NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

20 January 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Neill Marshall, (Acting PVC HaSS) (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 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, Dr Sara Maioli, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Lindsay Pennington, Professor Paul Seedhouse, Dr Ruth Valentine, Mr Steve Williams.

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

Apologies: Mr Wayne Connolly, Mr Tolu Kolawole, Professor Julia Newton, Dr Ole Pedersen, Professor Tony Stevenson, Professor Nick Wright, Dr Tony Young and Professor Martha Young-Scholten.

MINUTES

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 11 November 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed.

32. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

33. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

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

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

34. REF 2014 RESULTS

Received the results from the REF 2014 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Executive Board.

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

1. The University had risen one place in both the GPA and power rankings. Each faculty could point to some successes which helped support the University’s strategic approach of being a broad-based university.

2. The University’s performance in terms of the impact measure was reassuring as this was the first time this had been assessed.

3. The funding that resulted from the REF would not be announced for some time as there remained issues to resolve at a national level. For example, panel A awarded a higher proportion of 4* than other panels – a national funding algorithm that was simply based on 4* would therefore be a net transfer between subjects. HEFCE was in the process of debating whether this was a good idea.

4. A ‘Raising the Bar’ steering group chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, had been established to consider the results for each academic unit and was tasked with drawing conclusions to help inform future strategy.

5. Planning for the next REF was already underway. An increase in the weighting for impact could be expected and it was thought that there would be a requirement for all academic staff with research as part of their contracts to be entered.

6. A focus on classic subjects would be necessary and the University should aim to get at least 10 subjects in the top 50 of their respective subject world rankings.

7. The University’s performance had remained largely static over the past 15 years and a strategy to bring about a step change in performance was required. The Raising the Bar Steering Group would aim to produce this strategy before the end of the current academic year.

8. It was suggested that a requirement for all staff to be submitted could lead to changes in behaviour within institutions. The sector should press for the earliest possible decisions about submission requirements for the next REF as these would have implications for the University’s recruitment strategy.

9. The REF results had demonstrated that the University was successful in predicting areas where a strong performance was achieved but it had not been as successful at identifying areas of weaker performance.

35. SPORTS FACILITIES PROJECT

Received:

(a) A report prepared for the meeting of Council on 8 December 2014 from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

(b) An extract from the draft Council minutes from the meeting on 8 December 2014 showing Council’s consideration of this item.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Documents D and E. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:
1. It had previously been suggested that a Dean should be appointed to be responsible for the University’s sport agenda and progress on this proposal was requested. It was noted that action would be taken in relation to the Dean proposals in the near future.

2. It was suggested that the University should seek to make the best possible use of space in the Sports Centre extension.

Resolved that:

(i) The recommendations approved by Council at its meeting on 8 December 2014 be endorsed;
(ii) Professor Cholerton be thanked for her considerable work on the Sport Facilities Project.

36. LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

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

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

Noted that:

1. Changes in the external environment had focussed attention on the Postgraduate Taught (PGT) provision. ULTSEC had agreed that the University should participate in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) on an annual basis in order to support more effective oversight of performance in this area.

2. To date, application rates for PGT recruitment in 2015 seemed to be unaffected by the fact that this would be the first cohort of students to graduate having paid £9,000 fees at undergraduate level.

3. An action plan for the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy had been approved by ULTSEC.

4. Future developments include the implementation of new projects such as Xiamen, Newcastle University London and the Global MBA, all of which present individual challenges. Additional resources would be made available to support these projects, as required, which could include the appointment of Associate Deans.

37. STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

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

38. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

Received a progress report on the Human Resources Strategy from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. A Human Resources action plan was in the process of being developed following the release of the REF results. This would be presented to a future meeting of Senate for consideration.
2. The report noted that a new role of Associate Professor was to be introduced and would be used to give a clear indication of future potential. The question was raised as to what action would be taken if an individual who was awarded an Associate Professorship failed to achieve their potential. It was noted that performance management procedures would be invoked if an Associate Professor failed to achieve their milestones.

39. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 12 November and 3 December 2014.

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

40. REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Considered a report from the Honorary Degrees Committee.

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

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 December 2015 be approved.

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

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

41. INTO ANNUAL REPORT

Received the INTO Annual Report, from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The INTO partnership was continuing to progress well. One concern was noted, however. Students progressing to degree programmes from INTO were found not to be as performing as well as international students who had come to the University via other routes. A project was underway to understand the factors contributing to this.

2. In terms of student satisfaction, all but one measure had resulted in satisfaction scores in excess of 90%. The proportion of students who would recommend INTO Newcastle was only 77% and it was suggested that the reasons for this lower result should be identified.

3. Looking at conversion rates it was noted that in 2013-14, 9% of eligible students moved to other institutions. In many cases this was due to the University being unable to offer a student their preferred choice of degree programme, forcing them to look elsewhere. In other cases, some students chose to move to other institutions for personal reasons or because they perceived an alternative university to be higher ranking.
42. ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT

Received the annual Equality and Diversity Report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The Executive Director of Human Resources expressed her thanks to those individuals who had contributed to the report. Submissions to the Athena SWAN Charter in particular required a considerable effort and those who had participated in the recent submissions were thanked.

2. Within the Students’ Union it was noted that services to support students with mental health difficulties had been strengthened. A second mental health conference was planned for 2015 together with a women’s conference and it was suggested that reference to these events could be included in future reports.

43. GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2015

Considered a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Resolved that the terms of reference for the Governance Review of 2015 be approved.

44. DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

Reported that the University Statutes permit the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor following the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor and the establishment of a joint committee of Senate and Council.

Considered a recommendation from the joint committee of Senate and Council regarding the appointment to a Deputy Vice-Chancellor as set out in a report prepared by Mrs Veryan Johnston.

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

Resolved that the recommendation to appoint Professor Tony Stevenson to the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor from 1 April 2015 until 31 July 2020 be approved, subject to the approval of Council at its meeting on 2 March 2015.

45. ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS

Received the Annual Review and Accounts of the University.

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

46. ANNUAL REPORT FROM PUBLIC LECTURES COMMITTEE

Received the annual report from Public Lectures Committee.

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

47. 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 Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]