NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC BOARD
16 May 2012

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair) and 47 members of the Academic Board.

There were insufficient members at the meeting to constitute a quorum (100 members).

NOTES

1. NOTES OF THE 18 MAY 2011 MEETING

   The notes of the meeting of Academic Board held on 18 May 2011 were available at:
   http://www.ncl.ac.uk/executive/governance/academic/minutes.htm

2. NOMINATIONS FOR HONORARY AWARDS 2013

   2.1 Honorary Degrees

   The Honorary Degrees Committee invited nominations in writing for next year’s
   Congregation. Any member of Academic Board, Court, Council and the Alumni
   Consultative Group may make a nomination and support for nominees for honorary
   degrees should be sought only from members of these bodies. Where several members
   made a joint nomination, one should be shown as the nominator and the others as
   supporters. The grounds on which the nomination was made should be clearly stated.

   Principles for the award of Honorary Degrees could be found at:
   http://www.ncl.ac.uk/congregations/ceremonies/honorary/nom_hongrad.php

   Proposals should be sent in envelopes marked ‘Confidential - Honorary Degrees’ to Dr J V Hogan, Registrar, King’s Gate by Tuesday, 31 July 2012.

   2.2 Honorary Fellowships of the University

   Court invited nominations in writing for the award of next year’s Honorary Fellowships of
   the University. Any lay member of Court and Council, the Alumni Consultative Group and
   members of Academic Board may make a nomination. Where several members made a
   joint nomination, one should be shown as the nominator and the others as supporters.
   The grounds on which the nomination was made should be clearly stated.

   Principles for the award of Honorary Fellowships of the University could be found at:
   http://www.ncl.ac.uk/congregations/ceremonies/honorary/nom_honfell.php

   Proposals should be sent in envelopes marked ‘Confidential - Honorary Fellowships’ to
   Dr J V Hogan, Registrar, King’s Gate by Friday, 8 March 2013.

3. REPORT BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

   Received an oral report by the Vice-Chancellor on current business.

   Noted that:

   1. The new fees and funding regime has been introduced whereby student fees will
      replace most of the previously provided state funding from September 2012. The first of
the HEFCE teaching grant cutbacks has been implemented through a 20% reduction for 2012-13. The cutbacks will continue for the next four years through the transition period of the changes to the fee dispensation.

2. The deregulation of student numbers introduced by the Government, whereby universities are able to recruit as many AAB students as they wish, has created a market led economy at a national level. Conversions from applications to registrations to meet targets is critical and the ability to meet targets will vary by School.

The government has recently announced that uncapped recruitment of the highest-achieving students at A-level will be extended to the ABB threshold in 2013-14.

3. The UK Border Agency (UKBA) has insisted that all universities must now monitor the attendance of all international students, on a weekly basis.

4. The National Student Survey satisfaction results for 2011 increased to 89%. The participation rate for the 2012 survey has reached an all time high of 71% with the results due shortly. The International Student Barometer Survey (ISB) results are exceptionally good. Newcastle achieved an overall satisfaction score of 91.4%, placing us 6th out of the 12 participating Russell Group institutions, with students scoring the institution highest in arrival (88%), learning (90.2%) and living (91.4%).

5. Research income is up on previous years, showing a slight increase (~4%). 2010/11 was a good year for Research Council awards – Newcastle ranked 13th by value of awards.

6. We now have a full suite of 3 Societal Challenge Themes, each led by one of the three faculties, including a range of engagement activities regionally, nationally and internationally:
   - Ageing (Newcastle Initiative on Changing Age – NICA, Director Prof Tom Kirkwood)
   - Sustainability (Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability – NIReS, Director Prof Paul Younger)
   - Social Renewal (Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal – NISR, Director Prof Mark Shucksmith)

7. The University employed Ms Abi Kelly, as Interim Director of Public Relations to conduct a review on PR matters for the University, as this had been an area which had limited resources dedicated to it previously. The University has now confirmed Ms Kelly’s post as Director of Public Relations.

8. 2011-12 is proving to be a difficult year financially, but the University remains well placed and we still expect to achieve our budget. As reported last year, we still have healthy cash balances. The University remains reasonably confident about overall student recruitment but recognises that some subjects will struggle to meet their target numbers.

9. Significant building works have been undertaken across campus, including the refurbishment of the Students’ Union building, the demolition of the Museum of Antiquities building leading to the new paved Student Forum in front of the Armstrong Building, the Biomedical Sciences building at the Campus for Ageing and Vitality, and the INTO building works that will all be completed by September 2012. Phase 2 of the Armstrong Building redevelopment will begin in Summer 2012 and the redevelopment of the Grand Hotel, Kensington Terrace and Park Terrace are all scheduled to commence in October 2012.

10. We are continuing to make good progress in environmental sustainability, despite the additional building works. For example, we have achieved Gold Eco Campus status, with our bid for Platinum status under way. Our recycling rate for 2009/10 is 93%; the
The proportion of staff travelling to work by car has reduced from 40% in 2004 to 22% in 2010; and the University is participating in the second trial of introducing electric cars with the City Council.

4. QUESTIONS

It was reported that the Vice-Chancellor would be pleased to answer questions at the meeting from members of Academic Board and would be grateful to receive notice of these as far as possible. Members had been asked to submit to him in writing details of any questions they wished to raise by noon on Monday, 14 May 2012.

1. Professor Colin Brooks, (Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences) “As the Vice-Chancellor is probably aware, there is considerable anxiety amongst staff as to what will happen to them if they are not included in the REF submission? Can the Vice Chancellor give an assurance that the University will not impose changes to the terms and conditions, or impose any other detriment, on staff as a consequence of them not being submitted in the REF return?”

Response:

The REF submission process requires the completion and submission of a Code of Practice document. This document has been developed based on the fair and transparent selection of staff and we will ensure that these principles are adopted at each stage of the process when preparing REF submissions. Strategic and tactical decisions on who will/will not be submitted will be made for individual Units of Assessment throughout the University.

The evaluation of an individual’s performance in the University is not based on research alone. We have parity of esteem that ensures that performance is measured in teaching, research and engagement, carried out through the annual PDR process.

2. Mr Wayne Connolly, (University Library) “Following the changes introduced by the Government for the recruitment of AAB and ABB students, does the Vice-Chancellor feel that the University will be affected by the expansion plans of other universities?”

Response:

The market economy created by the government at a national level will lead to an increase in competitiveness. To some extent, it is a reputation game which needs to be played, and we need to ensure that the information which is available about us in the public domain will allow individuals to form a positive valued judgement about the University as a whole.

Impressions will be formed from the success stories of an individual University, aspects of student life, academic delivery, successful international links and overall appearance of the University. Reputation and quality will be key indicators.

The Vice-Chancellor ended by thanking all staff and students for the successes enjoyed by the University over the past year.