I write to question the necessity of this Bill.

It is hard to see what the Bill will achieve other than politicise and weaken the autonomy of the Universities. It will also damage the high global reputation built by Scottish Universities over many a year. I speak, from direct knowledge of this global reputation, having spent considerable time working overseas. Scottish education is at the top of the global reputation league alongside its whisky and golf. It is this reputation that enables Scottish Universities to attract the best students, the best academic staff and research. Damaged reputations are hard to recover and can only result in adverse economic consequences for Scottish Universities and for Scotland.

On the 1st August 2013 the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance was introduced. The Scottish Funding Council expects Universities to follow this Code. The Code’s independent Steering Committee has recommended that the Code be reviewed in 2016. It is difficult, therefore, to understand why there is such a rush to push through this controversial Bill.

Lord Thompson’s preface to the Scottish Good Governance Code is well worth a read. In it he states that his independent Steering Committee recognises “that the continued success of Scotland’s Universities rests on their autonomy, exercised within a robust system of governance”

Good governance is not a discovery of the late 1990’s. The culture and practice of good governance has developed over the ages. In education it is a heritage left to us by previous leaders of our Universities, and continued by the current ones. The principal of good governance has been, and always will be the key to the strength and independence of Universities. Scottish Universities have in place regulations and processes which are recognised as complying with global standards. Efforts by the government to introduce laws which amongst other things attempts to ‘standardise’ the practice of good governance can only create doubts on the integrity of the Universities and their staff on what they have been successfully doing for ages. “A production line one size fits all” policy is unsuited to Universities where original research is being pursued.

Listen to the people who successfully run our Universities. Let them continue to do so, by doing what they want.

The proposed Bill is unnecessary.

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