Education and Culture Committee

Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

General Council Business Committee Convenors
of the ancient universities of Scotland

Background

This paper contains a summary submission by the Convenors of the Business Committees of the General Councils (GC) of the four ancient universities of Scotland: Aberdeen; Edinburgh; Glasgow; St Andrews.

The four GCs are corporate bodies of ancient universities; they comprise graduates and senior academics and are presided over by the Chancellor of the university. A GC is one of the bodies in the tripartite ancient university governance structure in Scotland, established by Universities (Scotland) Acts. The other bodies are the University Court and the Academic Senate. Across the four ancient universities, the GCs comprise over 300,000 graduates (worldwide) and academic staff members.

In each ancient university, a Standing GC Committee called the Business Committee (BC) acts on behalf of GCs in representational matters within its powers. BCs comprise Assessors and Members elected by the members of the GCs.

The business of each GC is to take into consideration all questions affecting the well-being and prosperity of each university, and to make representations as appropriate. This submission is made under these terms of reference by GC BC Convenors.

Response to the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

The terms of the Bill and submissions from the Chairs of Court of Scottish Higher Education Institutions and Universities Scotland have been reviewed. The Convenors have considerable sympathy with much that is in the submissions prepared by these bodies but are concerned particularly about Sections 2, 3 and 14 of the Bill and their impact on ancient university autonomy. They are unanimously of the view that:

- The Bill will negatively affect the autonomy - and endanger the reputation - of the ancient universities in their contribution to the excellence of Scotland’s academic standards and knowledge transfer at international levels. From the perspective of the graduate GC Members throughout the world, this autonomy has over many years proved successful in maintaining the necessary culture that is a vital part of Scotland’s future success. This culture will not be sustained by the proposed Bill sections.

- In the ancient universities, appropriate control of public resource is also an important part of this culture. However, the BC Members believe that there are many and sufficient checks on how ancient universities spend taxpayer and other stakeholder monies.
The Business Committee Convenors of the General Councils ask for the opportunity to submit oral evidence.

Submitted on behalf of the Business Committee Convenors of the General Councils of the ancient universities of Scotland:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convenor</th>
<th>University of</th>
<th>Convenor</th>
<th>University of</th>
<th>Convenor</th>
<th>University of</th>
<th>Convenor</th>
<th>University of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colin Duncan</td>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>Charles Swainson</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>George Tait</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>Martyn Strachan</td>
<td>St Andrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenor, General Council Business Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Convenor, General Council Business Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Convenor, General Council Business Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Convenor, General Council Business Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>