As a graduate of the University of St. Andrews, I would like to express my objections to the Higher Education Governance Bill. St. Andrews attracts students from all over the world, who usually return to their home countries with an intensely high regard for Scotland in general and for St. Andrews in particular. Here in the US, I have also met Americans who studied at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen who feel the same way. They select these universities based on their individual reputations and I have never heard any of them suggest that Scottish universities would benefit from greater regulation.

In my personal experience of the US education system, I have seen how a proliferation of rules and regulations, an excessive focus on consistency, and a large bureaucracy sap the joy from teaching and learning and give our schools a pervasive air of depression and paralysis. Recently, a teacher in a neighbouring state asked me to act as a supply teacher for her for one week, in a subject where I have an M.Litt. degree, and I was not able to get permission to do so because my credential evaluation (a statement required for anyone who earned a degree outside the US) was done by a company that happens not to be on her state’s list of approved evaluators. No one at the school where I was asked to supply had any doubt about my credentials or ability, but they were not allowed to use their own judgment. They rarely are. The end result of this is that our system does not attract the best and brightest teachers, but rather those with a high tolerance for bureaucracy and oversight, and even they are dispirited.

For the excellent universities of Scotland, the freedom to decide on their own strategies and policies can only be a good thing. They are already aiming very high and drawing ambitious students from a global pool. As we say in this part of the world: if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

regards,