M I N U T E S

PART A : STRATEGIC ISSUES

70. Corporate Planning Statement

Reported that the Annual Monitoring Statements required by the HEFCE on the University’s spend against earmarked funds were currently being prepared. The areas of report were:

- Widening Participation
- Aspiration Funding
- Mainstream Disability Premium
- Race Equality and Diversity
- Learning and Teaching
- Higher Education Reach Out to Business and the Community
- Higher Education Innovation Fund
- Higher Education Active Community Fund
- Rewarding and Developing Staff
These Statements must be submitted to the HEFCE by 31 July together with the Corporate Planning Statement and Financial Forecasts. They could be made available, on request, to any member who wished to see them.

Considered the Corporate Planning Statement.

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

After noting that:

1. This document, which was largely retrospective, was required by HEFCE but was also useful as a statement of the University’s objectives;

2. Two new key strategic objectives had been included – ‘to increase the number of international students to 4,800 by 2010-11’, and ‘to increase our annual rate of growth by 12.5%’. These had been drawn from the Vice-Chancellor’s vision statement. However, it would be useful if the current number of international students was added to the first new objective and the word ‘by’ in the second new objective replaced by ‘to’;

3. While it was recognised that the objective of increasing the annual rate of growth would be difficult to maintain in some areas of the University in the longer term, it was estimated that overall growth would be approximately 14% next year and it was important for the University to have high aspirations in order to achieve what it should be achieving. Any areas which would have difficulty meeting this objective, for example home postgraduate student recruitment, would be taken into account in the overall strategy. However, it might be useful to insert the words ‘aim to’ before ‘increase’ in order to avoid any unwarranted criticism if this objective was not met;

4. Strategy Board had discussed this document and suggested that the last point, ‘to support and empower our staff to deliver the strategic objectives’, should be placed first as without that all the others would not be achievable. It also asked for the graph indicating growth in total income for 1999-00 - 2001-02 to be extended to 2002-03 and attempts would be made to do that. Finally, it had commented that the section on the human resource strategy should be toned down as it could be open to misinterpretation as it currently stood;

5. Academic Audit Committee had expressed concern over the inclusion of the phrase in the second point, ‘meeting internationally competitive standards’, as it could prove difficult to demonstrate evidence of this and so had suggested that it should be deleted;

6. The second point, ‘to provide excellence in our learning and teaching activities’, not only needed to be stated but also, particularly in view of the Guardian League Table result, demonstrated. External examiners had recently commented in one school that Newcastle was being particularly cautious in awarding first class degrees in comparison with other universities and this could have serious consequences, not only in league tables but in gaining research council awards. In addition, the Guardian was now selling CDs to assist students applying to university and so Newcastle’s ranking would not be quickly forgotten and this could have long term effects. Attempts had been made to address this situation but the underlying problem was the culture at Newcastle and, sometimes, the way in which programme regulations were written. Newcastle was lagging behind other universities in this area and this would have to be addressed;
7. When addressing the need to improve communication, the University should include negative outcomes as well as positive in order to make the messages appear to be more trustworthy;

8. One of the reasons that Durham was not prepared to consider merging with Newcastle was that it felt it might lose its identity.

Resolved that:

(i) The following amendments be made to the Planning Statement:

On page 1

- Point 2: delete the phrase ‘meeting internationally competitive standards’
- Point 5: insert the number of current international students
- Point 8: insert ‘aim to’ before ‘increase’ and replace ‘by’ with ‘to’
- Point 10 should be moved to become the first point

On page 2, extend the graph to include 2002-03

On pages 10-11, the tone should be amended to avoid any misinterpretation


PART B : GENERAL BUSINESS

71. Membership

Resolved that:

(i) The Student Sabbatical Officers elect, Luci Hargreaves and Tom Gorman, who were present at the meeting as observers, be welcomed;

(ii) The retiring Senators be thanked for their services and contribution to University affairs during the period of their appointment on Senate;

(iii) Senate record its appreciation to the retiring Student Sabbatical Officers and elected member for their services and its good wishes for their future careers.

72. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 25 May 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed.
73. Matters arising from the minutes

(a) Progress of business

Received a business tracking form.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document B. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(b) Statement of Good Practice in Provision for Doctoral Students
(Minute 60, 25.5.2004)

Considered a report from the Chair of University Teaching and Learning Committee.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that:

1. The Statement arose from the desire to reflect succinctly what doctoral students could expect in the light of a range of circumstances. These included the need for compliance with the Code of Practice, increased competition for such students, demands for such information from sponsors and the need to give feedback on a number of complaints which had been made by doctoral students;

2. The Statement was not intended to be an all-embracing document which included all information for doctoral students. It did not stand alone but formed part of a suite of information comprising the Code of Practice, the Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors and the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees. This suite would be extended in the future to include the Postgraduate Research Training Portfolio which would assist students keep a record of their development and acquisition of skills and experience. In addition, a learning agreement between the student and supervisor would be introduced which would address some of the issues raised previously by Senate;

3. The Quality Assurance Agency would be republishing the Code of Good Practice in this area and so it would be helpful to have a suite of procedures in place for the coming academic year;

4. In the light of comments made at the previous meeting of Senate, the Statement had been considered by University Research Strategy Group (URSG) and amended to incorporate some of the concerns expressed by Senate and URSG;

5. A separate section on health and safety had not been included as this was included in the Handbook. Each faculty tailored the Handbook for the particular needs of their students and this ensured that all relevant health and safety information was included. Not all students required the same information;

6. As the standard of English needed to teach and demonstrate to students could vary quite widely depending on the subject and the form of teaching, no standard had been defined. However, it was clearly essential that doctoral students carrying out these duties could convey the required information and so it might be useful if the references to training in section 11 were strengthened;
7. The first bullet point in Section 1 could be interpreted as meaning that the supervisory team should have research experience at a level equivalent to a PhD. However there could be some subjects in which this might not be required. If a comma was inserted after ‘degrees’ the meaning would be clearer;

8. The Statement did not apply to all research students, only doctoral students, as that could lead to resource implications for some schools which they would have difficulty in meeting;

9. Training was being offered to doctoral students, not made compulsory, as each student would agree their particular training needs with their supervisor and include these in the Portfolio. The assessment panel would monitor progress and, if there was a requirement to undertake specific training, ensure that this took place or implement sanctions if it had not;

10. The implications of the Statement of Good Practice would be reviewed by schools during 2004-05 with the intention of introducing it fully in 2005-06. This phased introduction had been agreed as, following consultation, it was clear that not all schools would be able to implement it immediately. The graduate schools would work through issues with schools, and each faculty had been asked to look at the resource implications and build these into their planning process. However, it would be issued to students in the coming academic year as it was important they were aware of what was intended and it would help with giving feedback to those students who had lodged complaints;

11. Complaints had been received in relation to various areas. These included the lack of adequate facilities to carry out research, poor quality of supervision, major inconsistencies across the University in the provision for doctoral students, and a lack of clarity on how opportunities to teach and demonstrate were handled. These complaints had arisen from the ESRC review, information received from faculties and information received from the AUT. It was essential that feedback was given to students on how these complaints were being addressed;

12. The third point in section 1 had been changed from ‘research active’ to ‘engaged in research’ in order to allow the document to apply to the whole University. As the rate of publication varied between subjects it was felt that this terminology was more appropriate.

Resolved that:

(i) A comma be inserted after ‘degrees’ in the first bullet point in Section 1 to help avoid any misinterpretation of the meaning;

(ii) Section 11 be amended to strengthen references to training;

(iii) Following the incorporation of the amendments above, the Statement of Good Practice by approved for publication and release to students.
(c) **Rationalisation of University Regulations and Senate Matriculation and Concessions Committee**  
(Minute 60, 25.5.2004)

Considered a report from the Academic Registrar.  
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that:

1. The role of Senate Matriculation and Concessions Committee had been reviewed in an attempt to simplify and reassign levels of authority to deal with concessions and admissions decisions. The recommendations would increase the level of decision making possible within schools by giving greater authority and responsibility to degree programme directors and admissions selectors. This would reflect the spirit of the recent restructuring exercise, reduce bureaucracy and allow those who were fully informed to make the decisions;

2. Central control would be maintained where quality assurance and equity issues were involved and in areas where it was important that there was uniformity of treatment, such as extraordinary progress and concessions arrangements.

**Resolved that:**

(i) **Senate Matriculation and Concessions Committee be disestablished with effect from 31 July 2004;**

(ii) **Faculty Progress and Concessions Committees be disestablished with effect from 31 July 2004;**

(iii) **A single University Concessions Committee be established as a sub committee of University Teaching and Learning Committee with effect from 1 August 2004 with the terms of reference as attached as Appendix A of Document D;**

(iv) **The existing matriculation requirements and the authorisation for selectors to make all admissions decisions be withdrawn and replaced with the revised matriculation regulations attached as Appendix B of Document D;**

(v) **The delegation of responsibility for many concessions to Degree Programme Directors, as detailed in the revised regulations attached as Appendices C, D and E of Document D, be approved.**

74. **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) **Congratulations**

Reported that:

(i) Miss Lindsay Allason-Jones, Director of Archaeological Museums, had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts;

(ii) Richard Middleton, Professor of Music in the School of Arts and Cultures, had been elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

(b) **Queen’s Birthday Honours**

Reported that Professor Alan Craft had been awarded a Knighthood in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List.

(c) **Higher Education Bill**

Reported that the Higher Education Bill had been passed by the House of Lords on 1 July and would now go for Royal Assent. Universities would be able to charge annual top up fees of up to £3,000 from 2006. This University had already taken the decision to charge the full £3,000 for all programmes and this would now be implemented. The House of Commons accepted the amendment which would allow students who were taking a gap year in 2005 not to be charged fees for the duration of their course. This had caused some concern in the higher education sector as it was a major loss of funding to universities. However, the sector approved the restrictions on the powers of OfFA. The Lords had dropped all other objections to the Bill.

(d) **Postgraduate Institute for Medicine and Dentistry**

Reported that:

(i) In common with other Deaneries, the Northern Deanery had been required by the Department of Health to make substantial budget cuts on a recurrent basis. On the 14 May 2004, it was announced that the budget would be cut by £4.4 million per annum, out of a total budget of £89.7 million. Subsequent discussions led to a smaller budget cut of £2.8 million being imposed, as confirmed by the Strategic Health Authority on the 15 June 2004;

(ii) The bulk of the Deaneries’ budget, approximately £67 million, was spent on the salaries of trainee doctors and dentists, and this expenditure must be maintained. The impact of the budget cuts would therefore fall on other areas activity, including staffing;

(iii) Account would need to be taken of expenditure already committed in the current financial year, since April 2004, before the budget cuts were announced and the cost of implementing the budget cuts, in terms of possible severance costs;

(iv) The Northern Deanery included 36 staff (not FTE) employed by a Lead Health Authority, South Tyneside Healthcare NHS Trust, and 120 staff (not FTE) employed by the University. The University staff were employed in
administrative, clerical and research roles, together with clinical staff employed on sessional contracts;

(v) Staff Committee considered the position at its meeting on 23 June 2004 and agreed that the terms of the Voluntary Severance Scheme should be offered to staff within the Postgraduate Institute, provided this could be funded from the Institute’s current budget. The University would also offer redeployment opportunities to staff within the Institute arising from vacancies elsewhere in the University;

(vi) It was not yet clear precisely how many positions would need to be lost at the Institute, nor how they would be identified. All staff were therefore potentially at risk at the current time and had been written to and advised of the situation, as had their trade unions. It was currently considered that the reduction in the total number of staff across both employers was unlikely to exceed 40 individuals;

(vii) Work was in progress to identify which areas of activity within the Institute needed to be reduced or discontinued and to identify future roles and structures within the Institute. A first joint employer meeting with the relevant Trade Unions had taken place on 2 July 2004. Meetings were also taking place with senior management within the Institute and with the Strategic Health Authorities in the region;

(viii) As reported above, there were a number of clinical academic staff employed on sessional contracts and research staff within the Institute. These staff were currently under threat of possible redundancy like the other staff in the Institute;

(ix) There would be a report on this situation to Council at its meeting on 19 July 2004 and Council might decide that it was necessary to set up a redundancy committee under Statute 57 if it appeared likely that there needed to be a reduction in the numbers of academic staff employed within the Institute. The constitution of a redundancy committee included two members of academic staff, nominated by Senate;

After noting that:

1. Although the decision to reduce the funding had been made in May, the cuts were being backdated to April and the University would be obliged to meet the costs. It seemed peculiar that this situation could arise in a contractual relationship, particularly when the Department of Health’s budget was increasing by 7% per annum, but the Department stated that it needed to produce savings;

2. The University’s relationship with the Health Service was complex. With regard to clinical academic staff, the balance between clinical and academic work was not costed and a ‘knock for knock’ arrangement was in place. It would be difficult to get further clarity on the situation;
3. It was difficult to reconcile the need to increase the number of doctors with cuts in the training budget and there appeared to be a range of other developments taking place which were also hard to understand, such as the change to the contracts for consultants;

4. The Russell Group, the majority of whose members had medical schools, had not debated this issue;

5. As the reductions would fall, in part, on administrative staff, there would be effects on efficiency which could affect adversely the training of postgraduates, particularly as the cuts had been imposed with such short notice. Consideration would need to be given to the long term implications of this situation;

6. The costs incurred by any staff taking voluntary severance or being made redundant would fall on the Health Service.

Resolved that:

(i) The Vice-Chancellor should raise this issue with the other members of the Russell Group;

(ii) In the event of Council deciding it was necessary to set up a redundancy Committee, Senate give the Vice-Chancellor the authority to nominate two members on its behalf.

75. University Statutes

Considered proposed amendments to the Statutes, endorsed by Academic Board and Convocation.

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

After noting that:

1. There were six main reasons for the proposed amendments to the Statutes which were:

   • to allow greater flexibility in the structure of the senior management team
   • to enable the University to comply with the requirements of the Privy Council by reducing the number of members on Council
   • to implement the recommendations of the Working Party on Court
   • to clarify the University’s financial authority
   • to allow the implementation of the resolution by Convocation to include all alumni, as defined by the Alumni Association, in its membership
   • to clarify the University’s position with regard to what information it would not make available to the public once the Freedom of Information Act was in force;

2. While it might be considered logical to merge Statutes 13 and 43 in the light of the decision to grant provosts the additional title of pro-vice-chancellor, the two roles would be very different as the primary responsibility of the provosts/pro-vice-chancellors would still be to their specific faculties and the appointment procedures were different. The aim of the change of title was to make it clear that the status of the two roles was the same,
rather than an indication that the roles and responsibilities were the same, and so it would be inappropriate to merge the Statutes;

3. It appeared slightly contradictory that proposed membership of Court, as listed in Statute 18, should include ‘such principal officers of the University as the Court may from time to time determine’ and this should be brought back to Court for further consideration;

4. Statute 25 did not include any guarantees that the University management could not overborrow. However it was not necessary to include this in the Statutes as it was covered in the Financial Memorandum with HEFCE which stated that the University could not borrow an amount which meant that the repayments were in excess of 4% of turnover without permission. In addition, as was stated in Statute 24, paragraph 1, Council had the responsibility for determining financial matters and monitoring performance;

5. The proposed amendment to Statute 63, Reserved Matters, to include ‘information which is commercially sensitive’, could be interpreted very broadly and some things might be included which would be of concern to students, such as the setting of fees and bursaries. As students withdrew from meetings of the statutory bodies when items under Reserved Business were being discussed, they would not be able to contribute to discussions on these issues. The assumption under the Act was that this would relate solely to matters in which commercial advantage would be lost if the information was made public and was intended to preserve confidentiality, particularly if a third party was involved. However it might be helpful if the wording was amended to define commercially sensitive information more clearly;

6. Concern was expressed about the use of the term Chairman in this and other University documents. The Chairman of Council had indicated her wish to continue to use this title but the matter should be kept under review;

7. The following additional amendments were required:
   - If the proposed change to Statute 13 was agreed, it would be necessary to delete the pro-vice-chancellors from the list of Council members in Statute 20
   - Statute 57 contained references to head of department and these should be changed to head of school.

Resolved that:

(i) The amendments identified in note 6 above be implemented;

(ii) Advice be sought on the revised wording of Statute 63 so that there was a clearer definition of what would comprise commercially sensitive information;

(iii) Subject to (i) and (ii) above, Senate endorse the proposed amendments to the Statutes.

76. Senate Standing Orders

Considered proposed amendments to Senate Standing Orders.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
After noting that, if it was decided to merge Statutes 13 and 43, the wording of the new Standing Order XI would need to be revised.

Resolved that the amendments to Senate Standing Orders be approved.

77. Revised General Regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Considered revised General Regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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

After noting that:

1. The first set of revisions was required for the implementation of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes to be possible. The second set was not essential but were recommendations from the working group. There had been some consultation with the faculties;

2. No member of a supervisory team could also be an examiner. However, where the team consisted of more than two, and particularly if one of the team had been acting in a mainly advisory capacity, it might be possible to make an exception to this rule;

3. As the current practice of registering research students initially on to an MPhil programme was deterring both students and sponsors, the introduction of the concept of a PhD candidate-elect was being proposed with effect from 2005-06 entry. The term was already in use in other institutions;

4. The proposal to allow an external examiner to request deferral of an oral examination until the thesis was resubmitted, as it was believed that it was not worthy of examination without a significant amount of further work, would only be used in exceptional circumstances. In order to ensure that a student who had not been given the opportunity to resubmit but who failed following a viva did not feel aggrieved, clear information on this point would be included in the instructions to examiners. If a student did feel aggrieved, there were other procedures in place to deal with this.

Resolved that the changes to the regulations and examination conventions for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy be approved, together with the incorporation of the principles embedded within these changes, where necessary, to the regulations for the degree of Master of Philosophy, staff regulations, etc.

78. Revised Student Procedures

Considered revised Student Procedures.

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

After noting that:

1. There was an ongoing need to review the formal procedures that applied to students and which were required under the Student Charter and QAA codes. The procedures now needed to be refined to reflect issues which had arisen from difficult cases, the increase in cases, requirements of codes of practice and best practice notes. The procedures also had to be legally robust;
2. It was recognised that these revisions would not solve the growing problem of plagiarism and a working group was to be established to look at this issue in detail in the coming academic year. A report from that group would be brought to a later meeting of Senate;

3. The proposals were based upon experience and some of the revisions suggested were relatively minor;

4. The proposed revisions to the Academic Appeal procedure were being proposed in order to:
   - adapt to the introduction of three large faculties which made forbidding members from the faculty in which the appeal originated to be members of the panel no longer sensible
   - attempt to overcome the difficulties faced in dealing with appeals made on the grounds of examiners not being aware of circumstances affecting performance by stating more clearly the need for the candidate to establish good cause for not making the examiners aware at an earlier stage of the circumstances involved
   - ensure that an appeal officer was not involved in any of the decision-making undertaken by the panel

5. While most appeals were dealt with quite quickly, delays could take place in deciding the outcome when access to critical information was delayed or people who needed to be consulted were unavailable. It was essential that those involved were allowed sufficient time to make the correct decision, but appeals could be sensitive and it was not in the best interests of those concerned if the process was prolonged. Consideration could therefore be given to the introduction of a timeframe. There had been an attempt to train Chairman of Boards of Examiners during the past year but appeals were particularly difficult matters to handle;

6. The proposed revisions to the Students Complaints procedure were an attempt to bring it in line with other policies which had either been updated or introduced in recent years. It clarified certain matters, such as which matters could not be resolved by the Academic Office, and introduced the provision for a complaint hearing if necessary;

7. The main revision to the Student Disciplinary Procedure was to allow the Disciplinary Convenor to sit on panels, which was felt necessary to ensure that officer was kept up to date. The second revision was to provide clarity;

8. The changes to the Procedure for Assessment Irregularities were a preliminary attempt to tackle what was becoming a major problem for all universities. This was a very complex matter, with many cultural and procedural issues involved. The main suggestion at this stage was to allow the Chairman of a Board of Examiners to determine some cases without invoking the full procedure if it was only a minor infringement. The Chairman would have the discretion to determine which were minor and which were major infringements in order to provide consistency of response, and supplementary documents would be provided to assist the Chairman in making these decisions;

9. The University had recognised the need to train Chairmen of Boards of Examiners and established a forum where good practice could be shared. A budget had been provided to support this;
10. Greater use could be made of software to detect plagiarism and to determine the percentage of the text which was plagiarised. Staff should be trained in the use of such software;

11. Students needed guidance on what constituted plagiarism as there was currently a lack of understanding on this matter.

Resolved that the changes to the Academic Appeals Procedure, Student Complaints Procedure, the Student Disciplinary Procedure and the Procedure for Assessment Irregularities be approved.

79. Report from Executive Board

Received a Report from the meeting of Executive Board held on 15 June 2004 concerning the Guardian League Table 2004.

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

80. Equal Opportunities Policy

Considered revisions to the Equal Opportunities Policy.

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

Resolved that the revisions to the Equal Opportunities Policy be approved for submission to Council.

81. Chairmen and members of University Committees

Considered recommendations for the appointment/re-appointment of Senate appointed Chairmen and members of University committees.

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

Resolved that the recommendations for the appointment/re-appointment of Senate appointed Chairmen and members of University committees be approved.

82. Report from University Teaching and Learning Committee

Received a Report from the meeting of University Teaching and Learning Committee held on 24 May 2004.

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

83. Annual Report from Academic Audit Committee

Received the Annual Report from Academic Audit Committee for 2003/04.

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

**PART C : RESERVED BUSINESS**

85. **Report from the Statutory Committee on promotions to personal Professorships and Readerships**

Considered the Report from the Statutory Committee on promotions to personal Professorships and Readerships.

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

*Resolved that the recommendations in the Report be approved for submission to Council.*

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

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

- **Professor I J Richards (1 July 2004)**
- **Professor J A Walker (1 August 2004)**
- **Professor J Milner and Professor A J Richards (1 September 2004)**