Submission from the Countess of Carnarvon

Dear Sirs,

I write as an Alumna of St Andrews University in relation to the proposed Higher Education Bill.

The bill as it currently stands seems a missed opportunity to promote diversity and excellence in the colleges and universities seeking to continue to succeed in higher education within Scotland.

It does not recognize the strength of different opportunities. A “one approach fits all” Bill rarely recognizes individual talent and could suppress and stifle the chance of Scottish universities being recognized as some of the best in the world.

Ideas and practical skills can surely be best encouraged and learnt through allowing independence (underpinned by good governance) but nor dictated nor stifled by layers of legislation.

As an alumna of St Andrews I had tremendous respect for the innovation of the current Principal. Her appointment could not have been more transparent and her successor will be chosen with same care and diligence. The effect of the current proposals may militate against such a world-class candidate coming forward to be considered. After all Louise Robertson’s work, that would be disappointing. Furthermore, like others, I am helping to raise funds to support the university in terms of infrastructure and support of future students. If universities are no longer independent then I suspect it will be less easy, or not possible, to put the case forward to a global audience. Education in most world-class universities is associated with independence from political prescription.

Scotland has often punched above its weight in terms of innovative, well-educated people who travel, create and retain strong links to Scotland. They are not afraid to try or to express their views.

Please consider that for tomorrow’s students an alternative aim might to be to include at least one Scottish university as one of the best 10 or 20 in the world.

Yours faithfully,

The Countess of Carnarvon