Present: Colin Duncan (Convener), Christine Burgess, Alan Campbell, Michael Cooper, Stephen Duggan, Nigel Lindsay, Tom Lynch, Willie MacColl, Mike McConnell, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Marjory Reid, Muriel Roberts, Jenny Shirreffs, Joseph Wallace, Brian Wood, with Caroline Inglis and Bruce Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies were received from Alex Arthur, Corinne Blackstock, Jacquelynn Craw, Eric Crockart, Duncan Macniven, Emily Mitchell, Paul Rorie and Jennifer Sewel.

41 MINUTES

The Minutes of meeting held on 24 April 2014 were approved subject to Mr McConnell’s attendance being recorded.

The Convener welcomed Mr Wallace to the meeting.

42 RECTOR

The Committee expressed its sadness following the death of the Rector, Dr Maitland Mackie and recorded its appreciation of the considerable contribution he had made to the Committee and the University generally.

43 MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising that were not otherwise covered on the agenda were noted.

44 PRESENTATION FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The Committee received a presentation from the Principal which covered a range of aspects of the University’s current performance including student recruitment, teaching quality, enhancing the student experience, retention, widening access, research quality and impact, league tables, and the commercialisation of research.

There followed an extended discussion during which the Committee discussed with the Principal matters relating to spend per student, the University’s approach to Online Learning and its forthcoming collaboration with FutureLearn, the percentage of students graduating with Upper Second or First Class Honours, the future of postgraduate education, the University’s relationship with local secondary schools, and the potential for the University to develop overseas campuses.

45 CONVENER’S REPORT

The Convener congratulated those members who had been re-elected to the Committee at the recent Statutory Meeting of the General Council, which had been well attended.

The Convener reflected on the work of the Committee over his term of office and its achievements. The Convener recorded his thanks to all members of the Committee for their contributions to this and for the support of the University.

The Committee recorded its thanks for the considerable service and leadership that Mr Duncan had given as Convener.

46 REPORTS FROM GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS
The Committee noted that there had been no meeting of Court since the last meeting of Committee and that there were no updates to receive from the Assessors.

47 UPDATE ON REVIEW OF SIZE OF COURT

The Committee noted that the Convener anticipated that Court would now discuss a model for its future size and composition which maintained the current number of General Council Assessors. In discussion, it was noted that as part of this, consideration was being given to ensuring that a number of constituencies on Court, including General Council Assessors, complied with governance best practice in relation to equality and diversity, terms of office and there being procedures in place to remove, if necessary, any member of Court from office, should a governor’s conduct materially breach the University’s Code of Conduct for governors.

The Committee noted that it would be consulted on the draft Ordinance to give effect to any amendment of the Court’s size and composition.

48 APPOINTMENT OF THE CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER

The Committee noted that as agreed at the last meeting, members of the Committee were invited to submit nominations for the position of Convener to succeed Mr Colin Duncan when he retired from the position on 30 September 2014. At the close of nominations, one nomination had been received from Mr Eric Crockart.

The Committee approved the appointment of Mr Crockart as the Convener with effect from 1 October 2014 for the remainder of his current term of office (30 September 2016).

The Committee considered the process for the appointment of a Vice-Convener and agreed that all members would be invited by circulation to stand or submit nominations for the role. Thereafter, if there were to be more than one nomination received, the Committee would be balloted by circulation and the result announced at the next meeting. In the event of only one nomination being received, this would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

49 FUTURE BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee discussed potential future items of business. A number of suggestions were considered, these being: Chaplaincy and Inter-faith centre, Research Themes, the University and the local community, Special Collections, Oceanlab, the future use of the Mitchell Hall, Internationalisation, Massive Open Online Courses, Widening Access, Fundraising, the University’s Capital Plan, and the Students’ Association. The Committee agreed that it should receive a list of potential items to discuss and prioritise.

The Committee agreed that it should hold some of its meetings in other parts of the University’s campuses.

It was also agreed that when considering changes to Degree Regulations there should be a member of staff from the University in attendance and was able to comment on these.

50 ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee noted a paper summarising the outcome election of members of the Committee to six vacancies, two of which were current with a further four arising from 1 October 2014.
The following candidates were elected to the six vacancies (four arising from the conclusion of existing members’ terms of office as at 30 September 2014).

Ms Christine Burgess MA  
Mr Colin Duncan MA  
Mr Nigel Lindsay MA MLitt  
Dr Duncan Macniven MA MLitt LLD  
Ms Susan Stuart MA  
Mr Joseph Wallace BSc

The Committee noted that Mr Wallace and Mr Macniven have been invited to take up their positions immediately given that two of the six vacancies were current.

The Committee noted that following the recent death of Dr Maitland Mackie, there was now a further vacancy for an elected member on the Committee. The Committee agreed that Ms Marjory Reid be reappointed for a further term of office to this vacancy.

51 GOVAN EVENT

The Committee noted a report from Mr Lindsay on a recent event in Govan that he had attended on behalf of the Convener. The event had been a commemoration of Glasgow teachers who had lost their lives in the First World War, one of whom had been a graduate of the University of Aberdeen.

52 ROLE OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee received and noted a paper setting out its role, which was routinely included for its information.

53 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings.