NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

C O U R T

11 April 2008

Present: The Chancellor (in the Chair), Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Sir Thomas Allen, Mr AG Balls, Mr NE Braithwaite, Sir Patrick Brown, Sir Peter Carr, Ms M Coyle, Dr EGN Cross, Sir Michael Darrington, Professor GJ Docherty (acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (HASS)), Councillor D Faulkner, Mr AE Glenton, Professor JB Goddard (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Dr VA Hammond, Dr R Hawley, Mr CJ Hilton, Mr PM Jonson, Professor TF Page (Pro-Vice-Chancellor), Lord Judd of Portsea, Miss FM Kirkby, Dr H Loebl, Mr RH Maudslay, Judge Mithani, Mrs S Murray, The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Newcastle, Mr BA Potter (Education Officer), Professor E Ritchie (Pro-Vice-Chancellor), Mr N Sherlock, Mr HM Shukla, Professor AC Stevenson (Pro-Vice-Chancellor), Mr R Taylor, Lord Walton of Detchant and Professor PL Younger.

In attendance: Miss LR Backhurst (Head, Undergraduate Recruitment & Admissions), Mrs L Braiden (Director, Marketing & Communications Directorate), Miss R Draper (Head of Executive Office) and Dr JV Hogan (Registrar).

Apologies for absence: The Rt Hon Alan Beith MP, Mr A Bergshaven, Professor CP Day, Mr J Edwards, Mr HB Farnhill, Mr A Fenwick, Ms C Galley, Professor EV Haimes, Mrs C Harvey, Councillor M Henry, Professor OR Hinton, His Honour Judge David Hodson, Lady Irvine, Mr J Jeffery, Lord Joicey, Mr S Pleydell, Dr M Ridley, Sir George Russell, Mr P Shaw, Mrs J Sjøvoll, Dr M Stoppard, Mr I Stratford, The Rt Hon Sir Mark Waller, Professor MJ Whitaker, Professor NG Wright.

M I N U T E S

1. DEATH OF AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR JOHN WILLIS

Reported the death of Sir John Willis, lay member of Court from 1997 to 2000, Vice-Chairman of Council from 2000 to 2006, and an Honorary Fellow of the University, on 9 January 2008. Sir John was a great and kind man who will be much missed by all the communities he served with such distinction, including, of course, his service and work on behalf of the University over a number of years.

Resolved that Court record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Willis.
2. **DEATH OF MR HARRY FAULKNER-BROWN**

Reported the death of Mr Harry Faulkner-Brown, OBE, MC, lay member of Court from 1986 to 2000, on 10 February 2008. Mr Faulkner-Brown served on the Board of the University’s Development Council and was the Consultant Architect who designed the University’s Robinson Library. He also served for many years as a member of the Northumbrian Universities Military Education Committee and in 1998 the University bestowed upon him an Honorary DCL.

Resolved that Court record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives of Mr Faulkner-Brown.

Members of Court stood to observe a moment of silence in memory of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Willis and Mr Faulkner-Brown.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed.

4. **THE UNIVERSITY’S PERFORMANCE ON ACCESS AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

The Chancellor, Lord Judd, Ms M Coyle and Mr R Taylor introduced the discussion topic of access and widening participation after which all members of Court were invited to participate.

Noted that:

(a) A university education was not seen as simply a matter of social inclusion, but remained the most consistent determinant of pay levels over an individual’s career.

(b) Although the English higher education system was recognised as performing well against international competitors, only 1.1% of GNP was spent on it, whereas it was 2.6% in the USA and even more in the Nordic countries.

(c) The North East had the lowest progression rate to higher education in the country, with areas of urban and rural deprivation and low attainment in schools and colleges. Changing North East attitudes and cultures was seen as being key to addressing our low achievement and low expectations, and this needed to be tackled at the earliest possible stage. (ie in primary school). The need to change attitudes applied equally to parents.

(d) There was a tendency to be fatalistic about these matters and it was beholden on universities to challenge society more and question why a poverty of performance and maybe aspiration existed at all levels of education, from primary to higher education.
(e) Education needed to be seen as a priority by society as a whole and universities, and Newcastle University in particular, should play a leading role in establishing the parameters of the national debate. Members of Court who were in key government, business and community positions could be highly influential in this debate.

(f) Local businesses could assist with these challenges. Parents and teachers needed to be better informed about the opportunities for their children and this could begin in a focussed way by businesses encouraging their own employees. There were also opportunities to work with primary school children through activities such as sponsored “Breakfast Clubs”.

(g) Many individuals returned to higher education as mature and highly motivated students later in life. Attitudes and expectations were also key in their choices.

(h) It was clear that there was not one big answer to the problems identified. What seemed to be required were lots of small actions to be taken by lots of people, over time.

(i) The potential role of the voluntary sector and local communities should not be underestimated in this activity. They were not tied down by regulatory issues as much as the public sector and the University should continue to build relationships with the many organisations that had the knowledge and trust of the local communities.

(j) There were additional and particular issues in some of the ethnic minority communities, where education might not be highly valued or seen to be a priority, and the problem of motivating parents was even deeper. The University could play a pivotal role in helping these parents to understand the importance of education.

(k) It was pointed out that a report published in 1993, “Learning to Succeed”, had highlighted many of the issues being discussed today. The importance of the attitudes of parents and teachers was also picked up in this report, and things did not appear to have changed a great deal in the following years.

(l) The University fully accepted its responsibility and obligation to engage with these issues, and even more so in describing itself as a “Civic University”.

(m) There were two parallel debates going on at a national level that distinguished between widening participation and increasing access. The Government’s approach to setting national benchmarks for these often meant that the University met one target at the detriment of the other. The University recruited approx 75% of its UK students from outside the region. The University more than met its widening participation (WP) targets of 25% of home students recruited from within the region, but it fell short on the WP targets on students recruited from outside the region. However, of the students recruited from outside the region approx 30% gained employment within the region after graduation and so the University acted as an importer of talent.
It was recognised that the University would wish to maintain its high academic standards although this could be measured as an output factor rather than an input one favoured by many league tables. The Vice-Chancellor explained that if the University simply wanted to move up some of the League Tables, it could scrap its highly successful Partners Programme.

It was acknowledged that a great deal was already being done at Newcastle to address the Widening Participation agenda, including developing successful partnerships with local schools, reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it remains accessible, and most recently a group has been established by the PVC Teaching and Learning, to look at our approach to Academies and Trusts in response to the Government’s agenda.

Resolved that there had been a lively debate within which a number of useful points had been raised. This was warmly welcomed by members of Court, who would like to see this format followed for future meetings.

5. **CREATING A CAMPUS FOR THE FUTURE**

Received a brochure entitled ‘Creating a campus for the future’ which detailed the plans for the development of the University estate.

* [Circulated with the Agenda. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

6. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S QUESTIONS**

Received details of two questions from members of Court to the Vice-Chancellor, submitted in advance of the meeting.

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

(a) “What is the Vice-Chancellor’s attitude to the idea that has been circulating that Durham University intends to establish its own medical school based on its Stockton Campus?”  

[Submitted by Lord Walton of Detchant]

Noted that:

(i) Newcastle is currently the only university in the North East specified under the Medical Act 1983 for the award of UK Primary Medical Qualifications. The University had acted as a regional medical school with our medical students undertaking their clinical training throughout the region.

(ii) Professor Higgins, Vice-Chancellor at Durham had indicated recently that Durham would wish to strengthen the provision of Medical Education in Teesside and, as part of this, award its own medical degrees.
In a paper tabled by Professor Higgins at a recent meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar, Durham University essentially made two proposals:

a. That a special medical degree programme should be mounted to benefit Tees Valley (specifically, that “there is a specific regional need and a specific need for doctors trained to work in urban areas at the interface of public health/social medicine”).

b. That Durham should lead such a programme, and to do so, should be given the power to award both undergraduate and postgraduate medical degrees (specifically, that “there is therefore an opportunity for Durham to….lead a new national model for GP training”).

The University had welcomed the suggestion of considering an “Inner Cities Doctor” Programme in Teesside, and a joint working group is being established to take this forward.

The University did not support the possibility of Durham or any other university in the North East awarding its own medical degrees as this would lead to the establishment of a second medical school causing inefficient use of public money for the training of doctors.

Professor Higgins had now confirmed that Durham does not wish to set up its own medical school, and we are grateful for this clarification

“Last year we initiated ideas on how to make use of any special experience of members of Court, particularly of external members, by encouraging members of staff to approach those who have recorded their experience with you. Nobody approached me until quite recently. It would be interesting to learn of the experience of other members. This may lead to an improvement in the use of members of Court.”

[Submitted by Dr H Loebl]

Noted that:

Since the meeting of Court in October, representatives from the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) had held meetings with at least 11 members of Court to determine the level and nature of the involvement they might wish to have in the University’s activities.

In addition, a number of members of Court were in regular contact with the University as a result of other interests and responsibilities. For example, Lord Joicey had recently given details of his involvement, which included hosting study visits for postgraduate courses, making land available for research and taking placement students. Dr Loebl had, in the past, been in contact with the Academic Registrar to discuss student enterprise and business start-ups.

Due to the recent expansion of the Development and Alumni Relations Office, it was hoped that it will be possible to engage with Court
members on a more strategic basis in future. DARO intended to inform members of projects and activities which correspond with their interests and expertise, with a view to their potential involvement.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT

Reported that the term of appointment of Mr S Pleydell would end on 31 July 2008. Mr Pleydell had been appointed as a member of the University’s Council with immediate effect to 31 July 2010.

8. SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Reported that:

(a) Professor Chris Day, formerly Head of the School of Clinical Medical Sciences at the University, had been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Medical Sciences) from 1 April 2008 to 31 July 2013, in succession to Professor O F W James.

(b) Professor Charles Harvey, Dean of Strathclyde Business School and Professor of Business History and Management at the University of Strathclyde, had been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Humanities and Social Sciences) from 1 May 2008 to 31 July 2013.

(c) Professor Nick Wright, Director of the Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology and Dean of Business Development in the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, had been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) from 1 May 2008 to 31 July 2013.

(d) Professor Paul Younger, Director of the Sir Joseph Swan Institute for Energy Research and Public Orator, had been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) from 1 May 2008 to 31 July 2013.

(e) Professor Day would be an ex officio member of Court from 1 April 2008. Professors Harvey, Wright and Younger would be ex officio members of Court from 1 May 2008.

9. REPORTS FROM COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Considered:

(a) First Report from Court Steering Committee.

(b) Second Report from Court Steering Committee.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents C and D. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]
Resolved that:

(i) Both reports and their recommendations be agreed.

(ii) The following persons be re-appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2008 until 31 July 2011, subject to their willingness to serve:

Sir Thomas Allen  
Mr NE Braithwaite  
Ms M Coyle  
Councillor D Faulkner  
Mr A Fenwick  
Mr AA Glenton  
Lady Irvine  
Lord Joicey  
Mr I Stratford  
The Rt Hon Sir Mark Waller

(iii) Honorary Fellowships should be conferred on the following at the Honorary Fellowships Dinner to be held on 6 October 2008:

Joe Carlebach  
Alumnus, former President of the Union Society and current Chairman of the Medical Faculty Development Board.

Ian Clarke  
Current Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Retirement Benefits Plan and former member of Council and Audit Committee.

Howard Farnhill  
University Bursar since 1990 (retires September 2008).

Glen Wilson  
Former member of Council and Chairman of Audit Committee from 1997 to 2005.

10. **MEETINGS 2008-09**

Reported that meetings of Court in the forthcoming academic year would be held on:

Monday 6 October 2008 at 2.00 pm in the Lindisfarne Room. (Instead of 21 October as previously reported).

Friday 8 May 2009 at 10.30 am.

Noted that on 6 October 2008:
– A programme of visits would be available for members of Court from 11.00 am to 12.30 pm.
– A buffet luncheon would be provided at 12.30 pm.
– The Honorary Fellowships Dinner would take place in the evening at 6.30 for 7.00 pm.