PRESENT:

The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Phillip Wright, Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Phil Ansell, Professor Caroline Austin, Dr John Appleby, Professor Jane Calvert (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Medical Sciences), Professor Paul Christensen, Professor Nicola Curtin, Dr Stuart Dawley, Mr Christopher Duddy (Education Officer, Students' Union), Dr Lindsey Ferrie, Dr Emma Foster, Professor Nigel Harkness, Dr Joan Harvey, Miss Rachael Kitching (Welfare & Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Sara Maioli, Professor Patrick Olivier, Dr Lindsay Pennington, Professor Jane Pollard, Mr Patrick Rosichuk (Student Representative), Professor Chris Seal, Professor Jackie Leach Scully, Mr Jack Taylor, (President, Students' Union) and Dr Ruth Valentine.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Lesley Braiden (Academic Registrar), Professor Werner Hofer (Dean of Research & Innovation, SAGe), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mrs Judith Whitaker (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer, Governance).

APOLOGIES:

Mr Wayne Connolly, Mr Richard Dale, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Ruth Graham, Professor Peter Jorgensen and Professor Klaus Schoefer.

Dr Rachel Cole-Fletcher and Mr Alex Smith, Ambitious Futures Graduate Trainees, attended as observers for Minutes 40 to 48.

Dr Oli King, University Disciplinary Convenor, and Mrs Angela McNeill, Head of Student Progress, attended for Minute 50.

24 Members of Senate were present for Minute 50.

MINUTES

40. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 15 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

41. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

1. Effectiveness of Senate (Minute 25, 15.11.16)

Reported that at the time of the last meeting no expressions of interest had been received for the role of Senate representative on the Rankings and Reputation Special Interest Group.
Resolved that Dr Sara Maioli be appointed as Senate’s representative on the Rankings and Reputation Special Interest Group with immediate effect until 31 July 2017 when her term of office as a member of Senate would end.

2. Teaching Excellence Framework Provider Submission (Minute 29, 15.11.16)

Reported that at the meeting on 15 November 2016 Senate granted delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor to approve the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Provider Submission for submission to HEFCE, on behalf of Senate.

Received an oral update from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching, on the current position of the TEF Provider Submission.

Noted that:

1. The Vice-Chancellor had approved the submission on the morning of 24 January 2017 and it would be submitted to HEFCE prior to the deadline of 26 January 2017.

2. The individuals who had participated in the preparation of the submission, which included Dr Phil Ansell on behalf of Senate, were thanked for their contribution.

3. The submission would be posted on the University’s internal website for staff to view shortly after its submission.

42. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor and President’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. The Vice-Chancellor would be hosting an event on Brexit on 16 February 2017. The event would be open to all staff and would aim to provide clarity and updates, where possible, on the key areas of impact resulting from Brexit.

3. Senate was advised that the UK Government had approved the £9,250 fee for UK/EU students for 2017-18 in the Higher Education (Higher Amount) (England) Regulations 2016 that were published in December 2016.

4. The Higher Education and Research Bill was currently at the committee stage within the House of Lords. On 9 January 2017 peers had voted 248 to 221 in favour an amendment, which addressed the function of UK universities to ensure they were recognised as autonomous institutions that must uphold the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech. There are numerous other amendments to be considered at the report stage.

5. 16 January 2017, which was Martin Luther King Day in the US, saw the launch of a year-long programme to mark the 50th anniversary of Dr King receiving an honorary degree from Newcastle University. Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, Chi Onwurah, hosted a special Westminster launch for Freedom City 2017 to reinforce the positive work Freedom
City 2017 was doing to engage communities in the city. Guest speakers included His Excellency Matthew Barzun, United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Marcus Jones MP, Minister for Local Government, and Dawn Butler MP, Shadow Minister for Diverse Communities.

6. Reports from Committees of Senate

University Research Committee (URC) – Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation:

URC had received an update on Research Data Management. It was noted that some progress had been made in this area but that there still remained work to do.

The University was performing well in relation to Open Access compliance where it had achieved a rate of over 70%, exceeding the RCUK’s minimum requirement of 60%. A 100% compliance rate was unlikely but it was expected that a further degree of improvement would be made.

An administrative post had been made available within Research Enterprise Services to assist staff with EU funding applications with a view to increasing grant income from these sources.

URC had received the Q1 research income and awards data which had pointed to a slight decline in the overall award value across the University when compared with the previous year. This combined with an increase in the overall number of awards had resulted in an overall decrease in mean award value. A significant decrease in applications to Research Councils and to the EU had been identified and this was to be investigated further.

University Internationalisation Committee (UIC) – Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement:

A new Director of International Recruitment and Partnership had been appointed – Mr Alex Metcalfe – who had joined the University from University College Dublin.

A review of Tier 2 partners was underway and the information that was available on the University’s website would be updated following completion of this review.

A Rankings and Reputation Working Group had been established which would aim to identify tangible actions that could be taken to improve the University’s performance in international league tables. An immediate action that had been identified was for all academic staff to be encouraged to view and update their Scopus entry to ensure it was accurate. It was suggested that a similar instruction should be issued in relation to Google Scholar since inaccurate entries on both sites affected the University’s performance in international league tables. It was proposed that an ‘all staff’ email should be sent to relevant staff with this instruction as this was considered to be the most effective method of communication.

University Engagement Committee (UEC) – Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement:

The University was increasing its interactions with businesses and strong partnerships were beginning to develop partly as a result of the introduction of the business toolkit.

The Policy Academy had been launched on 5 October 2016. The aim of this initiative was to inform local, national and international policy through knowledge exchange and communication of the University’s research.
A new approach was to be developed to ensure that the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector (formerly referred to as ‘third sector’) was appropriately reflected on the University’s webpages.

A new alumni strategy had been prepared which sought to promote events in locations where there was a critical mass of alumni rather than focusing resources on large events on the main campus, which were often poorly attended. A scheme to link alumni in business with current graduates was also to be developed.

**University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC) – Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching:**

The November meeting of ULTSEC had included a teleconference with the branch campuses in Singapore, Malaysia and London.

ULTSEC had considered a recommendation to introduce ‘take-away’ examinations and had approved their use, where educationally justified, as a means of broadening assessment methodology.

ULTSEC had considered a report from NUSU which analysed nominations data from the 2015-16 Teaching Excellence Awards. The awards recognised excellent teaching from the perspective of students, rather than via externally imposed metrics and was considered to be a valuable resource for identifying best practice. NUSU were thanked for their excellent report.

7. The Vice-Chancellor informed Senate that he intended to undertake a review of the University’s strategy which would begin at the Executive Board away day scheduled for 30 and 31 January 2017. Initial ideas would be communicated to Senate as soon as possible for consideration before being shared with the wider academic community. It was proposed to introduce mechanisms that would allow Senate and Executive Board to work together more closely. Lunches prior to meetings of Senate would be continued.

**43. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 5 DECEMBER 2016**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 5 December 2016.

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

**44. SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE PROJECT UPDATE**

Received a report from Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture and Engineering, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The recruitment process for the new Heads of Unit within SAgE was underway. It was hoped that three of the four headship positions would be filled by internal candidates, following interviews that were to take place in February. The Head of School for Mathematics, Statistics and Theoretical Physics had progressed to an external campaign. Interviews for this position would take place in March.

2. The support academic structures would be progressed once the new heads were in place.

3. Reports from within the Faculty suggested that the technical review had been well received and relevant staff within the Faculty were content with the process followed.
4. It was suggested that consideration could be given to applying for Athena SWAN status on a Faculty basis. It was thought that this might not be feasible initially but it was agreed that advice could be taken on the most appropriate approach. It was suggested that the equality and diversity agenda should be embedded at the executive level within each academic unit at the time that the headship appointments were made.

5. It was understood that where Athena SWAN status had been granted to an academic unit then this accreditation would remain valid for a period despite the changes that were being made to the School structures.

6. Steps should be taken to ensure that the restructure did not result in a significant reduction in the number of grant applications, as had been the outcome of the 2003 restructure.

7. It was suggested that there was a need for an adventurous vision behind the teaching that would be introduced as a result of the restructure and efficiency gains should not be the sole aim. It was proposed that members of Senate should consider what aspects they would like to see included in the business plan when it was presented to Senate for approval.

8. It was noted that the appendix to Document D highlighted varying levels of engagement across the academic units within the Faculty. It was suggested that the reasons for this should be determined and that future meetings should be targeted at the units where fewer staff had engaged.

9. It was understood that one of the objectives of the restructure was to achieve world class teaching and learning but it was unclear how the merging of disparate subjects would promote this. It was suggested that this was a consideration which the business plan should seek to address. It was noted that there was particular unease within the School of Chemistry where staff were unsure how the subject area would fit within the new structures.

10. Consideration should be given to amending the consultation process to allow staff to submit confidential responses. Turning Point, the student response system, was proposed as one possible solution.

11. The role of the Directors of Expertise were considered to be substantial and potentially unsustainable if not properly resourced.

**Resolved that:**

(i) Senate note the progress made;

(ii) Members of Senate are invited to submit any further concerns or issues that they would like to be addressed in the Business Plan to Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture & Engineering.

45. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT

Received a report from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board

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

Noted that:

1. It was unclear whether securing membership of EU funding schemes would be included as objective of the Brexit negotiations. The inability to access such schemes in future would
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have significant consequences for the academic units that were heavily dependent on EU funding. For the time being, staff were to be encouraged to continue to apply for EU grants since analysis showed that, where applications were made, the University’s success rate had not declined. The UK higher education sector was thought to be benefitting from a degree of solidarity from academics in other EU countries.

2. International competition from institutions in China and within the EU were highlighted as a developing challenge for the University’s research and teaching activity. Many EU institutions taught in English and often charged low or no tuition fees which was likely to affect future recruitment for UK institutions.

3. It was noted that in the Autumn Statement 2016 the government had committed an additional £2 billion of funding to its Industrial Strategy to help boost UK productivity but it was unclear how this would be distributed. It was considered that, despite this additional investment the UK would remain behind its competitors in terms of the amount of government funding that was allocated to Research and Development.

4. It was necessary for the University and the higher education sector as a whole to consider alternative and sustainable funding models in preparation for the UK’s exit from the EU and the likelihood that EU funds would not be available in the long term.

5. It was proposed that the University should engage in higher level, sustainable thinking in relation to its research strategy that was not prompted by a need to respond to external league tables. In response it was noted that seeking to pursue world-leading research in all areas would have the desired outcome of improving the University’s league table performance. It was not possible to ignore league tables since they could enhance the University’s reputation, help to attract good quality staff and students and bring benefits in terms of collaboration opportunities.

6. The University’s current strategy included an aim to have as large a number of subjects as possible which featured amongst the top 50 in the world in their respective subject rankings with a target of at least 10 by REF 2020 submission. Clarity was sought as to whether this would continue to be the strategy in future and it was noted that this would be considered as part of the early discussions on the University’s wider strategy that would take place in the forthcoming weeks.

7. It was considered important not to underestimate the effects of Brexit on staff morale. Whilst some staff had reported solidarity from academic colleagues in other the EU countries, anecdotal evidence from others suggested the opposite was also true.

8. It was proposed that consideration should be given to offering drop in sessions on EU matters to students.

9. Rather than identifying KPIs to impose on staff in the hope that this would lead to good research, it was suggested that the focus should instead be on providing the processes and structures that would generate excellent research. It was noted that there were peaks of excellence in all faculties and the common features that contributed to these successes should be identified and promoted across the University.

46. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

Considered the HEFCE report on the ‘Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework’ presented by Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

1. Key features of the consultation included a proposal to include all staff with a research contract in the REF, and removing the ability to ‘port’ a publication from one institute to another, although a possible exemption for Early Career Researchers was included. It was considered that any system that restricted the mobility of staff should be resisted. It was suggested that, in its response, the University could propose that portability should be possible until an agreed date during the REF cycle.

2. The review proposed maximum and minimum requirements on the number of outputs required for each staff member, ranging from 0 to 6. The possibility that a member of staff might still be able to be submitted without a research output was welcomed. It was considered that it should be possible to submit all staff into the REF regardless of their contract.

3. The proposal to promote a team rather than an individual approach was welcomed since this was likely to benefit Early Career Researchers who had previously lost out when individual research outputs were taken into account.

4. There was a need for the REF to include an effective mechanism to address the issue of interdisciplinary research but it was acknowledged that this could be difficult to achieve.

5. It was considered important to maintain the peer review process as a means of distinguishing between popular research and high quality research.

6. Members of Senate were reminded that it was important to champion all areas of academic activity, including teaching and scholarship, and to consider them of equal value.

7. The University’s response to the REF consultation would be developed by University Research Committee following wider consultation.

   Resolved that members of Senate be invited to submit any further comments and observations for consideration as part of the University’s response to the REF consultation to Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

47. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES AND INSTITUTES

   Senate was asked to approve 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 G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

   Resolved that:

   (i)   Senate approve a retrospective change of Directorship of the Research Centre in Film & Digital Media from Professor Guy Austin to Dr Ian McDonald with effect from 1 October 2016.

   (ii)  Senate approve the renewal of the University Research Centre status of the following three Centres for a further three years as recommended by University Research Committee and endorsed by Executive Board:

         • The Centre for Bacterial Cell Biology
         • McCord Centre for Landscape
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- Centre for Wildlife Management & Conservation

48. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR MEDICAL SCIENCES

Senate was asked to approve the recommendation from the Joint Selection Committee on the Appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, that Professor David Burn (currently Director, Institute of Neuroscience) be appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences with effect from 1 February 2017.

Resolved that Senate approve the appointment of Professor David Burn (currently Director, Institute of Neuroscience) as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences with effect from 1 February 2017.

49. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR RESEARCH/ PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR INNOVATION & BUSINESS

In accordance with Senate Standing Order X:

1. The Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and any establishment of, or appointment to, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor post.

2. If Senate and Council approve the recommendation, a selection committee shall be established comprising:

   The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair)
   Three members appointed by Council
   Three members appointed by Senate

Senate considered the recommendations from the Vice-Chancellor as set out in Document H.

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

Noted:

1. The two areas of Research and Innovation had grown considerably in recent years and were now considered to be too large for one individual to oversee as part of one portfolio. It was proposed that the Research and Innovation portfolio should be split in two and that the positions of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business should be established.

2. It was Professor Nick Wright’s preference to retain the remit of Innovation and Business and, after having overseen one REF cycle, he was content for this responsibility to transferred to the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor position. This was also the Vice-Chancellor’s preferred position.

3. It was noted that the introduction of an additional Pro-Vice-Chancellor would result in the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors being in the minority on Executive Board. The Vice-Chancellor noted that he would work to promote effective relationships between the Faculty and cross-cutting Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

4. It was considered that the selection panel for the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor position should include individuals who possessed experience of cross-disciplinary research. The Council members of the selection committee would be identified following consideration of the nominations received from members of Senate.
5. The possibility of appointing two individuals to work on the same portfolio was suggested as an alternative approach, rather than splitting the post as proposed. In response it was noted that the establishment of two clearly defined roles was preferred but the two individuals who occupied these roles would be expected to work together closely.

Resolved that:

(i) The proposal to establish the positions of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business be approved.

(ii) The proposal that Professor Nick Wright should become Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business once a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research was appointed be approved. (Professor Wright's appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business would end on 31 July 2018, in line with the term of office for his current appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation.)

(iii) Members of Senate should forward nominations for the Senate-appointed members of the joint selection committee to the Registrar by 1 February 2017. Senate would be asked to approve its members of the joint selection committee at its meeting on 7 March 2017.

(iv) The job description for the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research should be included on the agenda for the meeting of Senate on 7 March 2017.

50. Minute 50 is classified as ‘Strictly Confidential'

51. ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF VICE-CHANCELLOR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))

In accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may accord the title of Professor Emeritus or other University distinctions on retirees from the University.

Senate was asked to approve the proposal in a report from the Vice-Chancellor for the conferment of the title of Vice-Chancellor Emeritus.

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

Resolved that the title of Vice-Chancellor Emeritus be awarded to Professor Chris Brink with immediate effect.

52. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

The following meetings of Senate committees had taken place and the minutes from each committee were provided for information:

a) University Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee: 9 November and 14 December 2016
b) University Research Committee: 28 November 2016
c) University Internationalisation Committee: 1 December 2016
d) University Engagement Committee: 30 November 2016

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents M - P. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

53. ANNUAL REVIEW & ACCOUNTS

Received the Annual Review and Accounts of the University.
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[Tabled at the meeting. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

54. 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.]