The University of Dundee is grateful for the opportunity to submit evidence in the consideration of the above bill at stage 1. The University supports the evidence submitted by Universities Scotland, but would wish to expand on this as follows.

The University acknowledges that the abolition of the graduate endowment was a manifesto commitment and that the bill should legitimately proceed. The University also acknowledges that the abolition of the graduate endowment will benefit Scottish students studying in Scotland, and that it will remove what may have been a barrier to access.

Notwithstanding this, and in light of the budget and spending review outcome recently laid before the Scottish Parliament, the University firmly believes that a wider debate needs to take place in Scotland on the funding of higher education if Scottish universities are to compete on a level playing field with competitors in the rest of the United Kingdom and overseas, and more importantly if we are to fulfil the aspirations of the Scottish Government and the higher education sector itself. We would point out in this respect the importance of science and research & development in the recently published Scottish Government Economic Strategy. A failure to address the long-term funding needs of Scottish universities will undermine these aspirations and objectives. As a nation, we must tackle the funding disparity caused by the introduction of deferred variable fees in England, which will only be made more severe by the widely expected removal of the cap to English fees.

The University notes the statement in the policy memorandum that the abolition of the graduate endowment will not have any implications for university funding, but any change in the financial arrangements for higher education can surely only be taken in the wider context of the spending review as a whole.