NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
27 April 2015

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Appleby, Ms Claire Boothman (President, Students’ Union), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Robert Hull, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mrs Heidi Mottram, Dr Ole Pedersen, Mr Simon Pleydell, Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, and Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources) and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Mr Mike Davison, Mr Jonathan Glass, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Tom Joyce, Professor Neill Marshall (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor HaSS) and Mr Paul Walker.

Ms Abi Kelly attended for Minutes 98 & 99.

The Vice-Chancellor was not present for Minute 110.

M I N U T E S

90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

91. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 2 March 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.

92. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising or outstanding actions from the previous minutes.

93. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an oral report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on the current health and safety issues affecting the University.

Noted that a new accident reporting system was soon to be introduced across the University with the aim of improving reporting levels and management ownership of incidents.

94. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

1. Committee of University Chairs (CUC)

The Chair had attended a number of meetings of the CUC. Some concern had been expressed about the possible introduction of a Higher Education Bill and the implications this could have for the sector.
The CUC had also received an informative presentation from UCAS regarding the changing demographics of the student population. It was agreed that this presentation would be circulated to members of Council for information.

2. Council Briefing Sessions

Council members were reminded of the forthcoming Council briefing sessions:

- 11 May 2015, 11.30am-12.15pm, venue to be confirmed. General overview of the University’s Engagement and Internationalisation activities delivered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation.

- 20 May 2015, 10am-11.30am, meet at Level 1 Reception of King’s Gate. Estate Strategy: overview and current projects and issues followed by a tour of an area of the Estates, delivered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Estates.

- 15 June 2015, 11.30am-12.15pm, room L5.18 King’s Gate. Human Resources Strategy: overview and current projects and issues, delivered by the Executive Director of Human Resources.

- 15 June 2015, 12.15pm-1.15pm, meet at Reception of Students’ Union building. Tour of the Students’ Union, delivered by the President and Education Officer, Students’ Union.

Council members were asked to inform Lizzie Taylor if they planned to attend any of these sessions.

95. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report. Highlights of this report are discussed below.

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

[Minute classified as ‘strictly confidential’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

96. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER SUMMARY

Received the full Strategic Risk Register Summary report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University continued to perform well in relation to the student experience and this was reflected in a reduction of the net scores for this risk (SR2A).

2. The net scores for the risk related to political decisions (SR5L) had increased due to the uncertainty surrounding the forthcoming general election. Whilst it was acknowledged there were limits to the University’s ability to control this risk, there were mitigating steps which could be taken to address the impact of a change of government, for example, exercising caution over budget planning.

3. In future strategic risk SR4G – Failure to develop Newcastle Science City in a manner consistent with the Strategic Overview – would be incorporated into other risks.
4. Alternative approaches to risk management had been adopted in some sectors which included the identification of ‘black swan’ events – those which are hard to predict. The University’s approach to risk management was considered to be relatively light touch. The University was invited to contact staff at Northumbria Water to compare each organisation’s approach to risk management.

97. INSTITUTIONAL KPI SUMMARY REPORT

Received the summary KPI report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that, in many cases, the data used to compile the KPIs was issued annually therefore the changes which could be made between meetings of Council were limited.

98. INTERNATIONALISATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Received:

(a) A cover report on the Internationalisation and Engagement Strategies from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, on behalf of Executive Board.

(b) An update report on the Internationalisation Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, on behalf of Executive Board.

(c) An update report on the Engagement Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents E-G. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Internationalisation Strategy which had been prepared by the previous Deputy Vice-Chancellor remained largely appropriate but the focus would now be on improving the operational side of the University’s activity and developing clearer structures and relationships.

2. At present a significant amount of time was spent on the development of the Xiamen project. The strategy in Xiamen was under review and once the position had stabilised, responsibility for the project would be transferred from the PVC Engagement & Internationalisation to one of the Faculty PVCs.

3. Most of the actions listed in the strategy would be completed within the next six months. There were plans to improve internal communications and make more information about the University’s international activity available on its website.

4. Work was underway to reorganise the University’s portfolio of international relationships. It was not the intention to prevent staff from developing collaborations which were a consequence of or necessary to their research; these would continue to be encouraged. Where existing relationships had the potential to develop into a more significant partnership, these would be supported.

5. Strategic Objective 5 stated that there was a 20% target for student mobility to be achieved by 2020 and it was acknowledged that this would not be met. It was thought that this was
an external target, rather than one set by the University itself but it was agreed that this should be clarified.

6. There was still work to be done to ensure a consistent understanding of what was meant by the term ‘engagement’. It was considered that engagement activity should enrich an academic’s teaching and research activity and this was the message which should be conveyed across the University.

7. Providing additional funding for international conferences and policy engagement were two areas identified which could bring reputational benefits for the University. Consideration was being given to developing a ‘Policy Academy’. Where engagement activities had been identified as having only limited impact, funding would be reduced.

8. The University’s business partnerships would be considered and, where appropriate, funding would be allocated to help these develop.

9. The PVC Engagement & Internationalisation could draw upon a network of 1500 academic staff to provide resource and inspiration for the engagement work. Day to day oversight of engagement activity was undertaken by an Engagement Manager. Financial resources were available but much of this had already been allocated. Advancement staff and those working under the three Societal Challenge Themes also supported engagement activity.

10. It was necessary to consider the University’s outreach activities and how these fitted with the engagement agenda. Consideration should be given to how each outreach activity enriched the University’s core business whilst acknowledging that some, which did not directly benefit the University, would be important to continue for the benefit of the University’s relationship with the wider community. This process of analysis was underway.

11. Key Performance Indicators would follow which would provide clear targets for both strategies.

12. It was suggested that the University should consider developing its relationship with the CBI and the local Chamber of Commerce in order to increase business engagement opportunities.

13. It was suggested that the University should seek to harness the potential of its new base in London as a means of further developing its engagement activity. The University had made an application to join London Higher, an umbrella organisation for Higher Education institutions based in the capital. The possibility of submitting an application to London First, a business support body was also being considered.

14. The University’s Alumni was considered to be an important worldwide resource which could be used to enhance the engagement activity. Consideration could be given to aligning the alumni and engagement strategies.

Resolved that Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice Chancellor Engagement & Internationalisation be thanked for an informative presentation.

99. PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY

Received a strategic progress review on the Public Relations Strategy, including KPIs from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, supported by Ms Abi Kelly, Director of Corporate Affairs, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:
1. The University was working to build international recognition of its position as a world-class civic university.

2. The REF provided a recent opportunity to promote the University's research strengths.

3. Traffic to the University’s website had increased by 60% when compared to the previous year and much better use was being made of social media.

4. To return to the top 200 institutions in the Times Higher Education Survey it was necessary to improve the University’s position in the reputation survey that was conducted on a worldwide basis.

5. There was work to do on the University’s website to ensure it was compatible with mobile devices. Improvements were also being made to internal communications and consideration was being given to setting up an institutional-level blog.

6. It was noted that perception-based monitoring was now key to a business’ success.

Resolved that Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice Chancellor Engagement & Internationalisation and Ms Abi Kelly, Director of Corporate Affairs, be thanked for an informative presentation.

100. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY

Received an update report on the Research and Innovation Strategy from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The Research and Innovation Strategy included the institutional objective of being top 20 in the UK for research quality and power. It was suggested that this target was not sufficiently ambitious, particularly for some research areas which were already performing above this level. Further consideration would be given to the appropriateness of this target at the joint meeting of Council and Senate.

2. It was suggested that each school should be asked to ensure its research strengths were promoted as widely as possible. Consideration should also be given to what the University should be doing differently in order to improve its position. It was suggested that too much emphasis was placed on addressing areas of weakness, which should be kept under review, but the University should focus on areas of strength.

Resolved that the strategy should be subject to a further review in light of the outcomes from the joint meeting with Senate.

101. SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

[Minute classified as 'commercial in confidence’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

102. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 10 March 2015.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Council, 27 April 2015

Noted that:

1. Work was underway to increase awareness of course representatives to meet the 1:20 ratio target in all academic units.

2. The £10k required for video conferencing facilities had been removed from the 2015-16 subvention bid as funds for this project had been made available from the University’s budget for the current financial year. The £497,000 maintenance cost for the Flying Wing had been removed as this was subject to a value for money test.

103. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 11 March 2015.

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

[Minute classified as ‘strictly confidential’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

104. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Nominations Committee held on 20 April 2015.

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

Noted that:

1. Nominations Committee had considered a report of comments made by the Working Group on Governance in relation to its operation and the committee was largely supportive of the comments made. Members of Council who wished to submit any comments to the Working Group on Governance were invited to contact any of the Council representatives on the group.

2. In response to the need to increase the diversity of the University’s governing bodies the Chair of Council and the Vice-Chancellor had agreed that they would both sign up to the 30% Club, a body set up in 2010 with a goal of achieving 30% women on FTSE-100 boards by the end of 2015.

105. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 22 April 2015.

[Tabled at the meeting as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

[Minute classified as ‘strictly confidential’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

106. PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH UNIVERSITY DEANSHIPS

Received a report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Office.

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

Noted that at its meeting on 17 March 2015 Senate had agreed that Deanships in Diversity and Sport should be established. A further proposal to establish a Dean of Advancement would follow later in the year.
107. **HEFCE’S ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK**

Received a report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

108. **FEES SCHEDULE**

Received the fees schedule for 2015-16 which has been endorsed by Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that Senate approved the fees schedule at its meeting on 17 March 2015, subject to the approval of Council.

*Resolved that Council approve the fee schedule for 2015-16.*

109. **CHAIR’S CIRCULAR**

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 7 April 2015.

**Approved business:**

There were no items of business to approve.

**Items for information:**

(i) Advancement Strategy
(ii) Meeting Dates for 2015-16
(iii) Reported Business

110. **RESERVED BUSINESS**

[Minute classified as ‘strictly confidential’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]