Trinity College Dublin establishes Al Maktoum Centre for Middle Eastern Studies in Trinity College

A strategic alliance has been established between Trinity College Dublin and the Al Maktoum College of Higher Education to enhance the development of Middle Eastern Studies in Ireland, and globally, through the establishment of a new Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Trinity to be located in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies.

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The appointment of four new professors in Middle Eastern Studies to the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies will enable and facilitate Trinity in the establishment of a new and distinctive centre of Middle Eastern Studies with the vision and purpose of promoting Middle Eastern Studies within Ireland and globally.

Trinity College Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast; Professor Anne Fitpatrick, Head of Near and Middle Eastern Studies; Simon Williams, Trinity Foundation; Dr Abi Abubaker, Al Maktoum College Dundee, with a group of students visiting from the UAE and other regions.

President and Provost of Trinity College, Dr Patrick Prendergast, said: “This generous gift from the Al Maktoum Foundation comes at a vital moment in the history of Trinity College’s relationship with the Middle East, its peoples and its cultures. Continuing a long-established tradition of Middle Eastern studies in the history of Trinity College, this generous gift comes at
a time when society in Ireland must seize the opportunity to enhance the role which all can play in a pluralistic society. Societal challenges created by multiculturalism also present unique opportunities for engagement and enrichment.”

His Excellency Mirza Al Sayegh, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Al Maktoum College and the Al Maktoum Foundation said: “We are very proud to support this initiative and with the association with Trinity College Dublin, with its global reputation for excellence in research and education. It continues a long commitment of the Maktoum family’s investment in both education and in Ireland.”

The work of the Al Maktoum Foundation is internationally recognised for its focus and contribution to the promotion of understanding and peace across cultures and for its humanitarian work, notably in education.

Professor Anne Fitzpatrick Head of the Discipline of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Trinity said: “It is a great honour for Trinity to be the recipient of this level of support. The opportunity it will provide to generations of students will no doubt contribute to greater understanding and fruitful relations as students graduate as global citizens and move on with their lives into careers where they can truly have an impact in shaping a peaceful and harmonious future.”

Trinity has had a long engagement with the cultures and societies of the Middle East. The University’s commitment to Arabic dates back to 1762 when the first Professor of Oriental

Left: Trinity College Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast; Professor Anne Fitpatrick, Head of Near and Middle Eastern Studies; Simon Williams, Trinity Foundation; Dr Abi Abubaker, Al Maktoum College Dundee.
Above: Visiting students from UAE and other regions.
Studies was appointed. In 1855 a Professorship of Arabic Studies was established: the first appointed was William Wright, who was succeeded in 1861 by Mir Aulad Ali, a professor of Indian descent. As testament to his enduring impact on many in Ireland, Professor Mir Aulad Ali, was referred to in W.B. Yeats’ *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* written in 1916.

Within this tradition and heritage of Trinity College, the discipline of Near and Middle Eastern Studies offers programmes in Middle Eastern and Islamic Civilisations and has reintroduced the teaching of the Arabic language to the University. Also offered are courses covering the great civilisations of ancient Egypt, Babylon and Persia, ancient civilisations of South Arabia, and contemporary issues such as Islam’s contribution to European societies, and the cultures and histories of the Middle East and North Africa.

The most recent development is the creation of a new degree course in Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures which commenced in 2017. This degree is unique and no other university in the world has established a degree course which recognises the contributions made by the cultures and religions of the Middle East as being of equivalent value to those of Europe. Trinity’s growing reputation for Middle Eastern Studies is evident in the establishment of a dual degree programme between the Discipline of Near and Middle Eastern Studies in Trinity and Columbia University New York. Trinity students of Irish and international origin who are specialising in the Arabic language spend a year at a university in the Middle East, an experience which we hope will enable them to engage with the region in whatever professions they pursue and will promote good relations between Ireland, Europe and the Middle East.

**Acting Head of College at Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education, Dr Abi Abubaker,** said: *This is a key alliance that will be of major benefit to students seeking to undertake Middle Eastern Studies. As a centre of academic excellence, we look forward to what is certain to be a mutually positive collaboration with Trinity College.”*