Submission from Ms Anne Thomson
Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill

For the attention of the Committee Clerk.

I am writing to express my concern at the proposals contained in the Higher Education Governance Bill. I am a graduate of the University of St Andrews and wish to bring to your attention the following which I consider to be likely outcomes of the passing of this bill as it stands:

- the autonomy of the University will be greatly weakened and it will be vulnerable to direct political influence;
- its academic reputation will suffer;
- 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, for the country.

Furthermore, it is unnecessary.

I understand the Royal Society of Edinburgh's views are as follows:

- “The RSE considers that the proposals…are inappropriate, unnecessary and potentially counter to good governance…We suggest that the proposals are withdrawn.
- “Institutional autonomy and independence are fundamental principles that underpin the successful performance of Scotland’s HE sector. The proposals outline a level of governmental intervention that is entirely inappropriate for an autonomous sector.
- “The proposed intervention could only be justified by clear evidence of serious, systematic deficiencies in the governance of the sector.”

I would also like to see the post of Rector continue in its current role, upholding the interests of the student body and chairing Court.

I urge you to listen to the objectors to this bill and redraft or reject it.

Anne Thomson