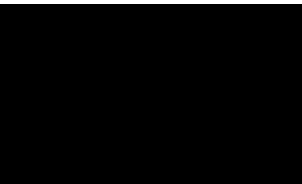




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Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

4 March 2021

Mr Simon Harris TD
Minister for Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1



Dear Minister

We write simply as two Trinity graduates, from North and South, to raise a number of questions about the current proposals – deriving from the overall review of HEA legislation – to reform the governance structures of Trinity College, Dublin.

Like so many people on this island we look forward to the gradual re-opening of society. The pandemic has exposed many shortcomings in the institutions where we earn our daily bread, and we have every sympathy with the Government of Ireland as it plans and prioritises for the almost impossible task of reviving the economy and the morale of the people of Ireland.

Might it not be helpful to take things that aren't broken off that 'to do' list? It is true that TCD is not governed on exactly the same lines as other Universities on the island but it is run effectively and in a manner that has created its own characteristic spirit. In every other context (educational and otherwise) such variety would be seen as an achievement of a pluralist society.

In addition Trinity has long been seen by many northerners, particularly from the unionist tradition, as being a place where they felt completely at home, exuding as it does the air of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. It is true that the Church of Ireland garrisoned its Divinity School and Chapel until well into the twentieth century, but there is now no man or woman living who would wish to return to that arrangements and very few who even remember it.

Perhaps part of its uniqueness is that it was established by Royal Charter, a fact which is of greater or lesser importance in itself to the signatories of this letter. However, we would both agree that compromising such a Charter, for the purposes only of homogenising third educational governance, would be contrary to the spirit of a shared island grappling with the alienating difficulties of the Ire/NI Protocol. In this decade of centenaries should we not be celebrating the complexity of our identities, including those expressed in the eccentricities of a time-tested system of governance?

We believe these thoughts are worth sharing with you directly: we wish you well in your deliberations, and speak only out of a desire to protect those bonds of education and culture which can contribute so much to the deepening of relationships on this our shared island.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

[Redacted]
BISHOP OF CASHEL FERNS AND OSSORY

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