Submission from Christine Elliot

Dear Sir or Madam,

Higher Education Governance Bill

I oppose the principle behind the Bill in that I do not consider it necessary or desirable for the Government to alter the governance structure to allow more direct Governmental control. I agree with the Royal Society of Edinburgh when it says that “Autonomy and independence from political influence or control are fundamental principles...” In my view, academic independence is vital for a vibrant, successful and diverse higher education sector. Laying down mandatory arrangements for governance are inimical to this.

In particular, I object to the proposed requirement whereby the chair of a Higher Institute of Education (HIE) is chosen from an electorate wider than its governing body: this may lead to an outcome where there is a fracture between the chair and that body. Further, I see no good reason to impose mandatory Trade Union representatives on the governing body. There should, properly, be staff members on that body so as to play a part in a properly-balanced decision-making body, but that is a very different thing from people mandated to act and vote in a particular way.

Yours faithfully,

Christine Elliot