NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

17 November 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Mr Luke Allison (Welfare & Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Phil Ansell, Dr John Appleby, Professor Paul Christensen, Mr Wayne Connolly, Professor Nicola Curtin, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Dominic Fearon, (President, Students’ Union), Dr Lindsey Ferrie, Professor John Fitzgerald, Dr Emma Foster, Professor Nigel Harkness, Dr Joan Harvey, Ms Abi Kelly, Mr Tolu Kolawole, Dr Sara Maioli, Dr Lindsay Pennington, Mr Matthew Price (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Klaus Schoefer, Dr Ruth Valentine, and Mr Steve Williams.

In attendance: Mrs Lesley Braiden (Academic Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland (Deputy Director of Human Resources), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer, Governance).

Apologies: Dr Stuart Dawley, Dr Ruth Graham, Professor Tom Joyce and Professor Neill Marshall.

Professor Ian Postlethwaite, Director of Projects, attended for Minutes 23 & 24. Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union, attended for Minute 26.

MINUTES

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 6 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.

20. MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that this would be the last meeting for Professor Steve Homans, Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE, and Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, who would both be retiring from the University on 31 December 2015.

Senate recorded its thanks to Professor Homans and Mrs Johnston for their contribution to the University over the past four and eighteen years respectively.

Senate was informed that Professor Kathryn Haynes, Northern Society Chair in Accounting & Finance and Deputy Director of the Business School, had submitted her resignation from Senate with immediate effect. Professor Haynes would be leaving the University at the end of term to take up the position of Dean of Hull University Business School.
Resolved that the vacancy created by Professor Haynes’ resignation would be left unfilled until 1 August 2016.

21. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

22. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

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

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. Financing for University Investment Plans

The £100m loan that was to be obtained from the European Investment Bank (EIB) would be secured against the Richardson Road redevelopment. The interest rate that would be applied was expected to be in the region of 2.45% which was cheaper than many mortgage rates.

The Project Summary report included an ‘Engineering Centre’ which was ‘under consideration’ and the question was asked as to whether progress on this project would be accelerated if a loan was to be obtained. It was noted that the ‘Engineering Centre’ project was still being developed and a business plan had yet to be prepared. Once plans were finalised it might be possible to borrow to accelerate the project and this would be considered at the appropriate time. There were certain conditions that applied to EIB loans and it would be necessary to determine whether the Engineering Centre would fulfil the eligibility criteria.

It was noted that the University had taken out two loans in the past 10 years; one to fund the Devonshire Building and a second to fund the refurbishment of Castle Leazes. In general, borrowing rates were increasing across the sector.

3. Newcastle University London Official Opening

Members of Senate were asked to contact Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, or Professor Amanda Broderick, Director of NU London, if they were aware of any academic opportunities that would benefit from being pursued at the University’s London base.

4. Donation

Senate was informed of an additional donation of £500,000 that had been received from the Garfield Weston Foundation in support of the Newcastle University Centre for Childhood Cancer (Future Fund).
5. **Government’s Green Paper on Higher Education**

On 6 November 2015 the Government published its Green Paper on Higher Education which was to be followed by a short consultation period ending on 15 January 2016.

The implementation of the proposals included in the Green Paper would have major consequences for the sector. One proposal was to give new entrants to the market an accelerated route to degree awarding powers. It was noted that this would increase competition within the sector which, in turn, could lead to greater instability.

6. **Raising the Bar Update**

A meeting with UCU representatives had been held to discuss concerns raised as a result of the introduction of the Faculty Research Expectations documents. The potential for the research expectations targets to be misused and the possibility of bullying were particular concerns.

Following a request from the UCU, data had been provided which showed that, based on the results from the REF 2014, between 75-80% of staff were already meeting the targets set in the Faculty Research Expectations documents.

Further concerns had been expressed about the imposition of a target for grant income for each member of staff. Whilst it was acknowledged that more punitive arrangements had been introduced at other institutions, the UCU had indicated that they would like to have further meetings with members of the Executive team to discuss possible revisions to the Faculty Research Expectations documents.

The generic Research Expectations document had been approved by Senate at its meeting on 7 July 2015 but the individual faculty documents had not been received. It was suggested that had these documents been presented, then some of the concerns that had since been raised could have been addressed by Senate in advance of their dissemination to staff. It was noted that the Faculty documents had been discussed and approved by the Faculty Executive Boards but it was agreed that they would be made available at the next meeting of Senate.

Heads of Academic Units could exercise discretion in terms of the individual targets set. Some staff expressed concern that this could result in targets being applied inconsistently which would create the impression of unfairness. In response it was noted that the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors would oversee the process to ensure the guidelines were implemented fairly and consistently. Regular update reports would be presented to meetings of Faculty Executive Boards and, subsequently, to Executive Board. Monitoring would take place and Faculty HR teams would be involved.

Information on the implementation of the Faculty Research Expectations had yet to be provided and, in the absence of such information, staff were drawing their own conclusions which, in many cases, were incorrect. SMART targets were used as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process which had been in place for many years and this would be the same process that would be used to set and monitor the targets for individual staff to address the research expectations. It was agreed that guidance should be prepared to assist with the identification of measurable targets.

Further information was requested regarding the plans for those staff who had been identified as not currently meeting the research expectations. Staff performance would be considered on a holistic basis and their contribution in other areas would also be taken into account.
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The relationship between the PDR reviewer and reviewee was important. Concern was expressed that, should an individual’s relationship with their reviewer be difficult then this could have an effect on the targets that were set. In response it was noted that the outcome of PDRs would be monitored and Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors would be involved in any capability decisions.

At present, little guidance had been provided on how teaching and research activities could offset each other and more information on this was requested. In addition, it was necessary to consider how teaching expectations interacted with research expectations in light of the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The importance of maintaining parity of esteem was emphasised. The exact requirements of the TEF were unknown but their impact on the Raising the Bar process would be considered once further detail was available. Teaching expectations were set out in the Student Charter and the Student Offer but these documents would be reviewed as part of the preparations for the introduction of the TEF.

There was considered to be a need for better dissemination of the message from the Executive through to academic staff since many of the key points from the Raising the Bar process were being distorted. It was confirmed that discussions with the UCU representatives would continue.

23. DRAFT INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

Received the first draft of the revised Internationalisation Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The current draft of the Internationalisation Strategy represented the evolution and simplification of the previous strategy. The strategy sought to capture most areas of internationalisation activity under three strategic objectives:
   - Global Presence and Impact
   - An International Experience
   - Pan University Understanding and Approach

   Further detail under each of the strategic objectives would be added following a consultation process which was to begin in the near future.

2. It was suggested that most of the University’s current global presence was concentrated in Asia with only a limited presence in other areas. In response it was noted that, whilst two of the University’s three branch campuses were located in Asia, this was only one of the many tools at the University’s disposal and it was only possible to establish a small number of branch campuses due to extensive resources required. Other types of activity such as partnerships could be used on a more widespread basis. Individual academics also developed their own relationships and collaborated with colleagues in overseas institutions which represented another significant and important aspect of the University’s internationalisation strategy.

3. It was proposed that the use of the word ‘global’ in the draft Internationalisation Strategy should be reviewed to ensure it was appropriate and consistent. It had been identified that there were occasions when the term ‘international’ might be more appropriate.
4. Assisting students to develop into global citizens and enhancing cross-cultural understanding were welcome objectives but it was noted that achieving these objectives could prove challenging due to reluctance from students. Reference should also be made to equality and diversity considerations since this was an area where improvement was required.

5. Where the University was required to operate under a different legislature it seeks to ensure that it remained true to its own principles whilst being mindful of local differences. Senate would be consulted in the event that local operations presented a conflict for the University.

24. PARTNERSHIP WITH SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Received a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Reserved Minute – ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

25. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Received:

(a) A report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

(b) A PowerPoint presentation from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Copy of slides filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that there was scepticism amongst Government departments regarding the extent to which the Higher Education sector demonstrated value for money. A strong and coordinated response from the sector was required to counter this view.

Resolved that Mr Dale be thanked for an informative presentation.

26. STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received:

(a) The Students’ Union Impact Report 2014-15

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

(b) A PowerPoint presentation from Mr Dominic Fearon, Students’ Union President, and Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union.

[Copy of slides filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. It was important to ensure students at the University’s branch campuses received a similar student experience with the same support services as those on the Newcastle campus. The Students’ Union had prepared had prepared a list of the services that were appropriate to provide at the branch campuses and was working to put these in place.
2. The President and Chief Executive of the Students’ Union would be attending an Association of College Unions International (ACUI) conference in America in the near future to gain insight into best practice in terms of student engagement.

3. It was confirmed that the digitisation of the historical record of the student newspaper, The Courier, was now complete.

Resolved that Mr Dominic Fearon and Mr Simon Gerry be thanked for their informative presentation.

27. REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Honorary Degrees Committee held on 8 October 2015.

After a vote on a motion ‘that the list be approved’, which was approved nem.con,

Resolved that the nominations made by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees in July 2015 be approved.

[Note: Senators were reminded of the continued confidential classification of the report until further notice.]

28. REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Received the reports from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 23 September 2015.

29. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES

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

Resolved that:

(i) Senate approve the renewal of University Research Centre status in relation to the Medical Toxicology Research Centre for the period 1st August 2015 to 31st July 2019 in line with the Centre’s NIHR funding.

(ii) Directorship of the Centre for Wildlife Management be changed to Dr Phil McGowan with effect from 1st November 2015.

(iii) University Research Centre status be conferred upon the Newcastle University Centre for Health and Bioinformatics (CHaBi) for a period of three years from 1 November 2015 to 30 September 2018 and that Professor Anil Wipat be appointed as Centre Director for the same period.

30. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received the Annual Reports from University Research Committee for 2013-14 and 2014-15 which have been endorsed by Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents K & L. Copies filed in the Minute Book]
Noted that the figures included in the 2014-15 annual report did not include the £20m for the National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation (NASI). This money was expected to be received from the Government in the near future. One off large grants such as this had the effect of distorting research income figures which come make comparisons between years difficult.

31. **APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC ORATOR**

Received a report from Executive Board regarding the appointment of a Public Orator.

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

Resolved that:

(i) **Senate approve the reappointment of Professor Helen Berry as Senior Public Orator for further three years from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2019.**

(ii) **Senate approve the reappointment of Professor Jimmy Steele as Public Orator for further two years, from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2018.**

(iii) **Senate’s Standing Orders be revised as follows ‘The Public Orators shall normally hold office for three years.’**

32. **ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT**

Received the Annual Health & Safety Report for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

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

33. **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 O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]