UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2016

Present: Eric Crockart (Convener), Alex Arthur, Corinne Blackstock, Nuala Booth, Alan Campbell, Sir Ian Diamond (Principal part meeting only), Stephen Duggan, Colin Duncan, Grainne Ferrigan (Clerk), Igor Guz, Caroline Inglis (University Secretary), Nigel Lindsay, Tom Lynch, Bryan MacGregor, Duncan Macniven, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Bruce Purdon (part meeting only), Marjory Reid, Muriel Roberts, Karen Scaife, Susan Stuart, Joe Wallace, Brian Wood.

Apologies: Christine Burgess, Mike Cooper, Willie McColl, Emily Mitchell, Mary Stephen, Paul Rorie and Jenny Shirreffs.

1. MINUTES
The minutes from the meeting held on 12 November were approved, subject to the reference to Athena Swan being deleted.

2. MATTERS ARISING
No matters arising were noted.

3. THE SPENDING REVIEW AND THE UNIVERSITY
The Principal delivered a presentation on the Scottish budget and the fact that there will be a 3.3% cut in funding in 2016/17. This is better than had been anticipated, although taken together with cuts in grants in the areas of teaching, research, and transitional funding, the total reduction will be 3.9%.

In 2016/17 there will be a major decrease in capital funding. A paper will be presented to the next meeting of Court, working through the implications for budgets. The University expects less money in future from the Scottish Funding Council, and will therefore have to diversify, recruiting new students outside of Scotland and the EU – England, Wales and NI.

The Principal indicated the Capital Plan will need to be rethought. In discussion, he said he would welcome Business Committee assistance with lobbying, adding that the University could provide a ‘talking points’ document to members for this purpose. He assured committee members that the student/staff ratio will be maintained. With regards to the City Deal there will not now be capital development on campus, including the planned Energy Building, but there may be refurbishment. On the issue of Britain’s membership of the EU, it is the Principal’s personal opinion that it is imperative for the medium term health of the University for the UK to stay in Europe. He concluded by welcoming any follow up emails from Business Committee members.

4. DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE KOREA CAMPUS
Professor Igor Guz and Professor Bryan McGregor gave a presentation and answered questions on the governance of the proposed campus, which will be located in the fourth largest ship building area in South Korea. Although the project is supported by the Korean government, the oil price downturn has had an impact, including on the level of demand from potential students. But there is no
educational alternative in South Korea to what the University is offering. It has been calculated that the maximum financial exposure to the University would be £2.5m over five years.

The Business Committee thanked the professors, and endorsed the draft resolution ahead of its further consideration by the University Court.

5. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener drew attention to the HE Governance Bill and correspondence he had received from other conveners of Business Committees in the other ancient universities. This correspondence had highlighted that the Bill had been amended to remove the requirement for two graduate members of governing bodies/courts. The Committee noted that the Court would be receiving an initial report on the implications of the Bill for its composition on 22 March. The Convener pointed out that any matters of concern then identified could be raised in email communications between members, and formally discussed if necessary at the next Business Committee meeting in June.

It was resolved that the Convener and Business Committee would monitor developments.

The Convener noted that pairing the statutory meeting in December with the carol service at St Machar's Cathedral had not resulted in an increase in attendance, and sought the Committee's views on alternatives. Steve Duggan suggested that a change is not necessary as a different event will not result in an increase in numbers. Muriel Roberts proposed video streaming meetings to international chapters. Tom Lynch concurred that he would welcome video streaming because he has to travel from Edinburgh and doing so in winter conditions is more onerous. Karen Scaife noted that video links have been used in the past to good effect and can be used again, especially as it is not cost prohibitive. Email communications about the meetings could be more sophisticated, with better content. Karen said help from the committee with messaging would be much appreciated. It was agreed the Convener and Vice Convener would follow these matters up with Karen.

The Convener drew attention to the four-year terms of office for his post and the Vice Convener's post laid down in General Council Standing Orders, and that they should be out of sync by two years. He pointed out that these rules were not taken into account when the committee previously decided all members should serve a maximum of nine years before having to come off the committee for at least one year. The Convener completes his nine years at the end of September, and then has to leave the committee, having served for only two years as Convener. He said the committee might wish to consider these matters again regarding the appointment and terms of office of future conveners and vice-conveners.

6. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

The Committee noted an update on upcoming alumni events locally, in Edinburgh and internationally, with alumni chapter launches in Lagos, Bangkok and Beijing in 2016. There was also an update on streamlining the import of graduate data, when Voice magazine will be published (end of May 2016), and the prospect of Guardian scholarships for alumni.

The next statutory meeting would take place in the King's Conference Centre on Saturday 28 May, during the May Festival. There will be a block booking of tickets for the Chapel Choir event, which all members are welcome to attend.

7. GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS' ELECTION

The Committee received and noted a report on the outcome of the General Council Assessor to Court nominations and elections process. Two nominations had been received for the two positions, Ian Percival and Jenny Shirreffs. Under the election regulations, as the number of candidates was the same as the number of vacancies, Mr Percival and Mrs Shirreffs were appointed (with effect from 1 October 2016) without the need for an election of General Council Members.

8. ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE
Karen Scaife noted that there will be five vacancies and nomination forms can be requested from her. The following members are eligible for re-election: Steve Duggan, Paul Rorie, Tom Lynch and Alan Campbell.

Duncan Macniven asked if anything can be done to encourage nominations from international alumni. The Convener said Business Committee members can suggest suitable people. Colin Duncan noted that a previous international member did join meetings by teleconference, though the Convener pointed out the challenges of audibility and travel costs. Colin Duncan indicated that he would be happy to second a nomination of an international member. Muriel Roberts warned against ‘positive discrimination’, noting that individuals themselves must be interested in participating. Joe Wallace felt that the Business Committee should not be so Aberdeen based, and that there needs to be an awareness of technological advances to allow participation from international alumni so they can become members of the Business Committee. Lynne Mennie suggested that use of hashtags and social media channels could be useful in this regard.

9. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION PROCESS FOR NEW CONVENER AND VICE CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Karen Scaife has the nomination forms and the deadline for submission of forms to her is 4pm on 5 May. Candidates need a proposer and seconder, and must consent to be nominated as a candidate for convener. If there is only one nomination, confirmation will happen at the June meeting. If there is more than one nomination, a ballot of Committee members will be arranged in advance of the meeting in consultation with the Convener. Appointment of the Vice Convener will be left until the June meeting, after the Convener has been appointed. Term start dates may need to change for these positions and can be looked at in the future. Both should not stop at the same time for continuity’s sake. Nuala Booth suggested that the Business Committee should be able to make the change.

10. DRAFT COURT MINUTES FROM 8 DECEMBER MEETING AND REPORTS FROM ASSESSORS

Colin Duncan remarked that it is useful to have the minutes available to the Business Committee. It was confirmed that Caroline Inglis is the new Registrar and Clerk to the General Council.

11. AOCB

No other items of business were noted.

12. Date of the next meeting Thursday 9 June 2016, 4pm, Committee Room 2