NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

6 October 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, Dr Stuart Dawley, Mr Dominic Fearon, (President, Students' Union), Dr Lindsey Ferrie, Dr Emma Foster, Dr Ruth Graham, Professor Nigel Harkness, Dr Joan Harvey, Professor Kathryn Haynes, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr Tolu Kolawole, Dr Sara Maioli, Professor Neill Marshall, 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), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer, Governance).

Apologies: Mr Mike Davison, Professor John Fitzgerald, Professor Neill Marshall and Ms Abi Kelly.

Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Vice-Chair of Council, attended for Minute 6.

MINUTES

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 7 July 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

4. 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

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following additional death:
4 October 2015  Professor John Moles. Professor Moles was appointed as Chair of Latin in the Department of Classics in September 2000.

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

2. Pay and Pensions

UCEA, the organisation representing employers, and UCU were to enter dispute resolution procedures over the lack of agreement in relation to the annual pay award. The employers’ offer of 1% remained the final offer.

Following the end of the consultation period, the revisions to the USS were in the process of being implemented. The University had arranged a round of briefing sessions for staff which would take place in January 2016.

3. Reputation and Rankings

The *Times Higher Education* had now split from Thomson Reuters who had in turn partnered with a publication called *US News and World Report*. They have brought a new ranking to market, in which the University was ranked at position 190.

4. QAA Higher Education Review

A volunteer from Senate was requested to read and comment on the draft of the Self-Evaluation Document that was to be submitted to the QAA by 25 January 2016. Any member of Senate interested in assisting with this process was invited to contact the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching.

5. Teaching Excellence Framework

The Green Paper for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was expected to be available by the end of October 2015.

The University should attempt to identify the metrics that were likely to be used as part of the TEF and seek to achieve an optimum position in relation to these. It was suggested that it might prove beneficial for more staff to be entered for membership to the Higher Education Academy as this could be a consideration under the TEF. The proportion of staff with teaching qualifications was also likely to be assessed.

6. City Council

The Leader of Newcastle City Council, Councillor Nick Forbes, had written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in September 2015 to request that business rates be applied to halls of residence. This was part of a submission to the Chancellor which was intended to help local authorities address growing student populations and declining revenues from central government. The Vice-Chancellor and the President of the Students’ Union had both written to Councillor Forbes in response to highlight the many advantages and economic benefits which students brought to the city. It had also been highlighted that many of the services used by students were provided by the University itself. It was acknowledged, however, that the City Council was suffering a loss of revenue from the conversion of offices, which provided it with business rates, to student residences, which did not incur council taxes charges. It was, therefore, necessary for the City Council to address the decline in its tax base which was already small. Any introduction of council tax
charges or business rates on student residences would be likely to affect students in terms of increased rental charges.

7. Devolution

An announcement regarding the devolution of powers to the North East region was expected in the near future. It was possible that skills could become a devolved responsibility.

8. Dean of Sport

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Dr Phil Ansell, a new member of Senate, who had also taken up the newly created position of Dean of Sport from 1 October 2015.

5. RAISING THE BAR SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Received an oral report from Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Medical Sciences, and Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.

Noted that:

1. The Raising the Bar agenda was a response to the need to improve the University’s position in relation to its research and its international reputation. It was now necessary to put support mechanisms in place to assist good performing staff to achieve at a higher level.

2. Each faculty had approved its own version of the Research Expectations document which had been approved by Senate at its meeting on 7 July 2015. These documents set out minimum research performance expectations that were appropriate for each faculty.

3. A meeting of the Heads of Academic Units would take place to set out the next stages of the process in more detail. Implications in terms of HR would also be discussed. A letter would be sent from each faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor to their staff to explain the process to be followed up by meetings at faculty level.

4. A number of support arrangements would be put in place to assist staff. These would include a Research Investment Fund of £30m to be used to fund capital projects. A support framework would be developed for staff to facilitate sabbatical and mentoring programmes. The University was due to receive £13m in Research Development Expenditure Credits and this would be used to provide studentships and funding for early career researchers. Where an academic unit was identified as having good support systems it would be encouraged to share its good practice with colleagues in other units.

5. The need for Heads of Units to have a certain amount of flexibility in implementing support arrangements was raised as was the importance of having accurate data in order to assess staff performance.

6. It was likely that changes would be made to the rules for the submission of staff to the 2020 REF but the exact nature of these changes was unclear. A variety of possible models had been proposed. It would be important to be clear of the funding implications of any changes in advance of the next submission.
6. **GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2015**

Considered a report from the Working Group on Governance.

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

Noted that:

1. The Working Group on Governance had concluded that it was broadly satisfied with the structures that were in place at the University. The section covering Senate proposed a number of suggestions which would require further consideration at a future meeting, particularly recommendation 23 which required Senate to consider how it wished to exercise its authority as prescribed by the statutes.

2. It was noted that the current proposed constitution for the Estates Capital Strategic Planning Committee did not include a student representative and it was suggested that the possibility of including such a representative should be considered.

3. Recommendation 28 which required all documents submitted to Senate and Council, and in particular those that required approval, to give details of the various options considered and the reason a particular option was recommended, was welcomed.

4. It was confirmed that members of Senate would be invited to consider both their own performance and the performance of Senate as a collective, once the proposed Senate effectiveness questionnaire was introduced.

**Resolved that:**

(i) **Senate approve the recommendations in the final report from the Working Group on Governance.**

(ii) **Senate be asked to consider how it wishes to exercise its authority as prescribed by the statutes (see recommendation 23 of Document C) at a future meeting.**

(iii) **Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Chair of the Working Group on Governance, be thanked for her work.**

7. **XIAMEN FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Considered a report from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The Xiamen-Newcastle University project had undergone a change in direction since it was first proposed in June 2013. Following consultations across the University the project had been broadened and the number of potential activities had increased.

2. It was proposed that joint teaching would be undertaken comprising of two postgraduate taught programmes in Translating and Interpreting (T&I) and Architectural Design. The exact fees structure for these programmes had yet to be determined.

3. The opportunity to develop exchange agreements was welcomed as was the possibility of developing internships. The potential for staff within the Professional Support Services to benefit from short-term exchanges was also considered to be a positive aspect of the proposal.
4. The potential to develop sporting opportunities between the two institutions could be considered further as the project progressed.

5. At this stage the University did not intend to establish a physical presence in Xiamen as expected student numbers in the early years would not be sufficient to make this viable but this would be kept under review.

Resolved that Senate endorse the change in nature of the relationship with Xiamen University, as detailed in Document D.

8. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS 2015

Received a report on the National Student Survey Results 2015 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 University had achieved an overall satisfaction score of 91% which placed it joint 1st in the Russell Group with Oxford.

2. In light of the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) that was to be implemented there was considered to be some areas that would require attention. It was thought likely that the scores for the teaching, assessment and feedback and academic support questions would be used to inform the TEF rather than the overall satisfaction score. The University’s score for assessment and feedback (71%) remained behind the HEI average of 73% and it was necessary to improve this in preparation for the TEF.

3. It was unknown whether the number of students responding had an effect on the changes in responses from one year to the next. The University sought to achieve as high a response rate as possible in order to meet the minimum requirement for the results of each subject area to be published.

4. It would be important to ensure teaching performance was maintained and improved throughout the implementation of the Raising the Bar agenda.

5. The impact of JACS coding and the possibility of reporting a weighted average for each subject area were issues which could be discussed at national level. It was noted that a review of the National Student Survey (NSS) was due to begin in the near future.

6. The wording of certain questions could lead to a number of interpretations which could have an impact on a student’s response. As a result it was considered that there was scope for certain questions to be revised and a recommendation should be made for this to be addressed as part of the planned review of the NSS.

7. Whilst it was acknowledged the University could not influence students in relation to their responses to the NSS, there was considered to be scope for students to be informed of the mechanisms and consequences of the publication of the NSS results. Students should be encouraged to consider their overall experience at University when responding to the NSS. They should also be made aware that satisfaction scores 1-3 represented a negative response when it came to the presentation of the results.

8. In relation to assessment and feedback there was a need for increased sharing of best practice between subject areas.
9. UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS FOR 2015 ENTRY

Received a report on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions entry for 2015, 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. The University had experienced a good admissions cycle in terms of both the number and quality of students.

2. The number of Widening Participation (WP) students that had registered was higher than in previous years but remained below the target of 900 that had been included in the University’s Access Agreement to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

3. Considerable efforts had been made by staff during the Clearing process and the Vice-Chancellor conveyed his thanks to all who had participated.

4. The number of home postgraduate students entering in 2015 had been upheld despite the fact that these were the first students who had paid the £9k undergraduate fee. It was considered that the scholarships which the University had made available had helped to maintain the number of home postgraduate students.

10. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES

Considered 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.]

Resolved that:

(i) University Research Centre status be conferred upon the Centre for Research on Entrepreneurship Wealth and Philanthropy for an initial period from 1st August 2015 to 31 July 2018, with Professor Charles Harvey appointed as Director for the same period.

(ii) University Research Centre status is renewed for the Centre for Synthetic Biology and Bioexploitation for the period of three years backdated from the 1st April 2015 to 31 March 2018, and that Professor Natalio Krasnogor is appointed as Director (taking over from Professor Jeff Errington) with immediate effect and until 31 March 2018.

(iii) The Centre for Synthetic Biology and Bioexploitation name is changed to the Centre for Synthetic Biology and Bioeconomy.

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

Received the reports from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 17 June and 15 July 2015.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents H and J. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that, as discussed under Minute 8 above, action would be required in order to improve the University’s performance in aspects of the NSS and ULTSEC would be asked to revisit the University’s approach.
12. 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 relevant faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors, for the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus.

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

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on Professor Don Grubin with effect from 1 October 2015.

13. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Received the revised policies which will be considered for approval by Council at its meeting on 19 October 2015.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents L and M. Copies filed in the Minute Book]

14. SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

Received the business schedule for meetings of Senate and Council for 2015-16.

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

15. MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

Received the membership of Senate for 2015-16.

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

16. DELEGATION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

Received Senate’s delegation of power and authority document.

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

17. 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.]