Submission from Ian Watson

I urge the MSPs to consider very carefully opposition from the Universities and other significant bodies to the terms of the bill. To disregard the considered views of these bodies, MSPs would indeed be exceedingly arrogant and irresponsible.

Our universities and specialist colleges have reputations, relevancy and responsibilities well beyond Scotland: to constrain their capacity to develop their individual reputations and contribution to the diversity of need in learning, research and teaching would be excessively narrow minded and contrary to Scotland's historical contribution to intellectual thought and to educational, cultural, scientific and technical evolution.

It would be extremely damaging to pass the bill without changes that will allow institutions of higher education a more than significant degree of autonomy and self determination as to how each individually can respond to and provide for the needs of its students and wider communities within Scotland and, more importantly, worldwide.

To allow politically inclined, non-academics in government or civil service to have any powers potentially determining levels uniformity in the realms of higher education would inevitably be dangerously parochial, short-term, short-sighted and stultifying.

The Scottish Parliament must avoid all possibilities for present or future straight-jacketing Scotland's institutions of international significance.

Ian Watson