NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COURT

11 OCTOBER 2011

Present: The Chancellor (in the Chair), Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, Mrs Lesley Braiden, Councillor Joe Carlebach, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Eric Cross, Sir Michael Darrington, Professor Chris Day, Mrs Olivia Grant, Professor Erica Haines, Professor Charles Harvey, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Councillor Mick Henry, Mr Jack Jeffery, Lord Judd of Portsea, Professor Eileen Kaner, Miss Florence Kirkby, The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Newcastle, Ms Laura Perry, Professor Ella Ritchie, Sir George Russell, Mr Mark Scrimshaw, Mr Peter Shaw, Mr Nigel Sherlock, Mr Hari Shukla and Professor Tony Stevenson.

In attendance: Professor Ian Clarke (Director of the Business School), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Director of Public Relations) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

1. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed the following to their first meeting of Court:

Councillor Joe Carlebach
Professor Eileen Kaner
Ms Laura Perry (Students’ Union President)
Mr Mark Scrimshaw

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed.

‘Financial Implications of Funding’ (Minute 8 refers)

Noted that:

There was still a degree of ongoing uncertainty on the subject of Tuition Fees and the possibility of offering two year degrees was still being considered; a full report would be submitted to the next meeting of Court.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Received:

The membership of Court for 2011/2012.

A document detailing the profiles of lay members of Court.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents B and C]

Noted:

(a) Any member who had not provided a short biography and photograph for Document C and for the Court web site had been requested to send them to Yvonne.Lee@ncl.ac.uk.

(b) That, following a change to the arrangements for the conferment of Honorary Degrees, lay members of Court were no longer routinely invited to ceremonies. Honorary Degrees are now conferred at scheduled degree ceremonies in July and occasionally in December and, as they can be conferred at a number of ceremonies on different days, it was not
considered practical to continue to invite all members. Members would still be invited to any special degree ceremony scheduled separately in the future.

Considered:

A recommendation from Court Steering Committee for the appointment of two additional lay members of Court.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document D]

Resolved that:

The following members be appointed to serve on Court with immediate effect until 31 July 2014, subject to their willingness to serve:

Councillor Nick Forbes
Baroness Joyce Quin

4. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received a report from the Vice-Chancellor.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document E]

Noted that:

1. The consultation on the Government Higher Education White Paper was still ongoing. Universities, UUK and the Russell Group have all responded.

2. A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation on the Regulatory Framework is also ongoing.

3. In the past year there have been two major funding changes, the new fees regime and the deregulation of quotas.

4. There is a major tension between higher fees and the need for young people from lower social economic backgrounds to cross a psychological threshold in applying to a University. A tension also needs to be acknowledged in Government policy between AABs and the notion that universities have a civic duty to widen access.

5. The Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have jointly been awarded £21m from the National Institute for Health Research to continue and expand our research into and treatment of the ageing population.

6. The University had scored recent successes being placed 10th in the National Student Survey and 5th in the Employability Survey among full service publicly funded institutions.

7. The recent application from Newcastle College to the Baker Dearing Trust for the establishment of a University Technical College had been approved. The University is a sponsor of this 14-19 year old recruitment initiative.

8. Substantial mine workings have been found on the proposed Science Central site with the consequent need to stabilise the ground prior to building work. Of the two possible options, either injecting cement/concrete into the ground or mining the coal, the latter had been chosen.

9. The University has a new £1m research vessel which has been designed by staff and students from the School of Marine Science & Technology and which was named ‘The Princess Royal’ by her Royal Highness at a recent ceremony.
10. The Vice-Chancellor has become chair of The Fairness Commission, a body established by the City Council to ensure the fair allocation of diminished resources.

11. Future media updates would be coming to Court from Ms Abi Kelly, the University’s new Interim Director of Public Relations, who was introduced to members of Court at the meeting.

12. The University had appointed Professor Steve Homans, currently Professor of Structural Biology and Dean of the Faculty of Biological Sciences at the University of Leeds, to succeed Professor Oliver Hinton as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, when he retires from the University at the end of December. Professor Homans will take up his post on 1st January 2012.

13. The University had been ranked 12th in the country in the Sunday Times Good University Guide 2012 and had received THE Leadership and Management Awards for the Outstanding Library and Outstanding Estates Teams. The University has also been shortlisted for three Times Higher Education Awards, with the winners to be announced on November 24th.

5. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S QUESTIONS**

Received from Miss Florence Kirkby:

“As the University is expecting to admit students at an earlier stage and possibly a younger age I should be grateful if the Vice-Chancellor could say a little about the provision which has been made for their general care and development as well as their academic progress.”

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document F]

Noted that:

1. It will still be the case that most students admitted to the University will be over 18 and therefore adults. The University regularly gets queries from the parents or grandparents of students but, due to data protection legislation, can only deal with the students themselves.

2. That, for the small number who may come to the University before they are 18, and are therefore legally minors; a range of wellbeing initiatives are in place.

3. The University’s Student Wellbeing Service is able to provide counselling on issues such as mental health and provide additional support.

4. The President of the Students’ Union also confirmed that they have a sabbatical officer with a Welfare and Equality portfolio and a Student Advice Centre with full-time financial and housing advisors.

5. The health, safety and welfare of under-18s in particular should be considered when planning Freshers’ Week activities which have generated evidence of binge drinking in the past.

6. The President of the Students’ Union confirmed that there has been a change of culture in this regard with 94% of daytime activities and 36% of evening activities in the most recent Freshers’ Week being alcohol free.

Received from Mr Mark Scrimshaw:

“What impact does the VC think that increased fees and costs for students will have on the excellent Partners programme the University has spent so much time and effort establishing,
and especially on the disadvantaged young people that programme was particularly meant to focus on; and what is the University doing to mitigate these impacts?"

[Circulated with the Agenda s Document G]

Noted that:

1. The University is committed to the retention and expansion of the PARTNERS Programme, particularly since this activity ties in with the institution's role as a civic university with a social conscience.

2. The range of financial support available to students is detailed in the University Publication 'Guide to Student Finance 2012 Entry', a copy of which is enclosed with the Minutes.

3. The University's commitment to Widening Participation is also illustrated by Professor Ella Ritchie's chairmanship of 'Realising Opportunities', a collaborative initiative with 11 other Russell Group universities, which promotes Fair Access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups.

4. Newcastle University Promise Scholarships is another initiative offering fully funded scholarships to students of high ability from low income backgrounds.

5. It was important to make a distinction between a student receiving money (as in a bursary or scholarship) and a fee waiver. In general the government preferred fee waivers and students might prefer receiving money.

6. It was important that the University did not pursue fairness at the expense of academic excellence.

7. Financial assistance is not a useful term due to a certain stigma that could be attached but the award of a bursary or scholarship can usefully be shown on CVs.

8. The White Paper articulates the aim to offer students a wider variety of study opportunities with the probability of degree awarding powers being given to a number of further education providers.

9. An institution must currently have a minimum of 4,000 students to be termed a University but the Government is proposing to lower this to 1000.

10. Similarly the Government is proposing to lower the current model of an institution operating for at least 4 years before being granted degree awarding powers to just 2 years.

11. The ability of the University to respond to the changes in the sector will be partly influenced by the steps taken in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and performance management.

12. The University's priority is to protect the core academic and student experience and more resources are being targeted towards enhancing the student experience.

13. With regard to performance management it is recognised that the annual performance and development review should apply to all categories of staff and the University is working towards this.

14. The University has introduced Success Factors as part of its Performance Development Review process for support staff in acknowledgement of the fact that qualifications and experience need to be accompanied by the encouragement of certain types of behaviour in the workplace.
15. High fees and rising debt levels may put pressure on students to study only particular disciplines which provide clear careers paths and salary guarantees. This could lead to increased applications to study e.g. Law, Accountancy and Medicine at the expense of other Arts and Social Science subjects.

16. There has been no fall-off in attendance at Open Days with around 29,000 at recent events hosted by the University.

17. The University needs to ensure that candidates understand that repayment of tuition fees will correlate directly to their future salary in order to counter the media hype focusing only on the prospective levels of debt.

6. **NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL**

Reported that the Business School moved in Summer 2011 to its new premises on Barrack Road.

Received:

A briefing paper on the work of the Business School.

[Circulated with the Agenda s Document H]

A presentation from Professor Ian Clarke, Director, on the above (copy enclosed with the Minutes).

Noted:

1. That the Business School was comparatively young, having been established only in 2003, while business schools at some of our comparator universities (e.g. Warwick and Lancaster) were around 45 years old.

2. Progress made in a relatively short time was highlighted in:

   a. the development of strong relationships with external advisers;
   b. an increase in the proportion of international Advisory Board members;
   c. Association of MBAs (AMBA) and European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) accreditation;
   d. working towards Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (ACASB) accreditation;
   e. the recruitment of over 90% of international (non-EU) postgraduate students, which accounts for a large proportion of the University’s international students;
   f. Santander sponsorship of student placements abroad (global internships);
   g. the award of degrees in partnership with international institutions (e.g. Groningen);
   h. the development of agreements with international institutions (e.g. Monash, Melbourne, Australia).

3. The Business School is fully committed to the University’s Societal Challenge Themes, having contributed to the ‘Changing Age’ theme with research into sustainable assisted living. The forthcoming ‘Social Renewal’ theme affords opportunities for contributions from the Business School in the fields of entrepreneurship and innovation.

4. The Business School engages with the regional community in many ways, including strong links with the local CBI and with the NHS Hospitals Foundation Trust. A number of current and former Court members who are active in the local business community also serve on the School’s Advisory Board (e.g. Sir Peter Carr and Mary Coyle).
5. In addition to the new building which houses the main Business School, some undergraduate students are taught in large classes in the Armstrong Building, and this accommodation has recently been refurbished.

6. The School has a good reputation with the following contributory factors:
   a. part of a Russell Group University with a good national and international reputation;
   b. strong national and international business contacts which assists with the employability of graduates;
   c. courses offer students an intellectual challenge;
   d. new build and refreshed brand/website;

7. There are also some challenges for the School to address:
   a. a challenging staff/student ratio;
   b. a feeling in the region that the School could offer more in the field of executive education;
   c. responding to the increasing expectations of students;
   d. some of the larger class sizes possibly negating opportunities for engagement.

8. Students benefit from not only theory in the School’s courses but assistance with the practicalities of business life. Students want to develop independent intellectual strengths but also stress the need for consideration of practical problems.

9. Not many business schools feature Governance and Leadership courses which would surely be attractive to prospective ‘business’ students, though it was important to distinguish here between leadership and management skills.

10. The School’s international recruitment base (currently 75% Chinese) needed to be expanded and the Indian market should be addressed. It was noted that changes to the UK’s visa regulations have had an impact on recruitment from the Indian Sub-Continent.

11. A course on ‘Nation Building’ was considered an attractive option, particularly for international students looking to go into politics or the Civil Service in their home countries. There is currently little expertise in this area within the School but this was cited as a goal.

12. In the present financial crisis courses should include elements of social ethics and moral responsibility.

13. The role of the Business School in the University as a whole was considered. Cross-faculty work in the areas of behavioural science and motivation was ongoing.

14. While most business schools feature a core group of organisational theorists focussing on the mechanics and functions of an institution, Newcastle’s Business School was currently working with Human Resources and an organisational studies group.

15. Common module sizes across degrees have not been historically common within the University, though the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty has introduced a common undergraduate regulatory framework. It was recognised that more cross-faculty interaction was needed.

16. It was queried whether there was a role for the Business School in advising academics who may be establishing research spin-off companies.

17. The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting of Court in Spring 2012 would focus on the University’s commercialisation activities.
Resolved:

That Professor Clarke be thanked for his informative presentation.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Reported that:

(a) The membership of Court Steering Committee for 2011-12 is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Observers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sir Peter Carr</td>
<td>Professor Chris Brink</td>
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<td>Ms Carol Galley</td>
<td>Mr Mark I’Anson</td>
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<td>Mr Jack Jeffery (Chairman)</td>
<td>Professor Ella Ritchie</td>
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<td>Registrar</td>
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8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A. Asian Business Connexions (ABC)

Reported:

That, following a request from Mr Hari Shukla, for the work of Asian Business Connexions to be discussed at a Court meeting, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had prepared a report on the University’s interactions with ABC and the wider Asian community for the information of Court.

[Circulated with the Agenda’s Document J]

Noted:

1. That the University already engages with the wider Asian community in a variety of ways including fees and funding advice, raising aspirations, together with information on entrepreneurship and enterprise.

2. Professor J Hayton, new Professor of Innovation in the Business School, had met with ABC colleagues and a number of practical ideas had been generated.

3. Many of the region’s undergraduates were hard-working and ambitious Asians who need help to get started in the business world. ABC has helped with the establishment of 89 businesses and many of the young Asian business men and women want to play a role in the North East’s business community. The University could have a role to play in offering advice.

4. The Asian community are particularly keen to over-turn the image of their businesses as nothing but corner shops, with large numbers of young Asian entrepreneurs having moved into manufacturing and other business areas. More representation in fora such as Court and other institutional bodies would be desirable.

B. Funding for Museums

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor referred to a recent briefing which had been sent to Court members regarding the future funding of museums. While there is not a crisis yet, the University hoped it could rely on the future help of Court members in lobbying and influencing policy in this area.
C. Honorary Fellowships Dinner

The success of the dinner the previous evening was noted and the University was asked to pass on the appreciation of attendees to those involved in the organisation of such an enjoyable event.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Reported that:

(a) The next meeting of Court will take place at 10.30am on Friday 11 May 2012 in King’s Gate, Level 5, Room L5.13&15.

(b) That in response to a request from the Chancellor, Court Steering Committee had agreed that a presentation on Commercialisation should be the main item on this agenda.