Submission from Anne Irwin

For the attention of The Committee Clerk

I am writing to you to express my deep concerns about the proposed Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill. I am strongly opposed to this Bill on a number of grounds.

The proposals being put forward, which include the possible introduction of greater controls and restrictions with the intention of enforcing consistency among institutions, will only reduce their ability to adopt individual and appropriate strategies. One size does not fit all, and trying to force all into a single straitjacket of regulation can only lead to a reduction of all to a common denominator, rather than a raising of all to a higher standard. The new legislation will burden universities and the public purse with extra regulation and bureaucracy that will stifle enterprise and will jeopardise the contribution that universities, such as St Andrews, make to the economy.

The introduction of this Bill will also have the following additional negative results:

This Bill threatens the autonomy of the University, which will be greatly weakened, and it will be vulnerable to direct political influence with all the dangers that implies.

St Andrews occupies a leading position globally and domestically in the field of higher education. The loss of its ability to introduce the most appropriate policies and strategies to maintain this means that the high academic reputation of St Andrew will suffer, and it will lose its edge, in a global market, to attract the best students, the best academic staff and funding. This will be bad for St Andrews, for Scottish higher education, for the economy and for Scotland.

Finally, this legislation is not only harmful, it is unnecessary.

As someone who was lucky enough to have benefitted from the great educational opportunities offered by St Andrews, I urge you to reconsider the introduction of this Bill.

Anne Irwin,