Submission from Dr Elizabeth Vallance

Dear Sirs

I write as a member of the General Council of the University of St Andrews in relation to the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill due to go through the Scottish Parliament this autumn.

In my view, this proposed legislation would give government a dangerous level of control over the governance of all Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, including St Andrews. Enforcing conformity among what are very diverse institutions will mean that their ability to develop their individual strategies will be inhibited, with inevitable stifling of innovation.

Any changes to the governance of the Scottish Universities and Small Specialist Institutions should be handled through the forthcoming review of the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance rather than through legislation. The Code allows for the evolution of good practice; legislation would inhibit it.

The Scottish Government taking unto itself powers to order the way in which members of University Courts are appointed (whether from Trade Union or other third party sources) is an unwarranted infringement of the institutional autonomy that is essential if the Scottish Universities are to be competitive in their pursuit of excellence.

Representative democracy, in the form of the direct involvement of elected representatives of staff and students, is a more effective and less risky means of selecting Chairs of University Courts than direct election through a plebiscite of staff and students.

In short, this is a misguided Bill, an unnecessary and unwelcome state intervention and should be dropped altogether.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elizabeth Vallance