NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

C O U R T

11 May 2012

Present: The Chancellor (in the Chair), Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Sir Alan Beith, Mrs Lesley Braiden, Professor Grant Burgess, Councillor Joe Carlebach, Sir Peter Carr, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Mrs Jane Clubley, Professor Eric Cross, Sir Michael Darrington, Councillor Nick Forbes, Mr Tony Glenton, Mrs Olivia Grant, Councillor Mick Henry, Mr Jack Jeffery, Mr Peter Johnson, Mr Antony Jones, Professor Eileen Kaner, Lord Judd of Portsea, Miss Florence Kirkby, The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Newcastle, Ms Laura Perry, Baroness Quin, Sir George Russell, Mr Mark Scrimshaw, Mr Nigel Sherlock, Mr Hari Shukla, Mr Greg Smith, Professor Tony Stevenson, Lord Walton of Detchant, Professor Michael Whitaker and Professor Nick Wright.

In attendance: Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Dr Douglas Robertson (Director of Research & Enterprise Service) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Two year intensive degrees (Minute 2 of 11.10.11 refers)

Reported:

That a Steering Group lead by the Head of the School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, had considered this issue as part of its deliberations on the possibility of the University having a presence in London in the future. Consideration was in the context of the possible clientele for such intensive degrees and which Schools would find it appropriate to offer them. A full report would be considered by Executive Board the week after this meeting of Court, but the main conclusion was that at this time it was more important to focus on core issues, rather than consider introducing intensive degrees especially since the marketing information suggested that intensive degrees might not satisfy international expectations on the time needed to obtain a degree.

Newcastle University Business School (Minute 6 of 11.10.11 refers)

Noted that:

(a) The Director of the Business School was leaving the University in the summer to take up a position at the University of Edinburgh.

(b) The campaign for the recruitment of a successor was already underway and in view of the strategic importance of the Business School to the University, the Vice-Chancellor would be chairing the Selection Committee himself.
(c) This would be an opportune time for a new person to take over with the move to the new building having been completed successfully and recruitment remaining buoyant.

3. MEMBER NEWS

Reported:

(a) That Professor Ella Ritchie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List 2012.

(b) That Professor Steve Homans, Pro-Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, took up his post on 3 January 2012.

(c) The death of Viscount Ridley, former Chancellor and Chair of Court, and of Professor Brian Shefton, former member of University Staff and Honorary Fellow.

(d) That Sir Peter Carr had been appointed Chair of the NHS Trust Development Authority, which is to be established in June 2012.

Resolved that:

(i) Court record its congratulations to Professor Ritchie and Sir Peter Carr.

(ii) Court record its sympathy to the relatives of Viscount Ridley, for whom a minute’s silence was observed, and Professor Brian Shefton.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT

Reported:

(a) That the terms of appointment of the following members of Court would end on 31 July 2012:

   Mr Alastair Balls
   Mr Jack Jeffery
   Judge Mithani
   Lord Bishop of Newcastle
   Dr Matt Ridley
   Mr Peter Shaw
   Mr Hari Shukla
   Dr Miriam Stoppard

(b) That Mr Rod Taylor had stepped down from Court due to work commitments, leaving a vacancy to 2013.

Reported:

That, while Court Steering Committee had recommended the re-appointment of Lord Matt Ridley for a further term (Document B refers), due to other commitments he was unable to accept.
Resolved:

(i) That Court record its appreciation for the service of retiring members.

(ii) That Court welcomed Councillor Nick Forbes and Baroness Quin to their first meeting.

(iii) That the Lord Bishop of Newcastle be re-appointed for a further term.

(iv) That, with thanks for his long and valuable service both to Court and Court Steering Committee, Mr Jack Jeffery be made an Honorary Life Member of Court with immediate effect.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Reported:

(a) That the term of appointment of Mr Jack Jeffery as Chairman of Court Steering Committee would end on 31 July 2012.

(b) That Ms Carol Galley had stepped down from Court Steering Committee, leaving a vacancy to 31 July 2013.

(c) That the three members of Court Steering Committee are currently also members of Nominations Committee and that, at its meeting on 21 November 2011, Nominations Committee resolved that the Chair of Court Steering Committee should discuss with Court whether this should continue to be the case.

6. REPORTS FROM COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Considered:

(a) First Report from Court Steering Committee

(b) Second Report from Court Steering Committee

(c) Third Report from Court Steering Committee

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents B-D]

(a) Lay Membership of Court

Resolved that:

The following be appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2015, subject to their willingness to serve:

Mr Alan Clarke
Ms Fiona Hall
Professor Patrick Lavery
Ms Lorna Moran
Ms Claire Morgan
Ms Chi Onwurah
Mr Jonathan Parkinson
Ms Angela Woodburn
Ms Vicki Wright

(b) Membership of Court Steering Committee, Nominations Committee and Honorary Degrees Committee

Resolved that:

The recommendations in the second report from Court Steering Committee be approved as follows:

i. The formal membership of Court Steering Committee be increased to five by the addition of the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of Council and Pro-Chancellor as Ex Officio members with immediate effect.

ii. Mr Jack Jeffery will step down as Chair of Court Steering Committee but be re-appointed as a member for one further year from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013.

iii. Sir Peter Carr be appointed Chair of Court Steering Committee for one year from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013.

iv. Mr Richard Maudslay be appointed a member of Court Steering Committee for three years from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2015, and would take over the Chair of Court Steering Committee from 1 August 2013.

v. Sir Peter Carr, Mr Jack Jeffery and Mr Richard Maudslay be appointed members of Council Nominations Committee for one year from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013.

vi. Mr Jack Jeffery be re-appointed as Court’s appointed member on Honorary Degrees Committee for one further year from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013, with a view to Mr Richard Maudslay taking over as Court’s appointed member from 1 August 2013.

(c) Honorary Fellowships of the University

Resolved that:

Honorary Fellowships be awarded to:

Mr Alan Clarke CBE
Professor Terry Davies
Ms Teresa Graham CBE

7. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received:

A report from the Vice-Chancellor on current issues within the University.

[ Circulated with the Agenda as Documents E ]
Noted that:

1. Vision 2021 was currently being updated to take into account ongoing strategic planning and new initiatives.

2. The University’s world-class status was evidenced through academic esteem indicators such as publications, conference attendance and research grants.

3. Our Civic University status was confirmed by our three Societal Challenge Themes. The themes are underpinned by Research Institutes which reach out to society regionally, nationally and internationally. Following a launch year each theme is embedded in our core business.

4. This is the launch year for the third theme lead from the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, ‘Social Renewal’. Professor Mark Shucksmith, the newly appointed Director of the Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal (NISR), recently led a successful PR campaign in London focussing on new initiatives such as the University’s work with the Fairness Commission.

5. That following interviews which failed to identify a suitable candidate, Dr Andrew Young, currently Head of Administration for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture & Engineering, had been seconded as Interim Director of Newcastle Science City for one year, after which a further recruitment campaign would be initiated.

6. That Digital Campus will be the virtual equivalent of the Coherent Campus initiative and was established by Executive Board following a review of University IT expenditure carried out by KPMG. Professor Tony Stevenson, PVC Planning & Resources, will lead on the project which will impact on all levels of staff and students within the University.

7. That, in view of the University’s need to strengthen its efforts in positioning and communication, Ms Abi Kelly, Director of Public Relations, is leading a review of this area and a revised Public Relations Strategy will be submitted to Council in the new academic year.

8. The University’s agreement with Xiamen University to establish a Confucius Institute, one of more than 200 world-wide, at Newcastle had been considered in the context of Human Rights and other issues, taking into account the experience of comparator institutions such as Edinburgh, before agreement was reached.

9. An update was requested on the University’s position with Hainan following the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the former Chairman of Council. This agreement had not resulted in any specific initiatives to date, illustrating the need to sign agreements with institutions (Xiamen) rather than provinces (Hainan) in order to focus more on peer to peer relationships.

10. The recent sporting successes achieved by students were acknowledged as outstanding, particularly in view of the fact that the University does not offer sports science degrees.

11. HEFCE has reduced its Teaching funding for 2012-13 by 20%. This is the first tranche of the eventual cutback of 80% over time. This major change will see teaching paid for by students and not the state, making it difficult to predict income in the future.
12. Funding from the Capital Investment Framework (CIF) will continue to come to the University with £13.5M expected over three years. CIF funding is used for refurbishments and new builds.

13. The University was working closely with N8 to bring researchers and industry together through the Technology Strategy Board and HEFCE funded Innovation Forums.

14. The University had recently clarified with Newcastle College Group that it would not be participating in Free School initiatives, only with the University Technical College.

15. Clarification was sought regarding the distinction between the Russell Group and the 1994 Group. It was explained that the latter represented smaller research-intensive institutions, typically without medical schools.

16. The new members of the Russell Group had also been invited to join the Aldwych Group, comprising the Student Unions of the Russell Group institutions.

17. It was important that the Russell Group and all equivalents should not just react to government initiatives but should lead the debate about the higher education sector. The Russell Group, the Committee of University Chairs and UUK all had a role to play here and the lay members of statutory bodies such as Court could help to keep the debate about the suitability of government initiatives alive.

18. Marketisation of higher education in terms of institutions competing for a share of diminished resources was inevitable and alongside the legitimate debate on the management of higher education at forums such as this, Court members needed to argue that the share of government spending on higher education should be increased.

19. It was confirmed that initial work on the geothermal borehole would be followed by the extraction and use of energy once the Science Central buildings are in place.

8. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

9. **UNIVERSITY’S COMMERCIALISATION ACTIVITIES AND SPIN-OUT COMPANIES**

Received:

A briefing paper summarising the University’s Commercialisation and Spin-out Companies.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents F]

A presentation on the above from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation and Dr Douglas Robertson, Director of Research and Enterprise Services, on the above.

[The presentation is appended to the Minutes]
After noting that:

1. The Director of Research & Enterprise Services (RES) was currently Chair of the National Association of Technology Transfer Officers, with a remit to negotiate terms and conditions, prices and contractual issues arising out of the University’s Commercialisation activities.

2. The University had decided that its primary purpose in engaging in commercialisation of research was to civic engagement, especially in supporting the local regional economy.

3. RES are based in the three Faculties, with some joint University/NHS and some institution-wide support teams such as Newcastle University Ventures.

4. Intellectual Property revenue from royalties and spin-outs has been steadily rising.

5. The Commercialisation of University research presents challenges to academics in terms of the length of time taken for ideas to succeed in the market place and the different skills sets required for hands-on involvement in commercialisation activities.

6. An example of a successful spin-out company which took a long time to come to fruition is Novacastria, which was established in 1987-88 and which took 15-20 years from formation of the business to sale.

7. Some spin-out companies are established in the absence of appropriate industrial collaboration, making a successful outcome more difficult.

8. Academic interest rises in correlation to the resources put into commercialisation activities.

9. The evaluation of academic impacts has to go back a long way.

10. The University has many different interactions with industry such as transmission of information into the public sphere, collaborative and contract research and development, joint ventures and the licensing of technologies.

11. Recent examples of targeted commercialisation from the Ageing Societal Challenge Theme are the development of a park bench designed with elderly users in mind, and the Ambient Kitchen aimed at helping elderly dementia sufferers to live in their homes longer.

12. In another example of commercialisation engagement in action, the Business School recently hosted a start-up weekend or master class in how to set up a business. This was the first such event organised outside London with 70 participants.

13. A case study was the upcoming technology of creating energy through offshore coal gasification, with up to £300M required for development.

14. It is quite possible that an academic may have a ‘bright idea’ and yet have no interest in taking part in its commercialisation.
15. There are challenges for RES in dealing with over 600 sponsors with different terms and conditions.

16. Cashflow plays a crucial role in any successful spin-out activity. For example, the business of one of our Companies, Seabait, was prejudiced by one of its major clients in South America.

17. That while the University’s research portfolio is slightly behind other similar universities, the length of time taken to develop companies plays a part in this. However, this is offset by improvements in collaborations with some major companies working on campus with our research teams.

18. Research and commercialisation initiatives are exciting to students and can be a useful recruitment tool.

19. It might be useful for the University to research case studies at comparator institutions. It was confirmed that some such studies had been undertaken but these are limited by the constraints of commercial confidentiality.

20. International case studies should be considered as a useful learning tool.

21. The possibility of the University establishing a fund to raise money for these activities from industry should be considered. However, the establishment of a fund would highlight the crucial question of whether the University is in business to make money or to provide ‘Excellence with a purpose’.

22. The idea of embedding commercialisation in the core business via staff training and the introduction of student modules on entrepreneurship was important. It was confirmed that some small staff training schemes are already in place and that the Careers Service do offer entrepreneurial training to students.

23. There is evidence of success in the large number of students who have started up companies.

24. It was noted that many pharmaceutical companies are closing down their own R&D departments in favour of collaboration with universities and this could provide useful opportunities for the University.

25. A view was expressed that the University still had not improved enough in this area due to a lack of drive and the inability to recruit appropriate individuals to specific Chair posts. It was important to identify and focus on the main reason for commercialisation activities and to build on the good work already going on in the University.

26. It was important to ensure the highest quality research which is most applicable to the future.

27. The need to look to the future rather than to the past was emphasised and the example of Scratch Bikes, the Newcastle equivalent of London’s Boris Johnson initiative, was cited as a crucial example, particularly as it is a spin-out company set up by Newcastle students.

28. While there is no lack of drive and ambition from academics their main focus should be on core teaching and research. Students may hold the key to future
commercialisation activities with development of ideas into spin-out companies a crucial pathway to employment.

Resolved:

That Dr Robertson be thanked for his interesting presentation.

10. **HONORARY DEGREES**

Reported:

That Honorary Degrees Committee had invited nominations in writing for the following year’s Congregations. Any member of Court, Council, the Alumni Consultative Group and Academic Board may make a nomination, and support for nominees for honorary degrees should be sought only from these bodies. Where several members make a joint nomination, one should be shown as the nominator and the others as supporters.

Principles for the award of Honorary Degrees outlines the criteria for awarding honorary degrees and should be consulted before making a nomination.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents G]

The committee welcomes nominees from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Nominations for 2013 would close on 31 July 2012. To make a nomination please complete an Honorary Degree Nomination Form.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents H]

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The need to circulate Minutes earlier in future was noted.

12. **MEETINGS 2012-13**

Reported:

(a) That meetings of Court in the forthcoming academic year will be held on:

- Tuesday 16 October 2012 at 1030
- Friday 10 May 2013 at 1030

(b) That this year’s Honorary Fellowship Awards Dinner will be held on Monday 15 October 2012.