NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

C O U R T

12 MAY 2017

Present: The Chancellor (in the Chair), Vice-Chancellor, Ms Parveen Akhtar, Councillor Joe Carlebach, Mr Alan Clarke, Professor Richard Davies, Mr Andrew Davison, Mr Colin Fitzpatrick, Councillor Nick Forbes, Mrs Olivia Grant, Ms Sarah Green, Rt Rev Christine Hardman, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Councillor Mick Henry, Mr Mark I’Anson, Mr Antony Jones, Lord Frank Judd, Professor Eileen Kaner, Ms Abi Kelly, Miss Florence Kirkby, Mr Stephen Lightley, Ms Pummi Mattu, Mrs Helen McArdle, Ms Claire Morgan, Ms Fiona O’Connor, Mr Jonathan Parkinson, Councillor Sue Pearson, Professor Julie Sanders, Mr Mark Scrimshaw, Sir Nigel Sherlock, Professor Mark Shucksmith, Mr Nitin Shukla, Ms Sarah Stewart, Mr Jack Taylor, Dr Robert Teoh and Ms Hannah Underwood.

In attendance: Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant). Ms Lucy Backhurst and Professor Liz Todd.

The Chair noted that illness had prevented both Mr Jack Jeffery and Sir George Russell from attending the meeting and confirmed that Court’s good wishes for their recovery would be passed on to them in a letter from the Vice-Chancellor.

The Chair welcomed Professor Chris Day to his first meeting as Vice-Chancellor and President and Mrs Helen McArdle to her first meeting of Court.

The Chair congratulated Mr Bruce Shepherd on the award of his OBE for services to the economy and skills in the offshore sector in the New Year Honours List.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document A]

2. 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, C and D]
Resolved that:

Membership of Court Steering Committee, Nominations Committee and Honorary Degrees Committee

i. Ms Fiona O’Connor be re-appointed to Court Steering Committee and Nominations Committee for a further term with effect from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2020.

ii. Ms Claire Morgan be appointed as the Court member on Honorary Degrees Committee for a period of one year in the first instance (as her current term of office on Court will end in July 2018) from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018.

Lay Membership of Court

i. The following members be re-appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2020, subject to their willingness to continue to serve:

   Councillor Joe Carlebach
   Councillor Nick Forbes
   Mrs Olivia Grant
   Ms Sarah Green
   Ms Fiona O’Connor
   Baroness Quin
   Mr Mark Scrimshaw
   Mr Greg Smith
   Ms Sarah Stewart

ii. The following be appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2020, subject to their willingness to serve:

   Mrs Jacqui Henderson, formerly a member ex officio as Vice-Chair of Council
   Mr David Flory, former Chief Executive of NHS TDA
   Mr Mark I’Anson, formerly a member ex officio as Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor

iii. Honorary Fellowships 2017

   Court approve the conferment of Honorary Fellowships on the following candidates at the Honorary Fellowships Awards Ceremony and Dinner to be held on 9 October 2017:

   Mrs Jacqui Henderson
   Dr John Lloyd
   Mr Nick Swales

3. WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Received:

A presentation on the University’s Widening Participation activities from Ms Lucy Backhurst, Head of Student Recruitment & Admissions and Professor Liz Todd, Professor of Educational Inclusion in the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences.
Noted that:

Presentation:

1. Newcastle University is a national leader in Widening Participation and our innovative research means that we have also influenced policy in this area.

2. Professor Todd and the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching have carried out the following research which informs our efforts in Widening Participation:
   - Evaluation of Children North East’s audit tool poverty proofing the school day, 2016
   - Analysis of how children 5-11yrs spend time out of school from Millenium Cohort Study, Nuffield Foundation, 2013-6

3. Findings show that poorer families have been particularly affected by various cuts in funding over a number of year and the national policy focus on grades have resulted in a restricted curriculum and teaching to tests.

4. Professor Todd has also carried out a mapping exercise of our activities and how we can adapt them to address these issues.

5. State School education is not necessarily free as findings show that pupils from poorer families have low participation rates in Sport and Music and, while extra tuition outside of school is increasing, they are not able to take up the same opportunities as pupils from more affluent homes. Students from poorer families are also disadvantaged by the extra costs of uniforms and other school essentials.

6. Our School Pupil Premium funds supplementary activity, with all Faculties and Academic Schools involved. University structures support our work with the Institute for Social Renewal working with the Centre for Learning and Teaching in responding to research findings.

7. Research on poverty-proofing the school day showed that:
   - Barriers to learning were found in every participating school in a wide range of areas including ability/behaviour, bullying, uniform, food, exams, extra-curricular activities, support, homework, resources, transport
   - Schools were often unaware of parental and pupil perceptions and of cumulative costs across the year – stigmatising practices are largely hidden without an understanding of pupils’ lived experiences
   - Action plans raised many low-cost ways in which schools could lessen barriers to learning and improve how pupil premium funding was spent
- There was evidence of improved attendance and attainment and improved take-up for FSM
- There was evidence of changed attitudes and a shift of ethos

8. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that pupils from disadvantaged homes do have aspirations, but do not have access to the same level of help in achieving their ambitions as those from more affluent homes.

9. The University has responded to research by introducing Project Based Learning, with projects proposed by university staff, students, businesses, public services or charities. We have a full-time co-ordinator, volunteers and teachers with success in supplementing learning skills, raising aspirations, good widening participation experiences, offer Continuing Professional Development for teachers and collaborations with external organisations. Our work in this area is also linked to Professor Sugata Mitra’s research into Self-Organised Learning Environments (SOLE).

10. Widening Participation is complicated for a variety of reasons. The University is committed to Widening Participation but the introduction of Tuition Fees and withdrawal of Maintenance Grants presented challenges in this area.

11. It is particularly difficult to balance efforts to increase Widening Participation with the need to have high entry standards to underpin the value of our degrees.

12. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) is the regulatory body to promote and safeguard fair access to HE and through our Access Agreement we are contracted to spend £1,000 from each £9,000 tuition fee on our Widening Participation activities. This also requires us to collaborate with institutions who are otherwise our competitors in the student market place.

13. The University is a national leader in Widening Participation activities. Our PARTNERS Programme is one of the largest, most successful in England. In 2016, 56% of our WP students entered through PARTNERS (507 students). We lead Realising Opportunities - an award winning national scheme involving 15 leading universities. We have just secured £7.7million from HEFCE to lead a regional WP project involving the five NE universities and 16 FE colleges.

14. Our students, graduates and alumni act as role models, mentors and buddies for students on our programmes, and shape what we do.

15. The School Sponsorship agenda is high on the Government’s list of priorities and we have had visits from the DFE and the Director of OFFA to ‘encourage’ our participation. The University feels that there is evidence to confirm that our efforts in terms of project-based learning, working with chosen Schools and Teachers and promoting after school clubs, make a wider impact than the University sponsoring one School or Academy could.

16. The University would welcome the involvement of Court members in any of the above activities they were interested in.
Discussion:

1. The University could usefully work not just with teachers but with school managers and it was confirmed that while the North Leadership Centre offers CPD for school managers, the Business School could also play a useful role in this regard.

2. It would be useful to invite Sir Michael Barber, the Chair-elect of the Office for Students and the new CEO when appointed, to view our efforts in Widening Participation. While this was an option, the idea that universities are pleading for special status for their work needed to be avoided.

3. It was important to note that policy changes and responses to them take time to work through a system. The social background of school pupils will impact on their future prospects and we need to take this into account in terms of access/entry levels. It was confirmed that our access criteria is derived from best practice across the sector. We take into account various factors including, low participation neighbourhoods, low income, whether someone is ‘first in the family’ to apply to University, whether they have come through the care sector etc, in assessing eligibility.

4. Fear of ‘financial burden’ is an issue for potential students from low income areas and the University offsets this with scholarships provided through our PARTNERS and Realising Opportunities programmes. The Students’ Union also provides bursaries to enable students to access clubs and societies. Current students and graduate ambassadors also lead sessions on financial budgeting while at University.

5. Degree Apprenticeships could also provide a useful Widening Participation aid and the University is now on the Register of Providers for Degree Apprenticeships. A Steering Group Chaired by the PVC Learning and Teaching is exploring our options in this area.

6. Funding cuts in schools in recent years have resulted in the loss of teaching posts and it would be important for universities to fill some gaps left where no funding is available to employ teachers of a particular subject. The University is aware of this issue and our activities in this area are free to schools with bursaries provided for transport if visits to the University are arranged. Greater use of digital technologies in the future could replace visits from outlying areas.

7. Rural schools in particular have been under financial pressure with the loss of non-core subjects.

8. The increase in school pupils with special needs also presented a challenge to Widening Participation but the University assesses students’ requirements before they are admitted after which the Student Wellbeing Service provide full support.

9. The Vice-Chair of Council could provide mentors through her Women’s Group in Northumberland and would welcome further details of how she could help.

10. Nitin Shukla asked Court to note how much help and support had been given to a school he is involved with in the West End of Newcastle, whose difficulties had been positively helped by help from Professor Todd and Lucy Backhurst’s team. This was relevant to the debate around whether School Sponsorship would have the best results.
11. Mature students and people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have gone into work but might wish to study in a career-break should be considered in terms of WP and it was confirmed that this was an area the University needed to improve.

12. Fiona O'Connor encouraged fellow Court members to follow her by contributing to the PARTNERS Summer school, as there could be benefits for both pupils in learning from the expertise and experience of the Court membership and for Court members in being part of such a successful programme.

13. Working with employers in the region could help in widening access to University and there could be better co-ordination across the region in this regard.

14. While children from deprived areas may not engage easily with older established types of profession, they all understand how big a role technology plays in the modern world and working with employers in the digital arena could have good results. We do already work with many organisations such as Teach First and through our Open Lab for project based learning and it was recognised that a focus on digital technologies was important.

15. It would be useful to arrange an event specifically for Court members to give further information on how they could help with these activities.

16. The age of some Court members might be a barrier to mentoring but it was confirmed that this could supplement the efforts of current students and graduate ambassadors in adding immense expertise and experience to their younger perspective. In addition Strathclyde had successfully used a number of retired academic staff to act as subject mentors to WP students.

17. It was noted that many people from disadvantaged backgrounds might have entrepreneurial gifts which needed nurturing and it was confirmed that our Enterprise and Entrepreneurship scheme, where graduates with successful start-up companies come to speak to current students, has recently won an award.

18. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will require us to report on not just how many students we admit through Widening Participation schemes, but crucially on their progress through the University to graduation.

19. With the focus on interviewing candidates for admission to universities and the time constraints faced by today’s academics, it was important to note that follow-up research into a prospective entrant with poor communications skills can tease out the information required to assess their eligibility for entry. It was confirmed that the specific panel members have knowledge of our various WP activities and are trained in what to look out for in pupils from this sort of background.

Resolved that:

Ms Backhurst and Professor Todd be thanked for their contribution to the meeting.
4. **VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS**

Received:

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

[Circulated with the agenda as Document E]

Noted that:

**Report:**

1. The passage of the HE Research Bill had been significant for the sector and, while UUK and the Russell Group had lobbied hard for further changes, it was positive that some concessions had been made by the Government, with, it was important to acknowledge, enormous help from the House of Lords.

2. In terms of the refresh of the University’s strategy, the Vice-Chancellor is partway through a lengthy consultation process with staff. The exercise will be sufficiently advanced for the Vice-Chancellor to make a full presentation to Court in October.

3. The Spring Budget had announced key investments in Research and Development, including the £100 million to be invested over the next 4 years to attract leading international researchers to the UK.

4. In addition, the first three tranches of Industrial Strategy Challenge Funding relating to healthcare and medicine, clean and flexible energy and robotics and artificial intelligence see the University will placed to put in bids from our highly successful areas of research.

5. The University had done well in the QS World Subject Rankings, with Dentistry and Geography our best performing subjects. The University had also done well in the Complete University Guide placing us 23rd in the country overall. In addition there had been high subject rankings, particularly in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, for which staff in the Faculty were to be congratulated.

6. The University’s red rating in the so called Freedom of Speech rankings published by the online magazine ‘Spiked’ had unfortunately been taken on by some of the mainstream press. The University and the Students’ Union have investigated and found no evidence of any ban on speakers.

7. The Learning and Teaching Centre on Newcastle Science Central is a significant milestone for Science Central and will be a flagship development with state-of-the-art learning facilities.

8. Court members would be receiving further information in due course about the events to commemorate the award of an Honorary Degree to Dr Martin Luther King in 1967, but the key dates to note were the event in the King's Hall on 13 November, to which Court members would be invited, and the events bringing together all faiths in the City.

9. In challenging times for international recruitment, it was pleasing to note that the International Student Barometer Survey had placed Newcastle 5th in the country and 18th in the World for student experience and the Times Higher Education Survey saw us placed in the Top 10 in the UK.
10. The Vice-Chancellor was delighted to report on the success of Professor Sir Doug Turnbull’s Mitochondrial Research work, with the award of the treatment licence from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HEFA), being the culmination of years of work in this area for Sir Doug, from his early clinical work with patients affected, to the ability to offer fertility treatment today.

Discussion

1. Court members could usefully contribute to the refresh of the University strategy and it was confirmed that the version presented to Court in October would not be final and the Court discussion would represent useful input to this exercise.

2. Degree Apprenticeships were a highly competitive area and it would perhaps be useful to focus on partnering small and medium sized organisations in our region to set us apart from other universities.

3. The University’s links with the military could feed into a niche market with funding pots available from the Ministry of Defence, the DfE and BIS.

4. The Red Rating by spiked could be looked on as a ‘badge of honour’ and it was sad that something like the University’s stance on initiation ceremonies, which had led to the death of a student, should have been mentioned in the context of restricting student freedoms.

5. It should be noted with regard to the Freedom City events, that Martin Luther King’s achievements were underpinned by his Christian faith and that the event at St Nicholas’ Cathedral was to be a Christian service in commemoration of Dr King’s Christianity, but that representatives of other faiths were to be invited.

6. The University should consider making the new Learning and Teaching Centre’s facilities available to other organisations in the Public Sector, particularly charities which had been affected by financial constraints.

7. In terms of the Industrial Strategy, the University welcomed the emphasis on place, which could see the University using its expertise to drive economic growth particularly in our own area.

8. Successful Postgraduate Open Days had been reported but how far did this level of initial interest convert to applications? It was confirmed that international PG application numbers were particularly challenging, but the University had responded to this with the appointment of a new Director of International Affairs, who was working closely with the PVC Engagement and Internationalisation to reverse these trends.

9. The passing of the HE Bill, while disappointing in not achieving all of the Higher Education sector’s sought-after changes, was notable in having enshrined into law the concept of institutional autonomy, which was so important to all, and the Haldane Principle which ensured that research funding would arise out of peer review. The intervention of the House of Lords and in particular the members of Court from their number, could not be praised enough.

10. Higher Education could not be approached in anything other than an international context in an inter-related world and the purpose of universities in encouraging international students and staff to enrich their campuses was crucial to the debate.
5. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S QUESTIONS**

Received from Nitin Shukla:

“Newcastle University has attracted many talented individuals from Europe, as lecturers, researchers and students. Following Brexit and the uncertainty in the residency status of Europeans in the UK, what is the University doing to meet the challenges of attracting the best talent from Europe in order to align recruitment with its corporate strategy and priorities?”

Received:

An oral response from the Vice-Chancellor.

Noted that:

1. The University is doing a great deal to re-assure EU students and staff currently at the University and had, in particular, made loans available to help staff with any legal costs arising from their application to remain.

2. The City was working in addition to the University in trying to influence government Brexit negotiations, particularly as this region has benefitted greatly in the past from EU structural funding in addition to funding in Agriculture and Education. The City was also concerned to support the EU nationals living here in whatever practical way it could such as proof of residency.

3. Recent job cuts at Manchester and Aberystwth Universities have been blamed on Brexit and the risks for universities need to be factored into Brexit negotiations.

4. The University had also been working with the City Council in a City-wide welcome to international staff and students.

5. It was important to note that international students do not only bring income to universities in the UK, but greatly enhance the student experience through home students mixing with a diverse international student body.

6. While there has been a 10% decrease in the number of applications for University posts from EU nationals, the University has appointed several EU academics to key posts in the University.

7. In terms of student numbers there has been a slight increase in Undergraduate applications since the Brexit vote, but a larger fall in applications for taught Postgraduate programmes.

8. The Institute for Social Renewal had also held events on policies post-Brexit.
6. **PAST COURT PRESENTATIONS: UPDATES FOR MEMBERS**

Received:

A briefing paper updating Court on the presentation received by Court at its meeting in May 2015, delivered by the Vice-Chancellor on the Coherent Campus.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document F]

7. **HONORARY DEGREES**

Reported that:

Honorary Degrees Committee invites nominations in writing for the following year’s Congregations. Any member of Court, Council or Academic Board or of the alumni present at meetings of Convocation at which the request for nominations is tabled, 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.

Received:

Principles for the award of Honorary Degrees outlining the criteria for awarding honorary degrees, which should be consulted before making a nomination.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G]

The committee welcomes nominees from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Nominations for 2018 will close on Monday, 26 June 2017. To make a nomination please complete an Honorary Degree Nomination Form.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document H]

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Court noted the enormous role the Chair of Council had played during his time in that position and thanked him for all of his hard work at this his last meeting of Court.

9. **MEETINGS 2017-18**

Reported that:

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

- Tuesday 10 October 2017 at 1030
- Friday 11 May 2018 at 1030

(b) Court Steering Committee has agreed that a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor on the refresh of the University Strategy should be the main item on the agenda for the October meeting.
(c) This year’s Honorary Fellowship Awards Dinner will be held on Monday 9 October 2017. Members are asked to note the date at this stage, with invitations to follow in due course.