Submission from Robert Bentley

I am writing to express my concern over the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill currently under consideration by the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

The proposed legislation would undermine the autonomy of Scottish Universities by giving future Governments significant influence and control without the safeguard of parliamentary scrutiny. This poses a danger to the ability of Universities to ensure academic freedom and act as sources of independent thinking, offering analysis and comment without fear or favour.

I also have serious concerns about the financial implications of the Bill, which include:

- concern that the Government has significantly underestimated the costs of compliance – in particular in relation to proposals for remuneration of chairs and the amount of work to implement the legislative change through reviewing, consulting, amending and implementing University ordinances
- concern that reductions in institutional autonomy will harm the global competitiveness of Scottish Universities and their relationships with business and charitable/philanthropic funders
- concern about the risk that the increased Ministerial control will jeopardise Universities’ charitable status

Given that there has been no compelling explanation of the problem that the legislation is trying to solve, I urge that the proposed legislation be tabled *sine die*.

Robert Bentley