UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

S E N A T E

7 March 2006

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor J B Goddard (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor O R Hinton, Professor T F Page, Professor C B Riordan and Professor E Ritchie (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor T Anderson, Dr P E Andras, Dr S G Ball, Professor J B Batchelor, Mr D Bulmer (Education Officer), Professor P F Chinnery, Dr E G N Cross, Professor P S Davis, Professor A M Dickinson, Professor G J Docherty, Mr T El-Menabawey (student member), Professor A M R Gatehouse, Professor M Goodfellow, Professor A G Hall, Professor G R Hammond, Dr S D Hogg, Professor C R Harwood, Dr L Y J Liu, Professor D A C Manning, Professor A G O’Neill, Mr A Robson (Communications Officer), Professor R A Seymour and Ms S White (Welfare Officer).

In attendance: Dr J V Hogan (Registrar) and Mrs C M Harvey (Academic Registrar).

Mr N Keeley (Director of the Careers Service) attended for item 39 and Mrs L Braiden (Director, Marketing and Student Recruitment Service) attended for item 43.

M I N U T E S

PART A : STRATEGIC ISSUES

39. NCL+ : A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EMPLOYABILITY

Reported that NCL+ was a collaborative venture between the Union Society and the Careers Service, and was about promoting skills development and employability to the student body to better prepare them for life after University.

Received a presentation on NCL+ from Mr N Keeley, Director of the Careers Service.

After noting that:

1. The NCL+ initiative had been launched at the start of the 2005-06 academic year to raise students’ awareness of the need to enhance their employability skills and to alert them to the many different opportunities available at Newcastle to do so. Participating services included the Careers Service and the Union Society who, between them, offered a wide range of employability and enterprise-related services and opportunities which complemented and supplemented activity in academic schools.

2. Graduate employers continued to expect graduates to supplement their subject-specific knowledge with well-honed generic skills. Such skills could be developed in many ways:
via work placement, volunteering, training events and programmes, accredited modules, leadership of student societies, etc. It was important that students understood the various routes they could take to enhance their employability and were able to reflect on, identify and record competence. Personal development planning systems (PDP) were now available as recording mechanisms.

3. NCL+ promoted curriculum-based activity (accredited modules such as Students into Schools, Learning from Work and Business Enterprise) and extra-curricular activity (such as Enterprise Soup and the Careers Service’s daily career education sessions). Due to the diversity of degree programmes, the majority of which were already addressing employability within their curricula in ways which were appropriate for their subject discipline, it would not be appropriate to impose a rigid employability framework at the University level with which all programmes had to concur, but the current generic skills framework (which all modules incorporated) was being updated and would provide a useful framework for the ongoing development of employment-related skills within degree programmes.

4. There was a view that NLC+ activity should be assessed, and successful students given certification. There would be significant issues involved in issuing formal certification, not least the need for additional resources and quality assurance arrangements. Separate certification of this kind would also go against the University’s strategy of ensuring that degree programmes incorporated and embedded approaches to enhancing employability within the curriculum, rather than viewing it as a separate strand.

5. The NCL+ brand was being used to raise awareness of employment related issues for potential students. It was clear that prospective students and their parents looked for evidence that universities were providing strong support for employability development and for graduate employment. It had also been recognised as important for our international students as well as home students. The work undertaken by the Careers Service had identified employment related skills as being entirely appropriate for international students in meeting the demands of international employers.

6. The NCL+ initiative could usefully be promoted with potential employers and plans were under way to promote the scheme via the Press Office and elsewhere.

Resolved that:

(i) Senate support the establishment of the NCL+ initiative and looked forward to its future development.

(ii) Mr Keeley be thanked for his helpful presentation and his support for the initiative.

PART B: GENERAL BUSINESS

40. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 17 January 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed.
41. 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) Working Group on the Effectiveness of Senate

(Minutes 26, 17.1.2006)

Reported that the Chairman of the Working Group had agreed to a request from the Chairman of Council to add a Council nominee to the Group, and Mr L M Aviss had agreed to serve.

(c) Corporate Visual Identity

(Minutes 27, 17.1.2006)

Reported that Council, at its meeting on 6 February 2006, had resolved that ‘Newcastle University’ be adopted as the University’s working title in the context of the development and future use of the University’s corporate visual identity, whilst retaining the title ‘University of Newcastle upon Tyne’ as the full, formal title of the University.

Noted that:

1. There remained concerns about the University’s visual identity, given the difficulty of reading the University’s full name when printed alongside the crest.

2. The Student Recruitment Office would very shortly be inviting staff to participate in a survey on the way in which the corporate visual identity should be used.

3. It was recognised that the current use of the University’s name was inconsistent and this might be harmful when compiling statistics on citations or similar exercises. It was also recognised that there was a potential for confusion with the University of Newcastle in New South Wales.

4. Following the decision of Council, it was expected that staff should refer to the University in publications as Newcastle University. Further guidelines on this and other issues would be given at the formal launch of the new CVI at the end of April 2006.

5. The trademark to the name ‘Newcastle University’ was already secured by the University.

42. 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) Death of Mr D K Wilson, former Honorary Treasurer of the University

Reported the death of Mr D K Wilson, Honorary Treasurer of the University from 1993 to 2004 and one of the initial recipients of an Honorary Fellowship of the University, on 9 February 2006. Mr Wilson contributed significantly to the development of the University.

Special thanks were recorded to Dr E G N Cross for organising the music at the memorial service for Mr Wilson.

Resolved that Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives of Mr Wilson.

(c) AUT Industrial Action

Reported that the AUT had voted for national action over their 2006 pay claim. There would be a one day strike on Tuesday, 7 March and a withdrawal of goodwill. The latter was being expressed in terms of withdrawing from the PDR process, withholding of activities involving assessment of student work and withdrawal of cover. It was extremely regrettable that the dispute would go ahead and the University was anxious to minimise the disruption for students.

Received a statement prepared by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association on the industrial action.

[Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Many student unions had stated that they did not support the AUT’s action and the Union Society had recently declared that it could not support the AUT action at Newcastle and would be carrying comments to this effect in the next edition of its student newspaper.

2. The Vice-Chancellor reported back on a recent meeting of UCEA at which it was confirmed that virtually every university had agreed that more than a third of the additional money arising from the introduction of higher tuition fees for home undergraduates would go on staff pay and this represented the position at this University. This included increases in pay, the overall increase of approximately 3% arising from job evaluation, increased contribution to pensions and the employment of more staff.

3. The Vice-Chancellor had written to all staff and students concerning the dispute.

4. Of the additional income of approximately £7.7m coming to the University as a result of the higher undergraduate tuition fee in 2006-07, approximately £3m had already been earmarked for student bursaries and other expenditure related to widening participation activities.
5. Concern was expressed about the need to settle the dispute as soon as possible, given the damage that could be caused, and in particular the harm to individual students. Senate was reminded that the impact on postgraduate research students could be virtually immediate.

6. The money deducted from staff for participating in the one day strike in 2004 had been used to fund student-based activities, and the money saved arising from strike action on 7 March 2006 would be used in a similar way. The money had not been paid directly into the student welfare fund, since the rules governing the use of this fund limited its distribution and it had actually been necessary for the University to return some of this funding to the Government in 2005.

7. The University was considering the best way of countering an ongoing assessment boycott whilst it was anxious to avoid inflaming what was already a difficult situation, but there was an absolute and overwhelming commitment to try to ensure that the students were not disadvantaged by the industrial action.

8. It would be important for the AUT and UCEA to resume negotiations and it would be helpful if the University could provide further information on the proposals that had been made for resuming negotiations.

43. REPORT ON SURVEY OF NEW UK UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, 2005 ENTRY

Received a report from Mrs L Braiden, Director, Marketing and Student Recruitment Service. [Circulated with the Agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Reported that Senate, at its meeting held in April 2005, had requested that further information should be presented based on a survey of new UK undergraduate students who entered the University in September 2005. This survey had now been completed. Its purpose was to identify the factors that influenced the decisions of students at each stage of the process, from first consideration of higher education to commencement of study at the University.

Noted that:

1. The survey complemented a number of other information sources, including a national review carried out by Hobsons on the reasons for student choices. The surveys all confirmed the importance of key issues:

   • The reputation of the university, and of individual subject disciplines, remained a critical factor in attracting applicants and converting them into firm acceptances.
   • It was vital to continue to seek to improve the University’s position in league tables.
   • The University needed to respond to the issues raised in the National Student Survey.
   • It was important that the University continued to ensure that its entry requirements were raised in line with market forces and the trend towards better A level results.
   • High quality publicity materials, visit days, websites and other promotional activities were essential.
   • The interaction between the applicant and staff and students of the University was of vital importance in securing a positive response to offers.
   • The delivery of high quality, post-application open days and maintenance of good contact with applicants were critical factors affecting conversion rates.
2. The survey again highlighted the issue of national league tables. Our own performance in national league tables continued to be disadvantaged by the relatively low proportion of students awarded a first or 2.1 degree. This issue had again been reviewed recently by UTLC.

3. The survey provided some extremely useful information and there was scope for further work given the relatively large pool of responses. The data could be broken down further by individual schools or subjects. Some further analysis would be undertaken by the Marketing and Student Recruitment Service.

4. There were important issues relating to the investment made by parents in higher education.

5. The concept of ‘reputation’ in the context of the University overall, and the subject discipline, required further examination.

6. Further consideration be given to the way in which the opinions of students could be obtained in the future. This was the first year that the University was running its own student survey for all first year students. Future exercises could incorporate questions about admissions.

7. Some promotional benefits could be obtained from the relatively safe campus environment, although it was recognised that discussion of safety could actually raise some concerns in the minds of applicants or their parents.

Resolved that:

(i) A report from UTLC concerning the award of first class and 2.1 honours degrees be submitted to the next meeting of Senate for consideration.

(ii) Mrs Braiden be thanked for her excellent report.

(iii) Mrs Braiden be asked to distribute the report widely, together with the original questionnaire, to ensure that admissions tutors and others were able to make use of both the report and any additional data that they might wish to examine.

44. REPORT FROM THE HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE
(Minute 26, 17.1.2006)

Considered a Report from the Honorary Degrees Committee dated 22 February 2006.

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

(a) Honorary Degree Congregation : 5 May 2006

Reported that:

(a) Sting (aka Gordon Sumner) had accepted the University’s invitation to have the honorary degree of DMus conferred on him at the congregation ceremony to be held on 5 May 2006.
(b) One of the nominees previously approved by Senate for the award of an honorary degree at the joint congregation with the University of Northumbria would now be offered the award of an honorary degree at the 5 May 2006 ceremony, due to difficulties with the timing of the joint ceremony.

(b) **Joint Congregation with the University of Northumbria: 30 October 2006**

Reported that the date for the joint congregation to be held with the University of Northumbria to commemorate the centenary of the RVI had been changed from 7 June 2006 to 30 October 2006, due to difficulties with the availability of key personnel.

Considered a recommendation from the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of an honorary degree at the joint congregation on 30 October.

*After a vote on a motion ‘that the name be approved’, which was approved nem.con,*

**Resolved that the nomination made by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of an honorary degree on 30 October 2006 be approved.**

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

(c) **Special Honorary Degree Ceremony: Summer 2007**

Considered recommendations 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 a special honorary degree ceremony recognising major contributors to the campaign against World Poverty, to be held in the summer of 2007.

*After a vote on a motion ‘that the list be approved’, which was approved nem.con,*

**Resolved that the nominations made by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees in the Summer of 2007 be approved.**

[Note: Senators were reminded that all of the nominations for the award of honorary degrees were confidential and needed to be treated as such until the individuals concerned had accepted the invitation and the University had made appropriate publicity arrangements.]

45. **REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of University Teaching and Learning Committee held on 31 January 2006.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
46. **GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ITS SUB-COMMITTEES**

Reported that:

(a) As a result of the recent review and final report to Council of the Working Group on Governance, the terms of reference of Executive Board had been amended to take into account its oversight of health and safety and diversity issues.

(b) In addition, Executive Board had considered whether further amendments to the terms of reference were necessary as a result of the disestablishment of Strategy Board.

(c) At a recent meeting of University Research Committee it had been proposed, and agreed by the Vice-Chancellor, that the Chairman of University Research Committee should become a full member of EB, and not just be in attendance informally at meetings.

(d) Executive Board has considered and approved amendments to the constitutions and terms of reference of Financial Monitoring and Budget Scrutiny Group, and Diversity Committee arising out of the Working Group on Governance’s report.

(e) Executive Board has considered and approved the constitution and terms of reference of the newly established University/Union Society Partnership Group, which was another of its sub-groups.

Considered proposed amendments to the constitution and terms of reference of Executive Board arising from the above reported items.

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

Resolved that the amendments to the constitution and terms of reference of Executive Board be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.

47. **BOARDS OF FACULTIES : ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING (STATUTE 42)**

Considered proposed amendments to the constitution of Boards of Faculties.

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

Resolved that the amendments to the constitution of Boards of Faculties be approved for submission to Council.

48. **CONGREGATION CEREMONIES, DECEMBER 2006**

Reported that three congregation ceremonies would be held on 5 and 6 December 2006 at The Sage, Gateshead.
48. 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.]