Submission from Dan Venning

To The Clerk to the Education and Culture Committee, and Members of the Scottish Parliament:

I am writing you to urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to vote "No" on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill.

My name is Dan Venning, and I am a graduate of the esteemed University of St Andrews (M.Litt. Shakespeare Studies, 2005).

The bill, as it is currently written, is an attack on the academic independence of universities and on academic freedom, the very underpinning of today's universities, because it places the governance of universities under more political and bureaucratic influence. This will, without a doubt, lead to political influence in composition and programs and stifle controversial inquiry (the spirit of the university). As a consequence, Scottish universities will be unable to attract the most prominent faculty members, and the universities will lose their edge in a competing global market of universities. This will in turn lead to the best potential students choosing to study elsewhere (including outside of Scotland).

The bill, as written, is noble in aim. It seeks to impose uniform standards over the composition of Scottish universities. But this bill is not the way to go about obtaining that aim. It will only serve to cripple the very universities it seeks to bolster, and will be bad for institutions like St Andrews, and for the higher education and economy of Scotland on the whole.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dan Venning
M.Litt. St Andrews,