

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Marlborough Street**

**Dublin 1**

**D01 RC96**

**26 May 2020**

Dear Minister,

We refer to your letter of 25 May informing us of your proposed decision that the Cork Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Tralee have complied with the conditions set out by you in your letter of 30 September 2019 and that you propose to grant our application and make an order under section 36 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 to establish the Munster Technological University. We greatly welcome your decision and we would like to thank you and your officials, the Executive and Board of the Higher Education Authority and of Quality and Qualifications Ireland for the rigorous review of the work we have undertaken to comply with the conditions set by you. This work was firmly based on the very considerable input of our staff and students since last September, and before that over a number of years, and on the strong and steadfast support of a wide range of external stakeholders.

While the Act provides that the Institutes may jointly make representations to you in relation to your proposed decision, we do not intend to do so. We do, however, want to note, and comment on, one aspect of the advice given to the HEA by the international advisory panel engaged by them. But first, we note their overall positive view and appreciate the detailed way in which they completed their review of our report of 30 March to you in which we responded to the conditions set out in your September letter.

The panel acknowledged the work done to address the conditions but suggested that the HEA seek additional information/evidence, rather than relying on a paper only review by them which left some issues unanswered. The fact that the panel felt that they did not have all the evidence they needed to hand is a direct consequence of how the process unfolded due to Covid-19. Typical practice for such reviews (e.g. Institutional Review, Programmatic Review, accreditation by professional bodies) and as originally envisaged, is that the HEA's panel would have met with a wide range of staff, students and stakeholders for a richer face-to-face dialogue on, and exploration of, our response and supporting documents. In that process additional information or clarifications would have been provided and the panel would have given their advice to the HEA fully informed by all the evidence. When we submitted our response to you on 30 March, we expected that the face-to-face meeting with the panel would be replaced by a virtual meeting. We continued therefore to expect to have the opportunity to engage directly with the HEA's advisers. As a result, we confined our response and supporting documentation to what we saw as the essentials – even then, it ran to 136 pages. In the event, in the view of the HEA, a virtual meeting proved impractical. The HEA executive had a virtual consultation with their advisory panel and arising from that sought additional information/evidence from the MTU consortium. In all

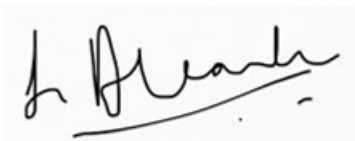
this ran to 193 separate documents and 1,399 pages which were provided to the HEA electronically. As proposed by their advisory panel, the HEA Executive subsequently conducted a virtual consultation with the Chairs of the Institutes' Governing Bodies, the Presidents, representatives of staff and students and the MTU Project Leadership Group over a twoday period. Combined in this way, all of the information/evidence sought by their advisers was provided to the HEA, enabling them conclude that all the conditions had been met. This is set out in detail in the HEA memo attached to your letter.

We greatly appreciate the rigour of the process, even as it had to change in response to the public health crisis. We want to acknowledge the considerable time and resources put into the review, especially by the HEA and their advisers and we consider that it places the designation and implementation of the Munster Technological University on a very sound footing. Work to further advance the project has been on-going and further progress has been made since we submitted our response to you in March.

The Consortium acknowledges the scale of the challenge that remains to achieve MTU, but we are confident that with the support of our students, staff and stakeholders we will achieve success as you describe it. In moving forward, we will take fully on board the issues you have flagged and we will continue to engage proactively and constructively with staff representatives.

In conclusion, your decision to designate the MTU at any time would have been of enormous importance for the social and economic development of the South West region. Coming at this time of great challenge and concern, the establishment of MTU provides encouragement to the region and will provide considerable supports and opportunities for recovery and for the long-term success of the region.

Yours sincerely,



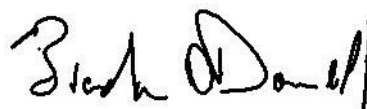
Mr Lionel Alexander  
Governing Body Chair  
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