Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor J B Goddard (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor T F Page, Professor E Ritchie and Professor A C Stevenson (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr P E Andras, Dr J C Appleby, Dr H M Berry, Dr R J Boys, Dr J E Calvert, Ms R S Currie (Education Officer), Professor A M Dickinson, Mr C Donnelly (student member), Professor M Goodfellow, Mr T Gorman (Communications Officer), Professor A G Hall, Dr G R Hammond, Ms L B Hargreaves (Welfare Officer), Professor C R Harwood, Professor M A Hughes, Dr A C Hurlbert, Dr T B Kirk, Dr S McHanwell, Professor C B Riordan, Professor R A Seymour and Mr A M Wilton.

In attendance: Dr J V Hogan (Registrar), Mr P S Mitchell (Academic Registrar), Mrs V S Johnston (Director of Human Resources), Mr Simon Wilmot (Assistant Director of Finance), Miss A Waistell (Project Accountant) and Mrs D A Michie (Senior Assistant Registrar).

Mrs L Braiden (Director of Student Recruitment) attended for item 58.

MINUTES

PART A : STRATEGIC ISSUES

58. ACCESS BURSARIES AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Received an oral report from Mrs Lesley Braiden, Director of Student Recruitment, on the University’s bursaries and home student recruitment issues, together with two papers.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents A & B. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that:

1. The University’s Access Agreement had been approved by the Office For Fair Access on 11 March 2005 and all the 118 agreements which had been approved were published on 17 March 2005;

2. The principal elements of this University’s bursary scheme were that all home UK students who were assessed as being eligible for full state financial support would receive a bursary of £1,300 for each relevant year of undergraduate study and all those eligible for partial government financial support would receive a bursary of £1,000 per annum for each relevant year of undergraduate study;

3. In addition, a proportion of the additional fee income would be used to support additional outreach activities from 2006-07. These would include:

   • The development of a student ambassador scheme which would involve six undergraduate students being employed on a one-year placement to work as student
ambassadors in collaboration with the student recruitment and widening participation teams

• The provision of funding to faculties and schools for widening participation related activity

• The extension of the PARTNERS programme into schools and colleges, initially in Yorkshire and Humberside, with a large black and minority ethnic population

• The extension of work to raise awareness of deaf and disabled students

This would amount to approximately 24% of the additional fee income;

4. The student ambassador scheme was a unique form of outreach. It would be piloted from August 2005 and the posts had already been advertised. The work would comprise: visiting schools to try and convey to potential students what it was actually like to be a student at Newcastle; assistance with recruitment activities on campus; and providing support for marketing. The students were fully supportive of the scheme and the sabbatical officers had received positive feedback;

5. When compared with the bursaries to be offered by other universities, in most cases Newcastle appeared to be making a similar offer. However, Durham would be offering £3,000 for those in receipt of a full maintenance grant and so could become a major competitor in the regional market for this group of students;

6. Newcastle’s Agreement was clear and simple to understand, which should benefit the University. Some of the others were long and complex and could be difficult for students to understand and might lead to confusion;

7. The University’s scheme for scholarships and prizes had not been included in the Agreement as it had not been finalised. Universities were likely to compete in this area and Newcastle could benefit from looking at what others, that had included information on this topic in their Agreements, were offering. The Student Recruitment Office was working closely with the faculties and schools on the details of the scheme. It would be finalised in the near future and details would be included in the new Guide to Finance;

8. The introduction of the Access Agreements and schemes for scholarships and prizes would increase competition between universities. This therefore sent a mixed message from the government to higher education as in other areas greater collaboration was being encouraged. For example, additional student numbers were now being allocated to a region on the basis of regional need so there was a need for institutions to collaborate in this area;

9. There had been an article about the University’s attitude to admissions in the Sunday Times on 24 April which was headed ‘University discriminated against private school pupils’. It followed a Freedom of Information request asking for the University’s policies on widening participation. The Director of Student Recruitment had considered the request carefully and had responded by providing a great deal of information including an e-mail sent by Professor Ritchie in July 2004 asking for admissions tutors to take into account school background when considering near miss candidates, which was a policy that had been agreed at University Teaching and Learning Committee;
10. Based on the statistical information released by UCAS in February, in contrast to many of the University’s comparators and a UK-wide increase in applications of 9.6%, applications to this University had decreased overall by 1.9%. This comprised a fall of 0.83% in home applications and 17.56% in overseas applications. Although, this decrease should be viewed in the context of a strong period of growth in applications over the past five years, which had been better than most of the University’s comparators, the University was one of only two in the comparator group to have had a decrease and the decline in overseas applications was the largest in the comparator group. However, there were some clear reasons for this decline. The Law School had raised its offer to three As, in order to reduce the number of applications it received and raise the calibre of candidate, and there had been no undergraduate intake into Physics or Religious Studies, which had been transferred to Durham. If the applications which had previously been received for these areas had been received for 2005 there would have been an increase of 2.04% in the number of home applicants over last year;

11. Some subject areas were showing positive indicators for the home market but the University was concerned that there were also some areas showing an apparent decline. In certain cases this decline reflected a national trend, for example Computing Science and Electrical and Electronic Engineering, but others would require further investigation. It would be important to concentrate on figures that could not be explained and addressing any problems that were discovered;

12. The final figure for overseas applications was not yet available as they were not committed to the UCAS deadline, however applications for the current year had been affected by a combination of factors including the depreciation of the US dollar, the greater provision of higher education in their home countries and difficulties with getting visas. It was also possible that the failure of the University to do well in league tables was having an adverse effect. It would be important for the University in the future to make every effort to encourage offers to be converted into acceptances;

13. The decline in overseas applications to the Business School could be of particular concern, in view of the plans to expand numbers and build a new building to house it, but one reason numbers had fallen was that the English language requirement had been raised. This was being countered this year by making a greater number of offers;

14. The raw statistics of numbers of applicants should not be viewed in isolation as this was a complex area with many factors involved. For example, as had been hoped, the numbers of applicants to Law had fallen but the numbers who had confirmed their offer had risen. Previously Newcastle was often held as the insurance offer. Other schools might find it helpful to consider raising their offers incrementally in the light of the favourable experience of Law;

15. It would be helpful to have feedback from students in their first year on why they applied to Newcastle University. Dentistry had done this and found it useful, for example they had discovered that students liked to be interviewed as they thought that it meant that universities that did this were taking students more seriously. Market research had been commissioned to find out how prospective students viewed the University and whether or not they were likely to apply but post-entry information would also be helpful. This could be acquired by issuing a questionnaire at Registration;

16. The University needed to be sure that any publicity it issued did not risk having an adverse effect on recruitment. The increase in gun crime in Nottingham seemed to have
affected applications to that University and so, the University needed to be careful and ensure that any publicity, particularly in Newslink, promoted the University’s strengths, such as the way in which the University supported its students.

Resolved that:

(i) Further analysis of the undergraduate recruitment position be presented to a future meeting of Senate;

(ii) Consideration be given to developing a questionnaire for first-year students on why they applied to Newcastle, which could be distributed at Registration;

(iii) Consideration be given to how publicity was issued to ensure that it promoted the University’s strengths;

(iv) Mrs Braiden be thanked for her helpful presentation.

PART B : GENERAL BUSINESS

59. MINUTES

Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed.

60. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Progress of business

Received a business tracking form.

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

Noted that:

1. The Union Vision Group had met on two occasions and there had, in addition, been several meetings outside the Group with the Estates Office. Professor Ritchie and Professor Goddard had also met with the sabbatical officers to discuss establishing more effective operational methods and a channel of communication. Good progress was being made and the Group hoped to report to Council in July;

2. Senators had been asked to review the distribution list for the Annual Report of the University and let the Deputy Vice-Chancellor have any suggestions they might have to improve it. Responses were awaited;

3. University Teaching and Learning Committee (UTLC) had discussed the structure of the academic year for the years beyond 2005-06. It had resolved that it recommend to Senate that the dates for 2006-07 should follow the same format as those already agreed for 2005-06. However, it had decided not to consider further restructuring of the year at this stage as it was thought more sensible to wait until more detailed information was available on the possible introduction of a post-qualification application system. UTLC was also reviewing assessment which could raise issues which would affect the shape of the academic year;
4. A report on University research structures was to be considered at Strategy Board on 3 May and this would then be considered at the next meeting of Senate. Strategy Board would also be updated on matters relating to the next Research Assessment Exercise and this would also be brought to the next meeting of Senate;

5. The Director of Human Resources would report to a future meeting of Senate on honorific staff titles and senior staff appointments and confidentiality.

(b) Headships and Deanships
(Minute 57, 8.3.2005)

Received a document giving full details of all heads of school, together with their periods of office.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that the recommendation to reappoint Dr E G N Cross as Dean of Cultural Affairs had been omitted from the Consolidated Report from Faculty Appointment Boards considered at the meeting of Senate on 8 March 2005.

Resolved that Senate recommend to Council that Dr E G N Cross be reappointed as Dean of Cultural Affairs for a further two years until 31 July 2007.

61. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

(a) Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

Resolved that:

(i) The Vice-Chancellor should write to the widow of Emeritus Professor Carlos Hormaeche to express Senate’s condolences for the tragic death of her husband;

(ii) Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.

(b) Science City
(Minute 48, 8.3.2005)

Reported that Professor Tom Kirkwood and colleagues in the Campus for Ageing and Health had been successful in their bid to be one of three centres in the UK for Systems Biology. This was a £6 million award. The other two would be at Manchester University and Imperial College, London.

(c) Report from the Science and Technology Committee

Reported that the Government had placed science at the heart of its political and economic agendas but numbers of students in the key science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects had been dropping for several years and a number of university science departments, including the chemistry department at Exeter, had been closed down. In the light of this, a report issued by the Science and Technology Committee on 7 April 2005 stated that the Government had to overhaul
the way in which science subjects were funded or risk missing out on key economic
goals. It recommended that, instead of allowing all 130 universities to compete for
research and teaching funds, each university should play to its own strengths in
order to reduce the strain on resources. Universities would be encouraged to
specialise and collaborate to ensure the provision of research and teaching in all the
core science subjects at a regional level. (The report can be accessed at
http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmsctech.htm)

After noting that:

1. The report stated that the government was currently passively pursuing a policy
of research concentration which would call the financial viability of some
universities into question. Some research-intensive universities had benefited
but some, which had been less successful in winning funds, were struggling to
keep all their departments open, particularly in science, technology,
engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects which were expensive to run;

2. To address this, the report recommeded that universities collaborate on a
regional basis and a ‘hub and spokes’ model of provision be introduced, co-
ordinated by a regional affairs committee;

3. HEFCE had yet to take a decision on this report but it seemed that it viewed its
role as one in which it supported excellence at a national level;

4. The government had made an effort to support science. It had a 10-year
strategy for science, which was likely to be continued if it was re-elected, and
had allocated a grant of £2 billion in its budget statement;

5. In the North East there was excellence in certain subject areas but it was
difficult to acquire the necessary critical mass to build on this and become even
better;

6. It was possible that, with the introduction of fees in 2006, more students would
stay in their own regions. If this happened, HEFCE might need to reconsider
its national viewpoint and look at funding on a more regional basis;

7. The report did not address the issue of the general underfunding of science and
technology in this country. In Korea, by contrast, there had been major
investment in science and technology and this had led to a great deal of
success. It would be important for universities to fight for a general increase in
funding rather than fighting for what each could gain at the expense of another
institution;

8. Some concern was expressed about how Science City was being taken forward
as it was not clear that staff in the University felt much mutual responsibility
for achieving its success and there seemed to be a certain lack of awareness
about it. People within the University needed to be educated on this topic in
order to change the intellectual atmosphere and make it a success. One way of
raising awareness could be to change the title from Science City to Newcastle –
City of Science;
9. The team working on Science City was making progress and a series of sub-committees, with representatives from the various parties involved in the project, had been set up to look at specific topics. More would be known after the first meeting of the Steering Group had been held. Moreover, if the Northern Science Initiative went ahead, there could be a significant amount of money involved. This could support the work of the Science City scheme;

10. There was a general problem with the public perception of science and it would be important to invite members of the public into the University to inform them of the socio-economic dimension of the work carried out and the impact it had. It had recently emerged that no MEP had been invited into their local University to be informed about its work. This should be addressed.

11. The University was currently facing a series of initiatives which it would need to address in a professional way. These were challenging but were taking up a considerable amount of time. It was intended that a report be made to Council which gave an overview of all the opportunities which could be available for the University and the ways these could be managed. Following this, specific suggestions would be brought to Senate for consideration;

12. The University had experienced a great deal of growth in recent years. Income had grown from £172 million in 2000 to £250 million in 2004. It was estimated in the budget that income would be £278 million in 2005 and the estimated budget for 2006 was £290 million. The challenge would be how to maintain this and stimulate further growth. Science and technology needed to be placed in the context of this growth.

Resolved that further consideration should be given to the best ways for the University to maximise some of the opportunities that now presented themselves to promote science, engineering and mathematics.

(d) Guardian League Table

Reported that the University had been placed 43rd in this year’s Guardian League Table.

Noted that:

1. The University’s position had improved but the result was still unsatisfactory. It would be necessary to look at the issues involved to try and identify if there were any areas that could be improved;

2. It would appear that many students did not regard the Guardian League Table as credible;

3. As much of the data in the League Table was based on the HESA returns, it would be worth reviewing the way in which the University’s HESA return was submitted as it could be that the methodology currently used might not be the one that was most to the University’s advantage.

Resolved that a report on the issues involved and how they might be addressed should be made to the next meeting of Senate.
(e) National Student Survey

Reported that the National Student Survey, which aimed to generate feedback about the quality of students’ courses, help inform the choices of future applicants to higher education and contribute to public accountability, would come to a close this month. All final year undergraduate students had been asked to provide feedback on the quality of their courses. The preliminary results were expected in July and the final results, which would be published on the Teaching Quality Information website (www.tqi.ac.uk), were due in September. The response rate from Newcastle students had been high, at approximately 65%, and discussions were currently taking place on how best to prepare for the publication of the results.

62. REPORT FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Considered a report from the meeting of Executive Board held on 8 March 2005. [Circulated with the Agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(a) Proposals for the filling of Chairs in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

After noting that:

1. The proposed Chair in Music would be a direct replacement for Professor R Middleton who would retire on 30 September 2005;

2. The proposed Chair in Speech and Language Pathology/Science would be to replace Professor B Dodd who had already left the University.

Resolved that:

(i) The recommendations for the filling of the Chair in Music and the Chair in Speech and Language Pathology/Science be approved, subject to the agreement of Council;

(ii) Subject to Council’s approval of the recommendations, the proposals for the appointment of the Senate-appointed members on the Statutory Committees for the Chairs be approved.

(b) NewRail Research Centre

After noting that:

1. The proposal to establish the NewRail Research Centre was to give formal recognition to a dynamic group of staff who had moved as a group to Newcastle from Sheffield;

2. It was the largest academic group studying transport in the United Kingdom, had many European links, had generated a great deal of funding and had recently won a major award.
Resolved that a NewRail Research Centre be established for a period of five years from 1 April 2005, with Dr Mark Robinson designated as founding Director.

(c) Clinical Research Centre in the Faculty of Medical Sciences

Resolved that Professor Gary Ford be appointed Director of the Clinical Research Centre for a period of three years from 1 January 2005.

63. QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT
(Minute 1, 21.9.2004)

Received an oral report from Professor Ella Ritchie (Pro-Vice-Chancellor) on the preliminary results of the QAA Institutional Audit.

After noting that:

1. The full draft report was due by 13 May but the University was pleased with the letter it had received following the Audit;

2. The letter stated that ‘broad confidence’ could be placed ‘in the soundness of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne’s current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards’;

3. The standard of student achievement in the programmes in the five discipline audit trails was ‘appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the Agency’s Framework for Higher Education Qualifications’ and the ‘quality of learning opportunities available to students was suitable for programmes of study leading to those awards’;

4. The letter drew attention to three instances of good practice at the University: the role of the Academic Audit Committee; the relationship between the Performance Development Review and the Staff Development Unit; and the focus on the development of guidance and support for students. The third instance could be used in a public way to benefit the University;

5. The Audit had identified two areas which it considered it advisable that the University should address: the updating of the credit and qualifications framework; and the enhancement of the external element of the programme approval process;

6. It also identified two areas which it considered it desirable that the University should address: ensuring consistency and proper use of management information; and monitoring the consistency and implementation of policies and practices at the local level;

7. The Audit had required a great deal of work and many people had been involved. The students who had been involved had played a major role and had greatly contributed to the favourable outcome.

Resolved that all those involved in the Audit, both staff and students, be thanked for their hard work and their contribution to the favourable outcome of the Audit.
64. **REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE**

Received a Report from the meeting of UTLC held on 1 March 2005.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

65. **CONGREGATION CEREMONIES : JULY 2006**

Reported that congregation ceremonies following the end of the Summer Term 2006 would be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday, 11 July 2006 (all day)
- Wednesday, 12 July (all day)
- Thursday, 13 July (all day)
- Friday, 14 July (all day)
- Saturday, 15 July (am)

66. **MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

Reported that the following had been appointed Sabbatical Officers for 2005-06 and would be ex officio members of Senate for that period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications Officer</td>
<td>Alistair Robson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>David Bulmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Officer</td>
<td>Sophie White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67. **DATES OF MEETINGS 2005-06**

Reported that Senate would meet at 2 pm on the following dates in 2005-06:

- 8 November 2005
- 17 January 2006
- 7 March 2006
- 2 May 2006
- 20 June 2006

68. **SENATE DINNER**

Reported that the Senate Dinner would be held on 8 November 2005.

69. **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 H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]