UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

SENATE

16 November 2004

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Baylis, Professor Page, Professor Ritchie and Professor Stevenson (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr P E Andras, Dr J C Appleby, Professor Batchelor, Dr H M Berry, Dr R J Boys, Dr J E Calvert, Professor Chinnery, Dr E G N Cross, Ms R S Currie (Education Officer), Professor Davis, Professor Gatehouse, Ms R C Gilroy, Professor Goodfellow, Mr T Gorman (Communications Officer), Professor Hall, Dr G R Hammond, Professor Harwood, Professor Hughes, Dr A C Hurlbert, Dr E F S Kaner, Dr C O Record, Professor Riordan, Professor Seymour, Professor Wheelock and Mr A M Wilton.

In attendance: Dr J V Hogan (Registrar), Mr H B Farnhill (Bursar), Mr P S Mitchell (Academic Registrar), Mrs V S Johnston (Director of Human Resources) and Mrs L M Brotherton (Human Resources Officer).

Mrs L Braiden (Director of Student Recruitment) attended for item 16 and Mr L M Aviss attended for item 20.

The student members were not present for items presented under reserved business.

MINUTES

PART A: STRATEGIC ISSUES


Received a presentation from Mrs Lesley Braiden, Director of Student Recruitment, on the Recruitment Strategy for 2006, together with an accompanying paper.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document A. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The additional income from the increased home undergraduate fee for full-time students was estimated to rise to approximately £24m when it reached steady state after five years. It was necessary, in order to be permitted to charge the higher fee, to have an access agreement approved by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

2. OFFA had recently published guidelines on producing access agreements which needed to be submitted by mid-March at the latest, and preferably by early January. There had also been considerable publicity in recent days concerning the expectations of OFFA.
3. It was clear that the University would be required to earmark a significant amount of the additional fee income to provide targeted support to certain under-represented groups of students, as well as taking additional steps to improve its widening participation performance.

4. The University had made considerable progress in some areas of widening participation. In particular, the social profile of students admitted from the North East to the University more than met all the benchmarks that had been established by the HEFCE. However, the University still fell considerably short of its overall benchmarks which included the recruitment of students from outside the region. It was recognised that it would be particularly difficult to make substantial progress on this given the close and increasing correlation between wealth and the ability to study outside one’s immediate area.

5. As part of the University’s strategy it was intended to:
   - continue to expand the widening participation work and in particular extend specific schemes to other parts of the North;
   - continue to seek extremely well qualified students and increase our entry grades wherever possible;
   - improve the information made available to academic selectors and the process for undergraduate admissions;
   - support faculties and schools in the key role of converting applications into registrations;
   - provide targeted financial support to help the University achieve its widening participation aims.

6. Detailed consideration was now being given to the level of funding required for bursaries and other activities in light of the OFFA publication and announcements.

7. The requirements to prepare an access agreement raised some serious difficulties for the University and could potentially create a difficult recruitment situation if the University failed to provide adequate bursaries for key target student groups.

8. It was estimated that nationally 80% of higher education institutions intended to charge the full £3,000 fee but the plans for individual institutions, in particular those in the North East, were still not known. Institutions had rightly regarded this, and the level of bursary support, to be commercially sensitive and had not made this information available.

9. There were significant differences in the recruitment profiles of different higher education institutions. However, it was likely that the trend towards all universities relying more on local recruitment would continue and this presented some particular difficulties for the North East given the relatively small number of students who progress from the school education system into higher education. It was already the case that 30% of all North East students who applied to enter into higher education include the University of Newcastle as one of their specified choices.

10. Further significant changes to our recruitment and admissions activity would be necessary following the introduction of a post-qualification application system. The Secretary of State had expressed very strong support for the introduction of such a system.
11. There were clear advantages in supporting teachers as part of the University’s recruitment activity.

12. Use was already made of some of our current students in ambassador roles and Executive Board had considered a proposal to expand this scheme.

13. Concern was expressed about the need to maintain a high quality teaching and learning environment for students. In particular, concern was expressed about the adverse staff:student ratios in certain parts of the University and the desirability of addressing such problems as a matter of urgency.

14. It had been thought desirable to try to set out extremely clearly the level of support the University would make available to students entering from 2006 onwards and minimise the amount of administration required. As a result, Executive Board had discussed the linking of bursaries directly to those students who received other forms of financial support and had discussed a specific figure which would enable a substantial amount to be paid to students in the years 1, 2 and 3.

15. The University had a number of key marketing advantages which it intended to continue to maximise as part of its recruitment strategy.

16. Owing to the very short timetable set by OFFA, it would not be possible to come back to Senate with specific financial details which the University intended to propose in the access agreement, but the final version of the agreement would be made available to Senate.

PART B : GENERAL BUSINESS

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed.

18. Matters arising from the Minutes

(a) Progress of business

Received a business tracking form.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(b) Membership of Senate
(Minute 9, 21.9.2004)

Reported that:

(a) The Union Society had appointed Mr Christopher Donnelly as the student member on Senate with immediate effect until 31 July 2005.
(b) Nominations were invited, by the closing date of 5 November, for the casual vacancy on Senate arising from Professor Ritchie’s appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning). As more than one nomination had been received, an electronic ballot would be conducted.

Noted that the new electronic ballot system was unable, at present, to support a single transferable vote (STV) mechanism and instead could just run on a ‘first past the post’ election.

Considered a request to permit elections to casual vacancies onto Senate to be run on a ‘first past the post’ ballot using the new electronic system, on the understanding that the annual ballot for Senate vacancies would still be conducted on the STV mechanism.

Resolved that the above request be approved.

19. Vice-Chancellor’s business

(a) Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

[Details filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.

(b) Stem Cell Research

Reported that the University had received an extraordinary amount of publicity during the summer concerning the decision to grant it a licence to conduct further work on human embryos. The media had concentrated on the use of a technique which could be used for cloning. Most of the media coverage had been extremely favourable recognizing the scientific expertise required and the potential of the process for making a major contribution to the advancement of medical sciences. The University had prepared its own briefing information and this had been well received. Nevertheless, there had been some complaints many of which were addressed when it was explained that the process did not involve the use of fertilized embryos.

(c) All Saints College

Reported that the University was a partner with the Church of England and the City Council in the work of All Saints College. This was a new college formed from two failing schools. The University was particularly interested in helping to identify barriers to progression to higher education. The new Head of School had decided to make an application for special school status for business and enterprise and required £50,000 in sponsorship. He had been successful in raising £30,000 and the Vice-Chancellor had recently agreed to provide the additional £20,000 required.

Dr Appleby has declared an interest in this item being a governor of the School. He reported that the School would be extremely grateful for the support and that
there had already been a marked improvement in the educational attainment of the students.

(d) Redundancy Committee

Reported that:

(a) Council, in the previous academic year, had agreed to give the Chairman of Council delegated authority to establish a Redundancy Committee for specific cases involving researchers on external funding.

(b) The Sowerby Centre for Health Informatics (SCHIN) was now a wholly owned subsidiary company of the University. As a result of contract re-negotiation with the NHS, the amount of money made available to SCHIN had been reduced and as a consequence it was necessary to reduce the staffing levels. Some employees had volunteered for redundancy and in other cases secondments from the NHS had been terminated. However, it was possible that a redundancy situation would now arise for one University employee and, since this individual was a researcher on an open-ended contract, it was necessary to follow the statutory procedure.

(c) The University intended to follow its normal redundancy procedure which involved seeking to avoid redundancies wherever possible by redeployment or other means. Nevertheless, if such mechanisms were not successful in this case a potential redundancy situation would be created.

(d) Under the Statutes, the responsibility for the establishment of a Redundancy Committee rested with Council and Senate’s role was to nominate two members of academic staff to be members of the Redundancy Committee.

(e) The AUT had expressed opposition to the establishment of the Redundancy Committee on the basis that the circumstances surrounding this particular case had not been managed appropriately and on the basis of opposition to any compulsory redundancy.

(f) Concern was expressed about the danger of inappropriate discussion of the employment position of an individual member of staff in Senate and the desirability, in future, to ensure that Council took a decision to establish a Redundancy Committee prior to a written request to Senate being made to nominate two members of the Redundancy Committee.

Resolved that:

(i) Senate communicate to Council its hope that compulsory redundancy would not prove necessary.

(ii) Professor C Ritson and Dr E G N Cross be nominated as Senate’s members on the Redundancy Committee should Council decide to establish such a Committee.
(iii) In the event of either being unwilling or unable to serve, Senate authorised the Vice-Chancellor to nominate alternative members of academic staff on its behalf for this particular case.

(iv) Senate made the nominations on the understanding that on this particular occasion the Chairman of Council would not exercise her delegated authority but instead information on the case would be presented to the next meeting of Council for Council itself to determine whether it would wish to establish a Redundancy Committee.

(v) Senate would be informed if Council decided to establish a Redundancy Committee.

20. Review of the Relationship between the University and the Union Society  
(Minute 25, 2.12.2003)

Received an oral progress report from Mr Llew Aviss, Chairman of the Committee set up to review the relationship between the University and the Union Society.

After noting that:

1. Mr Llew Aviss had been chairing the review of the Union Society and it was intended to produce a written report by the end of the calendar year.

2. The legal and constitutional position of the Union Society had emerged as an area of significant concern. Mr Ashley Wilton had very kindly offered his legal opinion to the Working Group. There appeared to be considerable confusion about the position of the Trustees and specifically their powers and liabilities. The Trustees, under the 1925 Trust, had responsibility for the Union Society building, but no source of funding. The University provided funding to the Union Society, but for a building over which it had no rights. The potential liabilities on the Trustees were, therefore, very high since they were left with the building as the only significant asset available to them.

3. The Working Group had identified issues concerning funding and transparency of the Union Society and the need for clear accountability. It was considering mechanisms for the appropriate way to manage the relationship between the University and the Union Society and had considered the operation of student unions in other universities.

4. Particular issues had been raised concerning the funding of sport provision.

5. The Review Group had been concerned with the facilities made available to the students.

6. There was widespread support for the view that a vibrant Union Society was important for the University.

7. In the view of the student representatives, notwithstanding the potential difficulties in the position of the Trustees, they would wish it recorded that the relationship between the Union Society and the Trustees had worked very effectively in the past.
8. As part of the review, a survey had been conducted of students to obtain a better understanding of the services which they required from the Union Society.

Resolved that:

(i) **Mr Llew Aviss** be thanked for his report and his work to date on behalf of the University.

(ii) **Mr Ashley Wilton** be thanked for his very valuable legal contribution.

21. Reports from Executive Board

Considered a report from the meetings of Executive Board held on 28 September and 12 October 2004.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(a) Proposal to establish a University Research Office and a University Research Committee

Resolved that:

(i) A University Research Committee (URC) be established to replace the current University Research Strategy Group, with draft constitution and terms of reference as attached as Appendix II to Document D.

[Note: The draft terms of reference would be considered by URC at its first meeting and might be subject to amendment.]

(ii) Considerable attention be paid to the organisation of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor portfolios and the co-ordination of research activity internally and research liaison externally.

(iii) It might be desirable to explore the possibility of providing office accommodation in London to support the University’s research activities. This was an issue which the new University Research Committee might wish to consider.

(iv) Further consideration should be given to the name, membership, and necessity of the continuation of a University Research Strategy Group in the light of the establishment of the University Research Committee.

(b) Revisions to the constitution and terms of reference of Executive Board

Noted that:

1. Executive Board wished to amend its terms of reference to make more explicit its responsibility for value for money issues and permit the attendance, although not the membership, of the Director of Information Systems and Services and the Director of Planning, once appointed.

2. Some concern was expressed about the increase in the number of people attending Executive Board.
3. Changes had been made to the title and terms of reference of the Financial Monitoring and Budget Scrutiny Group and the Budget Setting Group, as set out in Appendix IV to Document D.

**Resolved that the amendments to the constitution and terms of reference of Executive Board, as set out in Appendix III to Document D, be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.**

(c) School of Natural Sciences

Noted.

(d) “Enquiries to Registration” Review

Noted that Professor Riordan had chaired a Working Group looking at the postgraduate application processes. Its work had been extremely valuable and Executive Board had agreed to undertake a number of steps to make significant improvements to the application process.

22. Report from Strategy Board

Considered a Report from the meeting of Strategy Board held on 9 November 2004.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

**Annual Strategic Review**

After noting that:

1. The Annual Review contained a great deal of valuable information on the University’s performance.

2. Concern was expressed about the issue of staff:student ratios and the percentage of expenditure on academic staff which would be worth further consideration.

**Resolved that the following recommendations be approved subject to the agreement of Council:**

(i) *That Senate and Council endorse the Report attached as Appendix A to Document E, and the conclusion that the University’s overall performance in 2003/04 had been a successful one, with many areas of improvement over the previous year.*

(ii) *That given the strategic priorities identified for the coming year, the pre-commitments to the fund from previous decisions and the fact that the University had not achieved the planned increase in student income this year, there should be no open bidding process for the remaining headroom funds. If any priority areas emerged during the budget setting process, the Budget Setting Group would consider them at that time when the University’s overall financial position and commitments would be clearer.*
(iii) That the proposals for a Chair in Architectural Design, Chair in Hispanic Studies, Readership in French Studies and Chair in International Politics, as set out in Appendix B to Document E, be approved.

23. Report from the Committee on the appointment of a Public Orator

Considered a Report from the Committee on the appointment of a Public Orator. [Circulated with the Agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that:

(i) The title Deputy Public Orator should be amended to Public Orator-designate.

(ii) Professor Paul Younger be appointed Public Orator-designate with immediate effect until 31 July 2007.

(iii) Senate Standing Order XII be amended to read:

‘The Public Orator and the Public Orator-designate (when such an appointment is required) shall be appointed by Senate after considering a report of a committee. The Public Orator and Public Orator-designate shall hold office for three years.’

24. Report from the Honorary Degrees Committee

[Circulated as Document G with the Agenda. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Special Honorary Degree Ceremony

Noted the intention to hold a special honorary degree ceremony in conjunction with the University of Northumbria in 2006 to mark the Centenary of the RVI.

Honorary Degree nominations

Considered a recommendation from the Honorary Degrees Committee that Senate approve the list of proposed honorary graduands and the honorary degrees for which they would be presented at the congregation ceremony to be held on 6 May 2005 or, in the case of one of the graduands, at either the 6 May 2005 or May 2006 Congregation, or at a special ceremony on another suitable date to be agreed.

Resolved that:

(i) The nominations made by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees on 6 May 2005 be approved, subject to the inclusion of the individual nominated as reserve on this occasion and specified at the meeting, if this proved at all possible within the constraints of the time of the ceremonies.
(ii) **The recommendation for the award of an honorary degree at either the 6 May 2005 or May 2006 Congregation, or at a special ceremony to be arranged on a suitable date to be agreed, be approved.**

[Note: Senators were reminded of the continued confidential classification of the report until further notice.]

**Fellowships of the University**

Noted the difficulty of recognising the substantial contribution made by a number of key individuals to the working of the University and the desirability of establishing an appropriate form of recognition for such contribution.

**Resolved that:**

(i) **The notion of establishing Fellowships of the University as set out in Document G be approved.**

(ii) **Further consideration be given to the appropriate approval and awarding mechanisms, but Senate supported the suggestion that this could be a distinction awarded by Court and not Senate on the grounds that this was not an academic distinction but a recognition of service to the University which could take a number of forms.**

**25. Reports from University Teaching and Learning Committee**

Considered Reports from the meetings of UTLC held on 10 September, 8 October and 3 November 2004.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents H & J. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

(a) **Shape of the Academic Year**

After noting that:

1. The University had found itself in particular difficulties at the start of the 2004-05 academic year due to the early start of the academic year. This had created problems for some overseas students in obtaining visas and it also placed us out of line with the majority of other similar universities.

2. In the light of the problems identified, UTLC had agreed that urgent attention should be given to the possible change of the academic year for 2005-06. It had put together a broad issues paper which had been circulated to faculties and there had been substantial feedback to Professor Ritchie.

3. It was recognised that the proposals under consideration were intended for 2005-06 and would not pre-empt further more detailed investigation of the structure of the academic year in future. However, it was felt that urgent action was required for 2005-06.
4. The proposals were, therefore, relatively modest and it was recognised that the teaching practice in a number of parts of the University differed, making it difficult to produce changes to the pattern of the academic year which would be acceptable to all. Nevertheless, there appeared to be widespread support for shortening the induction process for new students, having a later start to the Autumn Term, and reducing the length of the Christmas vacation from four weeks to three weeks. This would be achieved whilst retaining the current 31 week academic year for undergraduate students.

5. There were mixed views about the desirability of reducing the Easter vacation from the current four weeks to three weeks. It was recognised that the Easter period was a key time for conferences and that some students preferred four weeks at Easter to give longer revision time. In light of these comments, it had therefore been proposed not to press for a reduction of the Easter vacation to three weeks on this occasion.

6. Considerable concern was expressed about the perceived very high levels of assessment for undergraduate students. There appeared to be an imbalance between the number of teaching weeks and the number of assessment weeks under the current academic structures.

7. The proposal to hold the graduation ceremony at an earlier date was welcomed.

8. The student representatives expressed their support for the revised proposals as presented to Senate.

9. The AUT had expressed some concerns about the proposals but accepted that the overall undergraduate academic year would not be increased.

10. The new arrangements will not apply to clinical programmes, ie the MB BS and the BDS, which will continue under the existing exemptions from the normal academic year’.

Resolved that:

(i) The proposals from UTLC to reduce the period of time for student induction and commence the academic year in 2005-06 on 25 September rather than 18 September, be approved. This would entail a three week Christmas vacation and the teaching in the first semester to be split eleven weeks before Christmas and one week after Christmas.

(ii) UTLC re-consider the structure of the academic year for the years beyond 2005-06 in the light of the comments made by Senate and the probable introduction of a post-qualification application system which would make an even later start to the Autumn Term highly desirable.

(iii) Further consideration should be given by UTLC to the presentation of the academic year for postgraduates, given the widespread teaching during the summer period.
(b) Collaborative Provision

Noted.
(c) **Approval of recommendations relating to Degree Programmes and other qualifications awarded by the University**

Noted.

26. **Academic Audit Committee**

Considered proposed amendments to the constitution and terms of reference of Academic Audit Committee.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

**Resolved that the amendments to the constitution and terms of reference of Academic Audit Committee be approved with immediate effect.**

27. **Annual Reports**

Received Annual Reports for 2003/04 from the Hatton Gallery, Hancock Museum and the Archaeological Museums.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents L-N. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

28. **Religious Studies and Linguistics**

(Minute 16(b), 2.12.2003)

Received a Report from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

29. **Annual Report from Public Lectures Committee**

Received the Annual Report from Public Lectures Committee for 2003/04.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

30. **Lunch for members of Court, Council and Senate**

Reported that, in accordance with tradition, Council invites members of Court and Senate to join it for lunch on the day of the last meeting of Council before Christmas. The lunch will be held on 13 December 2004.

31. **Congregation ceremonies : December 2004**

Reported that seven Congregation ceremonies would be held on Wednesday, 8 December 2004 for the conferment of initial and higher degrees.

[Details circulated with the Agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

32. **Reported business**

Received a report of action taken in accordance with agreed procedures, approved where necessary by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate and/or the Chairman of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairmen.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
PART C : RESERVED BUSINESS

33. Professorial Fellowship

Considered a proposal for the award of a Professorial Fellowship.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document S. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Professor I Goryanin be awarded a Professorial Fellowship, to be held jointly in the Faculties of Medical Sciences and SAGe, with immediate effect for a period of five years.

34. Academic distinctions – title of Professor Emeritus (Statute 31(4))

Reported that in accordance with Statute 31(4), Senate may accord the title of Professor Emeritus on professors retiring from the University.

Considered proposals from the Vice-Chancellor for the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus.

Resolved that the title of ‘Professor Emeritus’ be conferred on the following from the dates shown:

Professor M Aitkin, retrospectively from 1 October 2004
Professor P H Baylis, from 1 January 2005

35. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Medical Sciences)

Reported that the Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Senate, had approved a recommendation from the Committee concerned that Professor O F W James be appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Medical Sciences) with effect from 1 November 2004 until 31 July 2008, subject to the agreement of Council.

[Council had subsequently approved the recommendation at its meeting on 11 October.]