Submission from Simon Fraser

Dear Sir or Madam,

As an academic and researcher working for one of ancient Scotland’s universities I am writing to you to express my deep concern about the “Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill” currently being deliberated on by the Scottish Parliament.

While I am finding it hard to see which specific and pressing problems the proposed legislation is designed to tackle, it brings with it significant risks for the success of the great institutions that make up Scotland’s thriving tertiary education and research sector.

I am seriously worried that the provisions of the bill will be detrimental to the independence and individual distinctiveness of Scotland’s universities, will increase the risk of governmental intervention, will favour “consistency” over variety, will jeopardize academic freedom by establishing the practice of having this crucial notion defined by politicians and – as a consequence – will damage the international and scholarly standing of our great universities.

As you will no doubt know, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland’s national academy of science and letters, has characterised the proposals as “inappropriate, unnecessary and potentially counter to good governance”. The RSE concluded that there was “neither need nor justification for additional legislation or government intervention”.

As someone who is proud to make a contribution to our thriving and diverse university sector, I would like to urge the members of your committee and the Scottish Parliament more widely, to take seriously these grave concerns about the proposed legislation.

Yours faithfully,

Frank Lorenz Müller