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## The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology

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The Story of the  
**Dublin Institute  
of Technology**



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Joseph Hegarty  
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# The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology

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# Contents

Preface .....	xv
Introduction .....	xvii

## SECTION ONE: HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY OF THE DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

<b>1 Technical Education in Ireland before 1922 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Early technical/vocational education .....	3
Origins of the Dublin Institute of Technology .....	3
Technical School, Kevin Street .....	4
Municipal School of Music, Chatham Row .....	7
Municipal Technical Institute, Rathmines .....	8
Technical School, Rutland Square .....	9
Technical Institute, Bolton Street .....	10
Other higher education institutions in Ireland .....	11
Summary .....	12
<b>2 Development of the Dublin Colleges to the Dublin Institute of Technology .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Developments in the Dublin colleges under the Vocational Education Act .....	13
Teaching staff .....	15
Changes in titles of colleges .....	16
Review of developments in the individual colleges .....	17
Institute of Science and Technology/College of Technology, Kevin Street .....	17
Municipal School of Music/College of Music, Chatham Row .....	20
Rathmines Technical Institute/College of Commerce, Rathmines .....	22
School of Commerce and Retail Distribution/College of Marketing and Design, Parnell Square (later on Mountjoy Square) .....	23

Technical Institute/College of Technology, Bolton Street .....	25
St Mary's College of Domestic Science/College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street .....	26
The Ballymun Project .....	28
Processing the Ballymun Project proposals .....	31
Internal reorganisation within the Dublin colleges .....	33
Academic Council .....	33
Membership of the Academic Council .....	34
Terms of reference of the Academic Council .....	34
Balance sheet of the work of the Academic Council .....	36
Establishment of the Dublin Institute of Technology .....	36
CDVEC policy document on the unification of the colleges ..	37
Initial development of the Dublin Institute of Technology .....	38
Governing Body review of the DIT in 1983 .....	38
College-based organisational structure .....	39
Schools and departments in the colleges .....	40
Academic management of each college .....	40
General staffing of each college .....	41
Summary .....	41

<b>3 Government Policy and Legislative Backdrop to the Emergence of the DIT .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Commission of Inquiry (Technical Education) 1926 .....	44
Vocational Education Act 1930 .....	45
Commission on Higher Education 1960–1967 .....	46
The O'Malley proposals for University Reform .....	49
Steering Committee on Technical Education 1966–1969 .....	49
Higher Education Authority Act 1971 .....	51
Central Applications Office 1977 .....	51
National Council for Educational Awards Act 1979 .....	52
National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick 1969 .....	55
Burke proposals on University Reform .....	55
Outcome of the Burke proposals .....	57
National Institutes of Higher Education Acts 1980 .....	58
Green Paper on Education 1985 .....	59
International Study Group on Technological Education 1986–1987 .....	60
University of Limerick and Dublin City University Acts 1989 .....	61
Green Paper on Education 1992 .....	61
Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 .....	62

Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 .....	63
Steering Committee on the future development of higher education 1993–1995 .....	64
White Paper on Education 1995 .....	65
Universities Act 1997 .....	66
Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 .....	69
Summary .....	71
<b>4 Partnership Agreement between CDVEC/DIT and the University of Dublin (1976–present) .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Background to the partnership agreement between the CDVEC/DIT and the University of Dublin .....	72
Implementation of the partnership agreement .....	74
Forms of co-operation envisaged .....	75
Development of programmes under the partnership agreement ....	75
Inter-Colleges Committees .....	77
Development of postgraduate programmes .....	77
DIT/TCD joint research seed funding scheme .....	79
Reviews of the partnership agreement in the 1980s .....	79
TCD review 1987–1988 .....	79
DIT/CDVEC review 1989–1990 .....	80
Current stage of the partnership .....	81
Summary .....	82
<b>5 Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 .....</b>	<b>84</b>
Academic maturity of the Institute at the start of the 1990s .....	84
High level of demand for DIT full-time courses .....	85
Successful partnership with the University of Dublin .....	86
The standing of DIT graduates .....	86
Notable features of DIT courses .....	86
Development of research activities in the Institute .....	87
Quality assurance in the DIT .....	87
DIT staff expertise .....	87
Academic maturity of the DIT and its schools .....	87
Need for greater autonomy .....	88
Objectives of the Dublin Institute of Technology Bill 1991 .....	88
Political attitudes to the Dublin Institute of Technology Bill .....	89
Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke TD .....	90
Response of Teresa Ahearne TD .....	90
Other participants in the Oireachtas debate .....	90
Amendments made to the DIT legislation by the Oireachtas .....	91

Greater autonomy for the Institute .....	92
Preparing the Institute for conferring its own degree awards .....	92
Outline of the provisions of the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 .....	92
Unification of the six colleges .....	93
Functions of the new Institute .....	93
Composition and functions of the Governing Body .....	93
Procedures for appointing staff .....	94
Appointment and functions of the Academic Council .....	94
Annual programmes, budgets and reports .....	94
Transfer of property and liabilities from CDVEC .....	95
Comparison of the DIT Act with the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 .....	95
Awarding powers .....	95
Different Academic Council functions .....	96
Comparison of the DIT Act with the Acts establishing Dublin City University and University of Limerick .....	96
Awarding powers .....	96
Similarity of the DIT Act 1992 and the DCU Act 1989 .....	97
Appointing external examiners .....	98
Summary .....	98
<b>6 Organisational Development of the Institute under the DIT Act 1992 .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Establishment of the Institute on a statutory basis .....	99
Institute of Public Administration consultation on structures 1992–1993 .....	100
Administrative structures recommended for the Institute .....	101
Initial response of Governing Body to the report .....	101
Developing the central offices .....	102
Governing Body's consultative group to review the application of the IPA report proposals .....	102
Approval of the report of the consultative group .....	103
Faculty structure for the Institute .....	103
Basic structure proposed .....	103
Appointment of the directors .....	105
Academic Council .....	106
Membership .....	106
Interim administration of the Institute .....	107
Development of a mission statement for the Institute .....	107



Quality assurance audit leading to the authority to confer degrees .....	108
Review of the DIT for designation as a university under section 9 of the Universities Act 1997–1998 .....	108
Appointment and work of the review group .....	109
Terms of reference .....	110
Deliberations of the group .....	111
Documentation submitted by the Institute .....	112
First submission to the review group .....	112
Second submission .....	113
Third submission .....	117
Consultations of the review group .....	119
Fourth submission .....	119
Comments on the approach of the review group .....	120
General comments on the Institute's application .....	120
Report of the review group and the response of the HEA .....	121
Summary .....	123

## SECTION TWO: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DIT'S ACADEMIC PROFILE

<b>7 Apprenticeship Education</b> .....	127
Early apprenticeship education and training .....	127
Developments under the Apprenticeship Act 1931 .....	128
Apprenticeship education under the Apprenticeship Act 1959 ...	129
An Chomhairle Oilíúna (AnCO) and related developments .....	130
Apprentice Education Board .....	130
Reform of apprenticeships under Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) .....	131
Summary .....	133
<b>8 Higher Level Courses in the Institute</b> .....	134
Full-time higher level courses .....	134
Higher technician programmes .....	136
Professional and degree-level programmes .....	136
Development of courses under the partnership agreement .....	137
Other higher level courses offered by the Institute .....	140
Courses validated in external organisations .....	144
Changes in enrolments over the years .....	144
Summary .....	145

<b>9 Postgraduate Research</b> .....	147
Development of research activities in the Institute .....	147
Research within the Institute .....	148
Management of research .....	149
Postgraduate Studies and Research office .....	150
Internal funding schemes .....	150
External funding .....	151
Funding under the HEA research scheme 1999–2001 .....	152
Productivity of research in the Institute .....	152
Quality assurance in postgraduate research work .....	153
Development centres .....	154
Summary .....	155
<b>10 Accommodation and Facilities</b> .....	156
College of Technology, Kevin Street .....	156
College of Music, Chatham Row and Adelaide Road .....	157
College of Commerce, Rathmines and Aungier Street .....	157
College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square .....	158
College of Technology, Bolton Street .....	158
College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street .....	159
General issues about facilities .....	159
Physical development plan .....	161
Summary .....	162
<b>11 Academic Quality Assurance in the DIT</b> .....	163
Quality assurance procedures of the Academic Council .....	163
Course evaluations .....	163
Documentation required for Boards of Studies and Course Review Boards .....	164
Memberships of Boards of Studies and Course Review Boards .....	165
External examiners .....	166
Developments in quality assurance after the DIT Act 1992 .....	167
Steering committee to develop quality assurance procedures .....	167
Work of the quality assurance steering committee .....	168
Initial report of steering committee .....	168
Quality assurance handbook .....	169
Quality audit, 1995–1996 .....	170
Self-evaluation the key process in the quality audit .....	170
Detailed specification of the self-evaluation required .....	171

Planned review of the self-evaluation report .....	173
Institutional self-evaluation and preparation for the visit of the review team .....	173
Data and details gathered for the self-evaluation .....	174
Details about each school .....	175
Submission of documentation for the review .....	175
Institutional visit of the review team .....	176
Report of the review team .....	177
Ministerial order conferring degree-awarding power on the Institute .....	177
Balance sheet in 1998 of the institutional quality audit of 1995–1996 .....	178
Possible application of the universities legislation to the Institute .....	181
Summary .....	181

### SECTION THREE: A VIEW OF THE FUTURE OF THE DIT

<b>12 The Challenges facing DIT beyond 2000 .....</b>	<b>185</b>
Planning for the future .....	186
Development of a strategic plan to 2005 .....	186
Constructing the plan .....	187
Mechanisms for implementing strategies .....	187
Communication .....	188
Monitoring the implementation of the plan .....	188
External factors .....	189
Government policy .....	189
National and international context .....	190
Technological developments .....	191
Demographic changes .....	192
Competition in higher education .....	192
Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and national qualifications framework .....	193
Internal factors .....	193
Vision and leadership .....	193
Organisation .....	194
Academic development – general principles .....	195
Physical resources .....	198
Financial autonomy .....	199
Management information system .....	200
Staff .....	200

External strategic relationships and collaborations .....	201
A learning organisation .....	203
Students in the Institute .....	203
A proud history, a future of promise .....	205
<b>Index .....</b>	<b>207</b>

## Preface

This book traces the development of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) from its origins over 113 years ago. There are many aspects of the history of the Institute and its predecessor colleges and schools that deserve study. There were many people who made significant contributions to its development and who deserve wider recognition, not only in the educational sphere but in the national arena as well. This book will be a great success if it stimulates such studies and related publications.

The aim of the book is to capture the broad sweep of the story of the DIT but not to describe the fine details of every development. In consequence some highlights, and indeed some weaknesses, do not receive the attention that they might deserve.

The book is directed primarily at the Institute community — academic and support staff, professional and industrial associates in Ireland and abroad, alumni and their families and students and their families. We hope it will add to their well founded pride in the Institute and its achievements. It is also directed at future students and their families and advisers in second level schools, to provide them with broad background information about the programmes, ethos and spirit of the Institute. The book will also be of interest to local and national politicians, as well as to local and national government officials, who have a major stake in the Institute and its progress. The book will further be of value as a reference to students of education at home and abroad as a perspective on the changing currents in the Irish educational system.

This book is offered as a record of achievement, in trust that the next generation will take the Institute to greater heights of educational service and accomplishment.

May 2000

## Introduction

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) was established by statute as an autonomous institution on 1 January 1993, under the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992, “to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the state”. It was constituted from the six higher education colleges of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC). These colleges, located in the city centre both south and north of the River Liffey, had provided applied and higher vocational education and training programmes, mainly in areas of technology and business, for over a century.

The six colleges that amalgamated to form the DIT, with the foundation year of each given in brackets, were as follows:

- College of Technology, Kevin Street, Dublin 8 (1887)
- College of Music, Chatham Row and Adelaide Road, Dublin 2 (1890)
- College of Commerce, Rathmines, Dublin 6 (1901)
- College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 (formerly on Parnell Square, Dublin 1) (1905)
- College of Technology, Bolton Street, Dublin 1 (1911)
- College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1 (1941).

Since the earliest years the colleges developed programmes in different areas of speciality, with the underlying vision of providing the educational services needed by society — by students, industry, business, the community and particularly the disadvantaged sections of the population. The colleges responded flexibly and imaginatively to the changing needs arising from changes in technology in the city and in the country as a whole. In their new form as the DIT they continue to respond to the new challenges including those posed by the revolution in information technology and communications.

In the early years most of the programmes were at second level, but over the century, the Dublin colleges came to specialise mainly in higher

level educational work, while second level work was transferred to other schools in the CDVEC system. At the present time the Institute offers close to 300 courses in a wide range of disciplines, in a multi-level context.

The colleges have grown and developed such that the annual enrolments are now about 22,000 — 10,500 full-time third level students, 4,000 apprentices and some 7,500 part-time, usually evening, students. The Institute has the highest student enrolment of all the higher education institutions in the state.

This book describes the main features of the evolution of the Institute, from its beginnings more than a century ago to its academic development over the past thirty years. The approach is firstly to provide a general historical chronology together with the macro-political factors influencing developments, then to review the highlights of the academic profile of the Institute and finally to consider the challenges facing it in the early years of the twenty-first century.

The growth of the colleges from which the DIT has been formed is traced from their origins in the Technical School established on Kevin Street in 1887. To provide the backdrop and context for this story, the highlights in the development of higher education in general and the other higher education institutions are also outlined.

The detailed review presented in this book describes the ways in which the DIT and its predecessor colleges, under the CDVEC and the earlier City of Dublin Technical Education Committee, contributed and continue to contribute to educating young people in Ireland and to developing Irish society, industry and higher education. While the Institute has withstood challenges and availed of many opportunities to improve the educational service it provides to the community, it will be apparent that it also missed valuable opportunities. The various judgements and evaluations made in this book at different junctures about the development of the Institute and its predecessor colleges clearly have the benefit of hindsight and should be taken in that light. They should also be taken in the context of the predominantly progressive and constructive thrust of the programmes developed across all the colleges.

The Institute and its predecessors pioneered applied education and training in a wide range of occupations, trades and skills, in close consultation with the relevant industries, professions and trade unions. Throughout their history they developed solutions in a wide range of disciplines to the complex and conflicting demands made on them by the short-term training needs of industry and business and the long-term educational needs of students. In this conflict, expressed in recent times as between, on one

side, a possibly narrow instrumentalism or vocationalism focussing on instruction/training for the job, and on the other side, the broader educational development of the students for life, they strove to keep the interests of students at their core.

The Dublin colleges pioneered full-time education and practical training in applied areas that were not widely available due to the lack of a strong industrial infrastructure in the city and country. They helped to develop a range of new professions and the advanced training needed to establish and maintain them. They pioneered the development of technician and technologist training and education, a factor that helped in no small way to energise the emergence of Irish industry over the past thirty years. In that period the Institute has produced some 50,000 diploma, certificate and apprentice certificate graduates. It also developed an unprecedented partnership with the University of Dublin that has provided thousands of places on degree and professional courses during the rapid expansion in higher education that began in the 1970s and continued through the 1980s and 1990s. It has produced over 12,000 such graduates over the past twenty-five years. The DIT has provided, and continues to provide, access at all levels from apprentice to postgraduate level, with part-time, evening and full-time courses with clearly signposted transfer tracks between the different levels in most disciplines. Historically, in each academic year, it has provided more part-time and second-chance educational opportunities than all the other higher education institutions in Ireland combined. It pioneered applied research with strong industrial applicability at postgraduate level and recognised, at a very early stage, the key role of research and the related advancement of knowledge in underpinning all areas of higher education. It has maintained extensive and fruitful links with the professions, industry and business, nationally and internationally, for over a century.

As a multi-level higher education institution, the DIT continues this tradition and is developing and adapting it for future generations of students.



# Dedication

This book is a tribute to:

- all the members of staff of the schools and colleges, for some forty years under the administration of the City of Dublin Technical Education Committee and the Rathmines Urban District Council Technical Instruction Committee, then for over sixty years under the aegis of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, and latterly within the autonomous Dublin Institute of Technology
- the far-seeing members of those committees
- the administrative staff of those committees

who, down the years, worked often in adverse circumstances, to make the Dublin Institute of Technology the inspiring educational giant that it is today.

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Matthew Hussey  
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