Submission from Professor Jim Howe

Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill

To the Clerk to Education and Culture Committee

I am writing to record my strong opposition to the contents of the Higher Education Governance Bill which I believe is a wholly unnecessary intrusion into the affairs of the Scottish Universities which, by and large, have an enviable record of achievement in teaching and research, built up over very many years of hard graft, and have acquired an international reputation for excellence.

I write this as a Scot, a graduate of St Andrews University, and Emeritus Professor of Artificial Intelligence at Edinburgh University. The School of Informatics at Edinburgh University, which I helped to build over a lifetime, is currently the largest and most highly rated academic department in the UK in advanced computing, with significant links to Industry both here and overseas. That it exists today is due to the farsightedness of my senior colleagues who supported what in the beginning seemed to be an unattainable goal. They did so because of their faith in their colleagues' ability to deliver against their promises. No politician could have anything useful to contribute to such a creative process which is well beyond his/her ken. Indeed, my fear is that heavy handed political interference will do irreparable damage to the governance and operation of what ought to be amongst the most highly cherished institutions in Scotland. So, hands off!

Emeritus Professor Jim Howe