NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

12 May 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Neill Marshall, (Acting PVC HaSS), Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Appleby, Ms Claire Boothman, (President, Students’ Union), Dr Heather Brown, Dr Tim Cheek, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Professor Peter Clarke, Professor Steven Clifford, Mr Wayne Connolly, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Stuart Dawley, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor John Fitzgerald, Ms Olivia Jeffery (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Tom Joyce, Ms Abi Kelly, Mr Tolu Kolawole, Dr Sara Maioli, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Ole Pedersen, Dr Lindsay Pennington, Mr Steve Williams, Dr Tony Young and Professor Martha Young-Scholten.

In attendance: Mrs Lesley Braiden (Academic Registrar), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer, Governance).

Apologies: Professor Chris Day, Professor Julia Newton and Dr Ruth Valentine.

M I N U T E S

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

67. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 12 March 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.

It was clarified that, in relation to the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the ‘technical difficulties’ referred to in the minutes were not of the University’s making and were for the Higher Education Academy, the organisation which administered the survey, to resolve.

68. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

(ii) Honorary Degrees [Minute 40, 20.01.2015]

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar.

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

69. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.
Senate, 12 May 2015

Noted:

1. **Deaths**

   Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

   **Resolved that Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.**

2. **General Election: 7 May 2015**

   The outcome of the General Election would have a number of consequences for the Higher Education sector. There had been new appointments to the positions of Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Minister for Universities and Science which meant that, in terms of personnel, there was no continuity with the previous administration.

   Student fees would not be reduced but there was a possibility that a Conservative government could consider removing the cap to allow universities to set their own fees. In the short term, inflationary adjustments were possible. The non-fee component of university funding could come under threat as a result of the government’s austerity agenda since the budget for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills was not protected.

   The cap on student numbers would be removed from September 2015.

   The Conservative manifesto raised the possibility that an external quality assessment programme, similar to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), could be introduced for teaching.

   The budget for science would no longer be protected. The outcome of the review of the research support being conducted by Sir Paul Nurse, could determine how the science budget would be divided between research and innovation.

   Universities in the region could benefit from funding allocated to the government’s ‘Northern Powerhouse’ initiative.

   Student numbers would remain within immigration figures.

   The Conservative manifesto stated that the party would be ‘clamping down on the number of so-called “satellite campuses” opened in London by universities located elsewhere in the UK’. This would be monitored closely as there could be implications for the University’s newly-opened branch campus.

   A referendum on Europe would take place, the result of which could also have significant implications for the sector.

   It was considered possible that legislation on Higher Education could be introduced which could result in regulatory changes and changes to the role of the funding council.

   The government was expected to issue higher education institutions with a guidance note on their role in relation to the implementation of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act.

   The strong showing of the Scottish National Party (SNP) could result in pressure for a further referendum on Scottish independence which could also have implications for the higher education sector.
70. **SENATE ELECTION 2015**

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on the outcome of the 2015 Senate Election.

Noted that:

1. Between 30 March and 20 April 2015 eligible members of academic staff were invited to submit nominations for the vacancies in the Professorial and Non-professorial categories of Senate membership. Voting took place between 27 April and 8 May 2015 by online secure ballot.

2. There were 7 vacancies in the Professorial constituency of Senate. Only 5 nominations were received therefore the following individuals were appointed without an election taking place:
   - Professor Paul Christensen, School of Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials
   - Professor Nicola Curtin, Northern Institute for Cancer Research
   - Professor Nigel Harkness, School of Modern Languages
   - Professor Kathryn Haynes, Newcastle University Business School
   - Professor Klaus Schoefer, Newcastle University Business School

Approval was requested from Senate to transfer the 2 remaining Professorial vacancies to 2016.

3. There were 5 vacancies in the Non-professorial constituency of Senate. 13 nominations were received. An election took place in which the following individuals were successful:
   - Dr Phil Ansell, School of Mathematics & Statistics
   - Dr Lindsey Ferrie, School of Biomedical Sciences
   - Dr Emma Foster, Institute of Health & Society
   - Dr Ruth Graham, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
   - Dr Joan Harvey, School of Psychology

4. The working group undertaking the review of the University’s governance structures had expressed concern that the turnover of Senate members was uneven. Ways of evening up the turnover in membership had been considered and it was proposed to ask the two individuals who received the most votes in the Non-professorial election to serve one year in attendance and to commence their full period of membership from 1 August 2016. Their period of membership would, therefore, last four years instead of three. This proposal was included on the website for the Senate election when nominations were invited but it was noted that the permission of Senate was required in order for it to be enacted.

Resolved that:

(i) **Senate approve the proposal to transfer the two remaining Professorial vacancies to 2016;**

(ii) **Senate approve the proposal to ask the two individuals who received the most votes in the Non-professorial election to serve for one year ‘in attendance’ and to commence their three year period of membership from 1 August 2016.**
INTERNATIONALISATION & 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 C-E. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The update report on the Internationalisation Strategy focused on how the internal communication of the University’s existing international activity could be improved. In future there would be a focus on how the University’s activities supported the drive for excellence and the raising of its international profile.

2. Many of the actions included in the update report were already underway. Webpages were in the process of being developed to show the breadth of the University’s current international activities and also the individuals responsible in each case. The need to be clearer in terms of communications with staff was a priority and it was hoped that significant improvements would be made over the next 12-18 months.

3. Work would be undertaken to improve the University’s position in world rankings but this would be a long-term process.

4. A scheme was in place to bring visiting professors to the University. It was possible for staff at Newcastle to apply to undertake mini-sabbaticals overseas but few staff chose to take up this option.

5. The intention to make better use of the University’s alumni was welcomed.

6. Further information about the barriers to student mobility was requested. It was noted that there was insufficient resource invested in the student mobility programmes which meant that the University struggled to meet its targets. It was also suggested that insufficient students possessed the necessary foreign language skills to allow them to perform effectively at an overseas institution. This would be discussed further with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching to identify actions which could bring about improvements.

7. In relation to the Engagement strategy, attention would be focused on activities which promoted excellence in research and teaching and supported the raising the bar agenda and the three faculties. There was a need to provide a greater level of tactical information to support the existing strategy.

8. Policy engagement was an area which would be prioritised to build on recent successes such as the work undertaken by Professor Doug Turnbull which had succeeded in bringing
about a change in legislation in relation to mitochondrial replacement therapy. A policy academy would be developed to support academics to become more active in the political and policy sphere.

9. There was considered to be scope for the Engagement Strategy to recognise the contribution made by PhD students. It was noted that further work could be done in relation to the REF impact studies to highlight the contribution of research students.

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

72. 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 F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. There was a need to promote the University’s brand more widely and increase the visibility of the University internationally. The REF had provided a significant amount of material which could be used to do this.

2. The role of social media and the University’s website was becoming increasingly important. During 2014 there had been 7 million unique visitors to the University’s website. Improving the mobile compatibility of the University’s webpages was a challenge which was to be addressed as a priority.

3. It was the intention to increase coverage of the University’s activity on The Conversation, a well-regarded website for scholarly articles. Funding was also to be made available to increase the number of international conferences held on campus. It was suggested that consideration should also be given to making funding available to support student-led conferences.

4. Concern was express that data included in The Guardian guide for biosciences postgraduate and masters courses was inaccurate and included misleading information.

[Secretary’s note: It was subsequently established that the data included in The Guardian guide referred to postgraduate taught courses only and, on this basis, the data, which was drawn from the University’s returns to HEFCE, was accurate.]

5. Surveys were undertaken to determine staff preferences with regards to internal communication methods. The Town Hall meetings delivered by the Vice-Chancellor were well-received and would be continued in an effort to reach as many members of staff as possible.

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

73. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
Senate, 12 May 2015

Received a report from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 18 February, 18 March and 16 April 2015 (including a report on Student Admissions Complaints, Appeals and Concessions for 2013-14).

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

Noted that:

1. As part of the ULTSEC report, Senate received a full report on Admissions Complaints, Appeals and Concessions for 2013-14. The Committee of University Chairs’ Higher Education Code of Governance published in December 2014 recommended that the governing body should receive an annual report on student complaints. The full report would be submitted to the meeting of Council on 15 June 2015. It was noted that it was rare for complaints submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to be upheld which was testament to the robustness of the University’s procedures.

2. The development of a framework for taught joint awards had been required as a result of changes to the delivery of degree programmes in Singapore.

3. It was noted that all stage 1 students should be offered at least two opportunities to meet with their personal tutor and these meetings should be recorded on the ePortfolio system. From September 2015 onwards, a 70% KPI target would be established for students attending two meetings with their personal tutor, as recorded on the ePortfolio system. Support would be offered to academic units to help them meet this target and the ePortfolio system would allow staff to note occasions where a meeting was offered but the student failed to turn up.

4. Some concern was expressed at the intention to introduce stage evaluations in addition to the existing module evaluations. Consideration was being given to the range of questionnaires and surveys that students were asked to complete, both internally and externally, to ensure they were not over-burdened. A decision regarding the introduction of stage questionnaires would be taken once the current pilot was completed.

74. INTRODUCTION OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS ROLE AND PAY GRADE STRUCTURE (Minute 58, 17.03.15)

Reported that Senate, at its meeting on 17 March 2015 resolved that:

(i) The criteria for promotion from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor and from Associate Professor to Professor should be prepared.

(ii) Previous promotions data should be presented to determine the typical promotions route from Lecturer/Senior Lecturer to Reader/Professor.

(iii) A Senate Focus Group should be established to further consider the Associate Professorship proposals and promotions criteria, taking into account the promotions data obtained under (ii) above.

(iv) A report from the Senate Focus Group should be presented to Senate at its meeting on 12 May 2015.

Received:

(a) A revised proposal including a report from the Senate Focus Group prepared by Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources.

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

1. A meeting of the Senate Focus Group took place on 20 April 2015 at which the two aspects of the proposal, the introduction of a new grade and the introduction of the title of Associate Professor, were considered separately.

2. The focus group expressed support for the introduction of a 4-grade academic structure. The proposed introduction of the title of Associate Professor received a more mixed response and it was concluded that the retention of the title ‘Reader’ was the preferred option. It was acknowledged that varying views on the title had been obtained from the faculty focus groups.

3. As requested at the previous meeting of Senate, draft criteria for the promotion from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor and from Associate Professor to Professor had been provided. A further meeting to discuss and refine the criteria would take place on 20 May 2015 to which members of Senate were invited.

4. The email submitted to the Vice-Chancellor by the UCU had requested that an equality impact assessment be conducted. An analysis of the impact of the changes on male and female professors suggested that there would be a small differential impact in favour of females. The actual impact of introducing the new grade would be monitored annually.

5. It was considered that the current position, whereby two job titles occupied the same grade, was confused and untenable and the proposed changes were simpler, clearer and more systematic. It was acknowledged, however, that there would be some transitional issues to resolve.

6. The introduction of the Raising the Bar agenda had already had the effect of making it harder to gain promotion to Professor from either Senior Lecturer or Reader over recent years.

7. For Promotions Committees, the current grade of an individual was not the determining factor when considering whether or not to award a promotion. Each case was considered on its merits against the promotions criteria and an award made to either Chair or Reader, as appropriate, after taking into account an individual's achievements.

8. Concern was expressed that those in Senior Lecturer positions who had chosen to focus on teaching and/or make a significant contribution locally rather than promoting their work nationally or internationally may have limited promotion opportunities. It was suggested that this would negatively impact upon the notion of parity of esteem.

9. It was requested that the proposal to remove the discretionary points for Senior Lecturers should be reviewed. The availability of discretionary points was considered to be valuable for members of staff who made significant contributions to the work of the University but were less active nationally or internationally.

10. It was suggested that, had they been aware that the proposed changes would be introduced, some Senior Lecturers may have decided to put themselves forward for promotion at an earlier stage. It was noted, however, that under current arrangements, promotion to Reader or Chair required the successful completion of an external assessment and Senior Lecturers
would have had to go through this process at whatever stage they decided to put themselves forward for promotion.

11. The proposed changes would require the approval of Council.

Resolved that:

(i) Senate supported the proposal to recognise a 4-grade academic structure by revisiting the criteria for Grade 3 (Reader) and by a differentiation between the pay scales of Grade 2 (Senior Lecturer) and Grade 3.

(ii) Staff Committee be asked to give further consideration to the transition arrangements and to provide an update at the meeting of Senate on 7 July 2015.

(iii) The position of current Senior Lecturers and the possibility of retaining the discretionary points for this group be considered further at the meeting of Staff Committee on 18 May 2015.

(iv) The title of Reader be retained.

75. PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES RELOCATION

Received a report from Professor Neill Marshall, Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Resolved that Philosophical Studies be relocated from the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (SAGe) to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS) with effect from 1 August 2015 and that the subject area be integrated with the Combined Honours Centre.

76. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES AND INSTITUTES

Considered the recommendations in the report from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copies filed in the Minute Book]

Resolved that:

(i) Senate approve the re-establishment of the Centre for Research in Linguistics & Language Sciences for a period of two years from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2017, with Dr Richard Waltereit (School of Modern Languages) appointed as Director for the same period;

(ii) Senate approve the re-establishment of the following University Research Centres and the re-appointment of their Directors for a further three years, from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2018:

- The Newcastle Centre for Literary Arts with Professor Linda Anderson (School of English Literature, Language & Linguistics) appointed as Director for the same period;

- The NanoLAB Research Centre for a period of three years with Professor Anthony O'Neill (School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering) appointed as Director for the same period;
• The Joint Quantum Research Centre with Professor Carlo Barenghi (School of Mathematics & Statistics) appointed as Director for the same period;

• The Centre for Brain Ageing & Vitality with Professor Doug Turnbull (Institute of Neuroscience) appointed as Director for the same period;

• The MRC/Arthritis Research UK Centre for Integrated Research into Musculoskeletal Ageing (CIMA) with Professor John Loughlin (Institute of Cellular Medicine) appointed as Director for the same period;

(iii) Senate approve the re-establishment of the Mitochondrial Research Centre for a period of three years from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2018, with Professor Doug Turnbull (Institute of Neuroscience) appointed as Director for the same period.

77. ACCESS AGREEMENT 2016-17

Received the Access Agreement 2016-17 from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copies filed in the Minute Book]

78. GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2015

Received the submission by Executive Board to the Governance Review 2015.

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

Noted that:

1. A review of the University’s governance arrangements was underway. The Vice-Chancellor had prepared a submission to the Governance Review on behalf of Executive Board in which a number of recommendations were made in relation to the role and operation of Senate. Senate’s opinion on these recommendations was requested.

2. The relatively small membership of Senate was considered to be a positive factor; any move to increase the size was considered likely to inhibit discussion. It was suggested that the number of agenda items should be kept to a minimum to allow sufficient time for discussion.

3. It was considered that discussions would be enhanced if Senate was invited to contribute at an earlier stage in the consultation process. Increasing the number of joint meetings was recommended as these were considered to provide members of Senate with an opportunity to make a more meaningful contribution to strategy development.

4. Reconsidering the classification of items on the agenda was recommended in order to encourage discussion.

Resolved that Senate’s comments on Executive Board’s submission should be forwarded to the next meeting of the Working Group on Governance.
79. **SENATE APPOINTED CHAIRS AND MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

Considered a report containing recommendations for the appointment/re-appointment of Chairs and members of University committees.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copies filed in the Minute Book]

Resolved that the recommendations in Document O be approved.

80. **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 Chair of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairs.

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

81. **REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY AND FACULTY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEES**

Considered a consolidated report from the University and Faculty Promotions Committees.

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

Resolved that the recommendations in Document N be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.