



11 Merrion Square,
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Letters Editor,
The Irish Times,
D'Olier Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Sir,

MAJOR BOOST FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Last year your newspaper provided generous coverage of the widespread concerns which were being expressed regarding threats to Academic Freedom – which is, as your readers will know, a core and indispensable characteristic of any university system worthy of the name.

I am, therefore, very pleased to record through the medium of your letters page that not only has the cause of Academic Freedom received a major boost recently but the credit for this is due primarily to the work of Irish Academics.

In June 2011 the Scottish Government commissioned a high level Review of the Governance of Higher Education. The distinguished Irish Academic, Professor Ferdinand Von Prondzynski (formerly President of Dublin City University) was appointed as the Chair of this important group.

When the group presented its final report to the Scottish Government on 16 January 2012 it was greeted enthusiastically by all who support the principle of Academic Freedom, but in particular it was welcomed by Irish observers because, inter alia, the report recommends

That the Scottish Government and each University and Higher Education Institution in Scotland should adopt and incorporate the definition of Academic Freedom which is contained in Ireland's Universities Act 1997.

This core recommendation is based on the work done by Academics in Ireland on this topic and the relevant section of the report reads "In implementing the Irish provision, Trinity College Dublin, adopted a 'Policy on Academic Freedom' in December 2010, which was the result of an initiative of the College's Academic Staff Association, IFUT, and which was developed in a Special Working Group established by the College" (page 7, paragraph 2.4).

The report goes on to recommend that the TCD/IFUT Policy Statement should be treated by the Scottish Funding Council as a precondition for the award of university financial support, “or, in the case of the establishment of a new university, as a condition to be satisfied before university status is granted” (page 8).

It should be a source of pride for all Irish citizens and, in particular those who care about the quality of our universities, that a provision in Irish legislation is being held up internationally as a model to be emulated.

I hope you will indulge me in also saying that we in IFUT – the primary representative organisation of Irish Academics – are enormously proud of our colleagues in our TCD Branch who produced a document which is not only going to be applied in every university in Scotland but is, we are aware, being discussed and praised in Higher Education Institutions right across the world.

Yours sincerely,

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*Mike Jennings,
General Secretary.*