NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

4 October 2011

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor E Ritchie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor S Cholerton, Professor C E Harvey, Professor O R Hinton, Professor A C Stevenson and Professor N G Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor A J Adamson, Professor S Ali, Mr C Barry (student member), Dr D J Bevitt, Professor A V Boddy, Professor I M Clarke, Mr W Connolly, Professor E G N Cross, Dr H Dauncey, Dr C Exley, Ms K Hargreaves (Welfare and Equality Officer), Dr A B Horsfall, Dr D J Kennedy, Professor J A Kirby, Professor P A Lee, Ms L Perry (President, Students’ Union), Professor N J Reynolds, Professor C P Rodgers, Dr C L Rowe, Mr S Williams and Dr K Wolff.

In attendance: Dr J V Hogan (Registrar), Mr R C Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs V S Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), Mrs J Strachan (Academic Registrar) and Miss R Draper (Head of the Executive Office).

M I N U T E S

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

2. WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the new members to their first meeting of Senate.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 14 June 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

Received a business tracking form.

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

(ii) Honorary Degrees : December 2011 (Minute 87(ii), 14.6.2011)

Reported that Mr Chris Mullin had accepted the University’s invitation to be awarded the degree of DCL in celebration of the University’s Sustainability Societal Challenge theme, at a Congregation Ceremony to be held on 12 December 2011.

5. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
(i) Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

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

(ii) Pay and Pensions

The expected changes to the USS pension scheme were implemented on 1 October. Over the summer UCU members voted in favour of industrial action and the University has been advised that ‘action short of strike’ will commence on Monday, 10 October on a continuous basis. Staff and students will be advised of the University’s position on this, and it is hoped that the action will not impact on the student experience at this stage.

(iii) Vision 2021 Update

Reported that as it is three years since Vision 2021 was written, it is intended to update it to reflect the changes that have occurred in the sector during that time. A first update of objectives will be brought to Senate in November.

6. AAB+ STRATEGY

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.]

The following minute is classified as ‘commercial in confidence’ and its contents should not be disclosed to any person who is not a member of Senate.

7. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY: 2011 RESULTS

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

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

Noted that:

1. The results of the National Student Survey (NSS) are already an important source of information for potential applicants and their parents. From 2012 onwards, the survey will assume an even greater level of importance, as the outcomes from eight of the questions asked of final year students will be included in the Key Information Sets being compiled by the HEFCE. Key Information Sets are comparable sets of standardised information about undergraduate courses. They are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students and will be published 'in context' on the web-sites of universities and colleges.

2. Newcastle University scored an overall satisfaction rate of 89% in NSS 2011. This was an increase of 2 percentage points on NSS 2010 and 2009. The sector-wide score of 83% was an increase of 1 percentage point on 2010 and 2009. It was thought that the closure of the Students’ Union building might be a factor in adversely affecting ‘overall satisfaction’ scores, and, although displeasure at the lack of Union facilities was
mentioned in students’ open comments, Newcastle’s scores were apparently not seriously adversely affected as a result.

3. Within the overall satisfaction score, there was of course an element of variability across the institution. The Telegraph, amongst other broadsheets, reported this year on the calculated dissatisfied amongst final year students (National Student Survey: one in ten 'dissatisfied' with degree). This figure was a rounding-up of the 9% of students who had answered ‘mostly disagree’ and ‘definitely disagree’ – and discounting those who had answered ‘neither agree nor disagree’ - to Question 22 ‘Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course’. However, when this same calculation is done on Newcastle’s overall satisfaction scores, there are fewer than 5% of students actively ‘dissatisfied’.

4. Newcastle’s overall satisfaction rate is 2 percentage points higher than the 20-strong Russell Group average of 87%. (Russell Group scores ranged from 79% to 94%). Newcastle climbed one place in the rankings to 5th place. Cambridge ranked 1st, Oxford 2nd, Sheffield and Glasgow were joint 3rd; Newcastle has, this year, exceeded the scores of Warwick, UCL and Nottingham.

5. For the first time in 2011, HEFCE published an institutional-level ‘benchmark’ or target satisfaction score for Question 22. This benchmark was calculated on the specific mix of students and subject areas at each university. Newcastle’s benchmark of 85% satisfaction means that we exceeded our benchmark by 4 points. Cambridge University exceeded its benchmark by 8 points, Oxford by 6 points, Sheffield by 5 points, Glasgow by 4 points. Warwick and UCL exceeded their benchmarks by 3 points and Nottingham by 2 points.

6. There are two key areas where some very specific work is being done towards improving the student experience.

   • Assessment and Feedback: Newcastle’s score of 66% remains lower than the HEI sector average of 68%. However this score is on a rising trajectory, indicating the effectiveness of the ongoing action that is being taken at School, Faculty and institutional level to address this area.

   • Personal Development: Since Newcastle University’s score on this measure is equal to the sector average of 80%, further analysis will be done on this measure.

7. The Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee is responsible for the academic overview of NSS results and action on behalf of Senate, and will also receive annual reports from academic services, including ISS and the Library. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and QuILT will be working with the Faculties to support Schools and services in making further improvements to the student experience and student satisfaction through Project 2012.

   Resolved that Senate note the results of the National Student Survey 2011 and the actions outlined in Document E.

8. BSc BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES AT NUMed, MALAYSIA

   Considered a paper from Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

   [Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
The following minute is classified as ‘commercial in confidence’ and its contents should not be disclosed to any person who is not a member of Senate.

9. SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THEMES: REPORT ON THE LAUNCH YEAR FOR THE SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THEME OF AGEING AND HEALTH

Received a 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.]

Noted that:

1. The Report outlines the programme of events undertaken as part of the launch year for the first of the University’s three societal challenge themes.

2. The programme was supported by £150k from University strategic funds, but around three times that amount was secured in grant income during the year, particularly through arts related grants in support of the cultural programme led by Professor Eric Cross.

3. There was a high level of participation in the launch year programme from across the University, involving the majority of academic and non-academic units, generating a good deal of positive PR for the University.

10. OVERVIEW REPORT: HR STRATEGY

Reported that the Working Group on Governance had recommended that Executive Board should ensure that at least once a year Council and Senate receive overview reports on the key strategies within Vision 2021, in addition to the current reports on finance.

Received a report 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. The HR Strategy, developed in support of Vision 2021, was approved by Council in April 2010. The overview report summarises progress in the first year of implementation and identifies priorities and challenges for the year ahead.

2. Communication remains a matter of concern for staff as evidenced in the Employee Opinion Survey. HR will be working closely with the new Director of PR to assist with improvements in this area in the coming year.

3. Absence levels are another area of concern. At 2.8% (2009/10) the absence rate for staff for the University as a whole was marginally higher than the HE Sector average of 2.6% but below the UK average of 3.3%. This equates to an average 6 days absence per member of staff. The rate varies across staff groups with the operational staff being of most concern at a rate of 7.4%. However, the 2011 figures show a marked improvement to 6.9%.

4. As part of Project 2012, work has been done on clarifying Academic Career Paths and Expectations, leading to an articulation of career paths whether focussed on research or teaching and scholarship that will assist in communicating parity of esteem and support academic managers in managing the balance of workload and clarifying the
performance standards expected. A document on this will come to Senate in November.

11. COHERENT CAMPUS

Received a progress report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Coherent Campus initiative was launched in July 2008 following a ‘Think Tank’ workshop hosted by the Vice-Chancellor. The aim is to improve the spaces between buildings to create a sense of place that is welcoming, with well designed, well linked social spaces. The campus aims to be permeable, pedestrian and cyclist friendly, safe, clean and tidy, visually recognisable, clearly defined and environmentally sustainable.

2. Immediate and longer term actions were identified and recurrent annual funding of £1m was allocated to ESS to put the agreed Plan into action.

3. The report outlines the progress that has been made in the first three years against the Action Plan targets and flags up the priorities for 2011/12 that include the creation of a new Student Forum, revealing the fine south elevation and tower of the Armstrong Building and reconnecting it with the city through views and physically. Ultimately new pedestrian routes and an accessible entrance from the Armstrong Courtyard will link it with the Students’ Union Building and King’s Gate.

12. FACULTY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES: OUTCOME OF RESTRUCTURING

Reported that Senate, at its meeting on 17 June 2008, had resolved that the outcome of the restructuring of the Faculty of Medical Sciences be reported to Senate in the Autumn of 2011/12.

Received a report from Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Following the restructuring of the Faculty of Medical Sciences in August 2008, Council asked for a review to take place in 2011 addressing three key questions:-
   - Are the new structures effective?
   - Has there been a detrimental effect on either the student or staff experience?
   - Are inter-faculty interfaces operating successfully?

2. The review was carried out by a mixture of focus groups and questionnaire, with student representation included in the groups. Questionnaires were sent to all Heads and Managers of the Academic Units of the Faculty together with a selection of staff at all levels in the Faculty who had volunteered to join the focus groups but who were not able to attend. Opinion was also sought from the Steering Groups of the Faculties of SAgE and HaSS.

3. Data were collected on research income and publications; student opinion in the form of the National Student Survey and the Postgraduate Research Student Survey was also collected.
Senate, 4 October 2011

4. The review has shown that overall the structures are working effectively and there have been some real benefits such as improved role awareness; clarity of management; enhanced student identity; more collaborative working resulting in some notable research successes; enhanced training for junior doctors; focused administration. Some areas were identified as needing attention, which are being addressed.

13. SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS FOR 2011-12

Received the business schedule for meetings of Senate and Council in 2011-12. If members had any comments to make on the list of Senate items, or wished to submit any additional items, they were asked to write to Dr John Hogan, Registrar.

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

14. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR SAgE (Minute 87(iii), 14.6.2011)

Reported that the Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of Senate, and the Chair of Council, acting on behalf of Council, had approved the recommendation in the report from the joint Selection Committee for the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE, that Professor Steven Homans be appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE from 1 January 2012 to 31 July 2017.

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

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

Received a report from the meetings of UTLSEC held on 6 July and 14 September 2011.

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

16. SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT POLICY

Reported that Council, at its meeting on 11 July 2011, had approved a recommendation from the Ethical Investment Working Group set up by Council that the University adopt a Socially Responsible Investment Policy.

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

17. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURE FOR THE AWARD OF ASSOCIATE, VISITING AND GUEST STATUS

Received updated guidelines and procedures for the award of Associate, Visiting and Guest status, approved by Staff Committee and Executive Board.

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

18. NEWCASTLE SCIENCE CITY

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

[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
19. **MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

Reported that:

(a) The Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of Senate, had approved the appointment of Mr S Williams as a co-opted member of Senate from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2014.

(b) Mr Charles Barry (BA Hons Economics, Stage 2), had been elected by the Students’ Union to serve on Senate for 2011-12.

Received the membership of Senate for 2011-12.

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

20. **FACULTY APPOINTMENT BOARDS: CHANGE TO CONSTITUTION**

Considered the following proposed amendment to the constitution of Faculty Appointment Boards which had been approved by Council at its meeting on 11 July 2011:

delete: (b) Any two of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (or their nominees)

substitute: (b) Any two from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors (or their nominees)

*Resolved that the above amendment be approved.*

21. **ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Considered a recommendation from the Chair of Ethics Committee that Professor J Hayton (currently a co-opted member) be appointed as a Senate-appointed member of Ethics Committee with immediate effect to 31 July 2014.

*Resolved that the above recommendation be approved.*

22. **DELEGATION OF POWERS AND AUTHORITY**

Received Senate’s delegation of powers and authority document.

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

23. **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 T. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

---

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

24. **ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))**

Reported that, in accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may accord the title of Professor Emeritus on professors retiring from the University.
Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor, following consultation with the faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, for the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus.

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on Professor J L Scott from 1 April 2011.