



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education



Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

A' brosnachadh foghlam adhartach agus àrd ìre

Our ref: 246802904

12 October 2016

Mr James Dornan MSP
Convener
Education and Skills Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Dornan,

I am writing in regard to your recent letter concerning the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) relating to the Higher Education and Research Bill.

I can confirm that the Scottish Funding Council is content with the LCM. The provisions for extending the powers of the Secretary of State in the area of research funding are not, in our view, contentious. The provision to allow for joint working between SFC, Research England (as a part of the legal entity EKRI) and the Office for Students is welcome. To take one example, this will allow us to continue the effective partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England on the Research Excellence Framework into the future arrangements. Also, we have no concerns about the contents relating to the Teaching Excellence Framework.

We agree with Ms Somerville's points in her letter to the Public Bill Committee on 12 September 2016, in which she raises the unresolved issue of the proposed new research infrastructure arrangements, and the challenges and risks of establishing a hybrid body with both England-only and UK responsibilities.

In terms of the Teaching Excellence Framework, we support Ms Somerville's views and, in particular, would like to echo her support for, and recognition of, Scotland's existing well-developed enhancement approach to quality.

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We were pleased to learn that, on 29 September, Mr Johnson wrote to the Convenor of Universities Scotland, Professor Andrea Nolan, inviting her to convene a discussion group to work with the Department for Education to design the TEF as it moves into work at the subject-level.

Yours sincerely

Martin Fairbairn

Chief Operating Officer