11,965 graduates of DIT diploma courses have become eligible for degree awards of the university.

In keeping with the terms of the partnership agreement, external examiners, agreed by both the DIT and the university, have played an important role in underwriting the standards of the degrees awarded. Normally, at least two such examiners with expertise appropriate to the discipline
are appointed, with one drawn from an appropriate academic institution at home or abroad and the other from industry or professional practice. In accordance with their terms of appointment they report to both the DIT and the University of Dublin.

The DIT procedures of rigorous course validation and ongoing five-yearly reviews, in both of which the university is involved, are quality assurance arrangements that compare favourably with those pertaining in any other institutions in Ireland. They ensure that the standards of the courses leading to the degree awards are maintained to the satisfaction of both partners.

**INTER-COLLEGES COMMITTEES**

Under the partnership agreement, inter-colleges committees were established relating to the different course disciplines as indicated in Table 4.1 and a joint co-ordinating committee was set up for the joint course in human nutrition and dietetics. These committees embody the efforts to develop close personal relationships between staff members in the two institutions, particularly those in related disciplines. They are responsible to the Liaison Council and their role involves the monitoring, co-ordinating and reviewing of particular areas of co-operation, and giving advice where considered appropriate, having regard to the provisions of the partnership agreement.

**DEVELOPMENT OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

The partnership agreement with the University of Dublin has helped to stimulate increasing postgraduate research activity within the DIT. As a logical part of the development of the agreement, interest and commitment among DIT staff and graduates in pursuing higher degree awards through both research and taught programmes underwent considerable growth.

A fee-waiver (zero fee) scheme was introduced in the late 1970s to facilitate DIT academic staff engaging in research activity to obtain a higher degree of the university. Through this scheme the university contributed significantly to DIT staff development as well as to the growth of its research programmes. It has also been a catalyst for co-operative research projects in some discipline areas. More than sixty DIT staff have participated in the scheme since it was initiated and have been conferred with
### Table 4.1: Inter-Colleges/Joint Co-ordinating Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Inter-Colleges/Joint Co-ordinating Committees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>relating to Architecture BSc(Arch), Property Economics and Construction Economics BSc(Surv) (Bolton Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>relating to Electrical/Electronic Engineering BSc(Eng) (Kevin Street) and Mechanical, Manufacturing, Building Services and Structural Engineering BSc(Eng) (Bolton Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Sciences</td>
<td>relating to Biological Science, Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics and Physics BSc(AppSc) (Kevin Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>relating to Hotel and Catering Management BSc(Mgmt) (Cathal Brugha Street), Marketing and Administration BSc(Mgmt)(Mountjoy Square) and Business Studies, Management Law, Management Services, Health Services Management BSc(Mgmt) and Communications BSc(Media) (Aungier Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Health</td>
<td>relating to Environmental Health BSc(EnvH) (Cathal Brugha Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Laboratory Science</td>
<td>relating to Biomedical Science BSc(AppSc) (Kevin Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Nutrition and Dietetics</td>
<td>relating to a joint degree for this disciplineBSc(HN&amp;D) (Joint Co-ordinating Committee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Studies</td>
<td>relating to postgraduate research</td>
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higher degrees. The DIT has also provided funding for additional places on the scheme in response to growing demand.

Proposals for the extension of the provisions of the partnership agreement to cater for postgraduate activities in the DIT were frequently raised at meetings of the Liaison Council and inter-colleges committees. However, it was not until the late 1980s that these proposals were more
Partnership Agreement

formally addressed. The Liaison Council established a joint committee representing both partners in 1988, "to provide orderly arrangements for the considerable amount of research activity already taking place". This joint committee prepared a memorandum that addressed both postgraduate taught programmes and postgraduate research activities. In June 1989 the Liaison Council adopted the proposals as set out in the memorandum. However, some difficulties arose later in implementing the memorandum in relation to postgraduate studies by research, partly due to the absence of suitable structures within the DIT and partly due to a reluctance by some departments in TCD to become more involved and co-operate with the DIT in this activity. In 1992 these issues were addressed and a further memorandum of understanding "concerning the registration of DIT candidates for higher degrees by research" was agreed between the University of Dublin and the DIT, dealing with the registration, supervision, progression and examination of DIT postgraduate students pursuing higher degrees in TCD. It also provided for a remission of up to 50 per cent of fees paid to the university where the work was wholly carried out in the DIT.

In addition, at an informal level, a limited amount of collaboration has taken place in relation to staff exchange, exchange of equipment and shared use of facilities and joint research.

DIT/TCD joint research seed funding scheme

A joint research seed funding scheme was initiated in 1995, funded from the Institute's and the university's resources. It was aimed at assisting staff members in the two institutions to develop joint research projects, which might lead to European or other external funds. In assisting over twenty projects since its inception, this scheme has helped to develop a number of inter-institution research collaborations.

A call is issued for this programme once each year, internally within the DIT and TCD, and the selection process is carried out by a joint committee of senior staff from the two institutions.

Reviews of the Partnership Agreement in the 1980s

TCD review 1987–1988

In 1987 the Council of the university established a committee to undertake a review of the partnership and to consider whether the best interests of TCD would be served by continuing or changing the arrangements in
the partnership agreement. The review committee used a questionnaire to survey the members of TCD staff who were involved in the arrangements and also received a brief statement from each.

The report of the review committee summarised the remarks received thus:

- the lack of research in the DIT adversely affected the quality of teaching at honours level
- the attendance of TCD representatives at examination boards was of a formal character and did not allow an opportunity to judge standards
- the various inter-colleges committees tended to be unsatisfactory in composition and function and did not exercise supervision over the relevant courses
- the links between TCD and the DIT were administrative rather than academic in character
- the DIT staff members tended to react defensively to criticism and did not respond adequately.

The senior personnel in the university, however, considered that the initial course validation and five-yearly course review procedures, together with the appointment of reputable external examiners, did work satisfactorily. The report also placed the partnership agreement in the context of the Burke proposals of 1974, which were considered to be "potentially extremely damaging to TCD". At that time it was expected that the proposed new NIHE Dublin would absorb the higher level programmes in the Colleges of Technology at Bolton Street and Kevin Street, and the College of Commerce at Rathmines. In 1975 the university was "already well advanced in working its policy towards an association" with that embryonic NIHE Dublin when the partnership agreement was finalised.

The report concluded that the relationship should continue but it recommended improvements in the operation of the partnership. Internal to TCD it recommended the appointment of an academic liaison officer, supported by a committee, to consider operational improvements. It also recommended the establishment of a joint academic council to enable staff members from TCD and the DIT colleges to contribute constructively to the partnership.

**DIT/CDVEC review 1989–1990**

In response to the TCD review report, the DIT/CDVEC initiated a review of the operation of the partnership agreement in 1989. The report that
emerged in 1990 from this review surveyed the historical development of the partnership very much along the lines of the TCD review report, and, in particular, addressed the critical comments and recommendations in that report. It also considered the partnership in the new context of the government’s 1985 Green Paper on Education and the 1987 report of the International Study Group, both outlined in Chapter 3. In this regard it explored the following possible future arrangements:

- discontinuation of the partnership agreement with TCD and the establishment of other arrangements
- the provision of greater autonomy for the DIT colleges with power to make their own awards to degree level
- the university and the DIT entering into a more formally structured relationship
- the continuation of the partnership, but with improvements in its operation.

**Current Stage of the Partnership**

The prospect of the DIT being given the power to award degrees within a year or so was an integral element of the parliamentary discussions leading to enactment of the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992. During the academic year 1994/1995, the Liaison Council formed a working party to further review the partnership between the University of Dublin and the DIT and make suggestions on the future form of the relationship. The joint working party consisted of senior members of staff from both institutions.

A number of interim reports were forwarded to the Liaison Council who approved the final report in July 1998. It contained a number of recommendations.

In relation to courses that led to degrees of the university, it was agreed that from the student intake of September 1998, they would lead to degrees of the Institute. However, degrees of the university would be available to students who entered those courses in any year previous to that, regardless of their rate of passage through the course, within the regulations of the DIT. The related inter-colleges committees would continue to

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meet as required until academic year 2000/2001 for four-year courses and until 2001/2002 for the five-year architecture course. Any of these courses undergoing five-yearly reviews up to summer 1999 would continue to have a joint DIT/TCD review panel, but thereafter would have a DIT panel on which a TCD staff member might serve as an external member. External examiners nominated for these courses would continue to be nominated jointly by the DIT and the university as indicated above.

All existing joint courses would continue as before, and new joint courses would be encouraged in the future.

The fee waiver scheme to enable DIT staff members to register for higher degrees of the university would continue and a reciprocal scheme for members of staff of the university to take courses in the Institute was agreed.

The seed funding scheme for joint research projects would be continued and focussed on first research initiatives of relatively recently appointed lecturers. In order to further assist the DIT in developing research, especially postgraduate research, it was agreed that at least one member of TCD staff, nominated by the Dean of Graduate Studies, would be appointed to membership of the Institute’s Postgraduate Studies Committee.

It was also agreed that arrangements for staff from one institution to teach in the other would be encouraged, mainly at school and faculty level. Opportunities for sharing of facilities, for instance where purchases of large and expensive items of equipment might be involved, would also be welcomed and encouraged, generally on a case by case basis.

Finally it was agreed to review these arrangements during academic year 2000–2001.

**SUMMARY**

The partnership agreement between the Dublin colleges under the CDVEC and the University of Dublin, based on wide co-operation and commonality of interests, was signed in 1976. It ushered in a quarter century of growth in primary degree programmes and postgraduate research activities within the colleges.

The partnership represented a new and higher academic plateau for the DIT. This was especially so because the partnership was based on deep academic trust and commonality of interests at the time. This commonality arose to a large extent from the political and developmental problems facing the two parties and the partnership represented an imaginative response to the challenges of the time. It offered a welcome solu-
tion to the pressing need for additional degree places in Irish higher edu-
cation in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It effectively provided political sup-
port to the University of Dublin in its successful resistance to the Burke
proposals. For the DIT it provided a viable alternative to its failure to
benefit from the opportunities of the Ballymun Project. In depth and ex-
tent it was a unique collaborative venture between two academic institu-
tions with different histories and ethos. It provided evidence of DIT's ca-
pacity to be the catalyst for change in the binary system of higher educa-
tion.