Submission from Tom Scott

I wish to add my name to those who are protesting at the proposed HEG bill.

Before I allude to the specific academic issues, I note with alarm the tendency of the present Scottish Government to centralize essential services (police, fire, ambulance), despite the claims made by the Yes Campaign during the recent Independence Referendum that the SNP stood for a revival of local political engagement and accountability.

The current HEG bill seems to perpetuate the same misguided policy.

The Higher Education sector in Scotland is extremely varied, and that is entirely to be applauded. But it is hard to see how a unitary administrative structure could serve the needs of institutions as disparate as colleges of further education (e.g. Borders College), specialist technical institutions (e.g. Scottish Textile College Galashiels), distance-learning colleges (e.g. the University of the Highlands), alongside 'traditional' universities.

The performance of the University of St Andrews, of which I am a member, enjoys international recognition: its recruitment and fund-raising differ fundamentally from other more 'regional' universities.

How are these institution to be compared? Where are their common needs? How is equivalence to be achieved?

Is there any evidence that current governance is deficient or inefficient?

And if that were to be the case, why has the evidence not been made public?

This proposed legislation seems misguided: it addresses a problem which does not exist by suggesting a procrustean structure of governance which will inhibit higher education institutions from pursuing policies tailored to and appropriate to their very varied needs.