



University
of
St Andrews

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Professor Louise Richardson, FRSE
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

StA/LR/jb/ThomasBalding180313

18 March 2013

Professor Mark G Thomas
Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT

Professor David Balding
Genetics Institute
University College London
Darwin Building
Gower Street
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Dear Professors Thomas and Balding

I am writing in response to your complaint against Mr Alistair Moffat, as Rector of the University of St Andrews.

Before going further, I think it is important that I explain the nature of the role of Rector at St Andrews. This position of Rector is unique to the ancient Scottish Universities. Our Rector is not an employee of the university and is not subject to any of the rules or procedures that govern the behaviour of academic or non-academic staff. Rather, the Rector is a person external to the university who is elected by the student body to represent their interests for a period of three years. In this capacity the Rector, while lacking executive powers, also presides over the University Court, the supreme decision making body of the university.

On receiving your complaint I asked the most senior member of our Academic Senate to convene a panel and investigate. The panel has concluded that the wording of part of a letter sent to you by the Rector's solicitors on September 3rd, 2012 was contrary to the principles of academic freedom and honest scientific debate in a matter of public interest. These findings have been accepted by the Business Committee of Senate.

As freedom of academic inquiry is the core principle of any university the Senate strongly disapproves of such action. We wish to make clear, however, that the dispute is between you and Mr Moffat in his capacity as a private businessman and the university has no locus in this dispute. We very much regret that the university has unwittingly been drawn into the matter and we have asked Mr Moffat to delineate more clearly between the university and his personal business interests.

The University of St Andrews expects all members of our community, whether they are staff, students or office holders, to respect fully the principle of academic freedom and to promote unhindered academic inquiry at all times.

I appreciate your bringing the matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Professor Louise Richardson FRSE
Principal & Vice-Chancellor

cc Professor Malcolm Grant