NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

7 May 2013

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Chris Day, Professor Charles Harvey, Professor Tony Stevenson and Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Ashley Adamson, Ms Eve Berwin (student member), Dr Debbie Bevitt, Dr Tim Cheek, Professor Steve Clifford, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Dr Joanna Elson, Dr Catherine Exley, Dr Alton Horsfall, Mr Robert Hull, Professor Julia Newton, Ms Laura Perry (President, Students’ Union), Professor Paul Seedhouse, Dr Neelam Srivastava, Ms Rachael Thornton (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mr Steve Williams and Dr Tony Young.

In attendance: Mrs Lesley Braiden (Acting 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: Dr Heather Brown, Professor Peter Clarke, Mr Wayne Connolly, Dr Hugh Dauncey, Professor Steve Homans and Ms Esta Innes (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union).

M I N U T E S

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

68. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 5 March 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed.

69. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

(ii) Honorary Degrees [Minute 55(ii), 05.03.13]

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar.

Noted that:

1. Nominations have been invited for the award of honorary degrees associated with the Societal Challenge Themes. Sir Michael Marmot will be awarded an honorary degree under the banner of Social Renewal at the December 2013 ceremony, after having deferred his attendance from an earlier ceremony.
Senate, 7 May 2013

2. One nomination has been received under the banner of Sustainability and three nominations have been received under the banner of Ageing.

3. Given the time factor this year, it is proposed that the nominations will be circulated electronically to Honorary Degrees Committee members for comment and the subsequent recommendations will be made to Senate, also electronically.

Resolved that the above recommendation for the procedure to be followed for the approval of the remaining Societal Challenge Theme honorary degree nominations, be approved.

70. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

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

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. Congratulations

On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor recorded his congratulations to the following individuals on their recent achievements:

Mr Charles Barry, Chair of the Students’ Union Council, on being elected to the NUS National Executive.

Professor Christine Harrison, Professor of Childhood Cancer Cytogenetics in the Northern Institute for Cancer Research, on being elected as a fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

3. Rankings

The University has improved its performance in a number of league tables:

- Leiden Rankings (measures scientific performance) – the University has improved from 172nd position in 2012 to 133rd position internationally in 2013;
- Times Higher Student Experience Rankings – the University has been placed 14th nationally. up one place from 2012;
- Complete University Guide – the University has been placed 22nd nationally, up one place from 2012.

4. North East Economic Review

The North East Economic Review, led by Lord Adonis, was commissioned by the North East Local Economic Partnership (LEP). The review report, which was published in April 2013, acknowledges the contribution the regional universities make in terms of skills and innovation. The Neptune Centre for Subsea and Offshore Engineering (see Minute 79 below) is cited as initiative worthy of further support.
Members of Senate are asked to keep colleagues in Research Enterprise Services informed of any research they are engaged in which might result in innovations which could be included in the LEP’s innovation strategy.

5. **Government Spending Review**

The Government’s 2013 Spending Review, which will determine departmental budgets for 2015-16, will be announced on 26 June 2013. Most Government departments are thought to be preparing for a 10% reduction in their budgets. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), which determines the budget allocated to the Higher Education sector, will not be protected from any reduction. The Higher Education budget represents the largest area of expenditure for BIS and is likely to be a target for cuts.

Many universities have been prudent in recent years and have generated surpluses for the purpose of reinvestment. The Russell Group and UUK have both made submissions to the Government setting out the investments to be made by universities using the surpluses which have been generated. The sector will continue to reiterate its value to the wider economy in the run up to the announcement on 26 June.

71. **FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT**

Considered the strategic progress report for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and a PowerPoint presentation from Professor Charles Harvey, Pro-Vice-Chancellor HaSS, on behalf of Executive Board

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

[Copy of the slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is one of considerable diversity which represents a strength but also presents challenges. The Faculty displays strong performance in many areas but in others standards and performance vary.

2. Increasing the scores achieved by academic units in the National Student Survey is a high priority. Considerable improvements have been witnessed in the results achieved by schools which have implemented a formal framework designed to improve performance.

3. Developing new programmes is an area of focus for the Faculty, particularly following the recent changes to the fees regime. The recently introduced Creative Writing programme has received a high number of good quality applications.

4. It is the Faculty’s intention to achieve triple accreditation for the Business School and progress towards this is on track following recent re-accreditation by EQUIS. Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs) are also a key area of focus for the Faculty and a number of good external reports have recently been received in relation to existing DTCs.

5. It was proposed that the Faculty should introduce an additional KPI for the diversification of the student population. It was noted, however, that progress towards a fully diverse student population would be affected by issues of supply and demand.

6. The availability of scholarships was identified as being a key issue for the Faculty. It was noted that universities which were able to offer a high number of scholarships often had a large amount of endowment income available to facilitate this. It would be useful to establish whether other universities subsidised scholarships from teaching income.
Resolved that Professor Harvey be thanked for an informative presentation.

72. STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Considered the new Student Recruitment Strategy prior to its submission to Council, introduced by Professor Suzanne Cholerton on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The strategy presented to Senate builds upon the discussions held at the 2012 joint meeting of Senate and Council. An implementation plan is to be prepared which will be presented to Senate and Council and the strategy will be renewed annually.

2. Student recruitment involves a large number of people across the University. The strategy aims to set the overall direction of travel for the institution but it is acknowledged that the implementation may vary according to the local needs of individual academic units and subject requirements.

3. The question was raised as to whether there were any plans to introduce a strategy to alter the population of students by faculty which currently stands at 49.2% in HaSS, 29.3% in SAgE and 21.5% in Medical Sciences. In response it was noted that no such strategy was planned however it is possible that changes could occur naturally as a result of the new fee regime; some subjects which were previously strong recruiters may become less popular in future. Executive Board will consider opportunities for growth but this will be based on the principle of retaining the University’s broad disciplinary base. Any increase in student numbers in Medical Sciences is limited due to Government restrictions. There are, however, opportunities which could be explored in SAgE, where recruitment to engineering and STEM subjects could increase, and there are also high demand subjects within HaSS.

4. Section B of the strategy sets out the University’s Vision and Strategic Objectives, one of which is ‘to attract, engage and admit high-quality students from UK and international markets’. It was proposed that it would be more appropriate to replace the word ‘market’ in this instance with ‘backgrounds’ so as not to be seen to be viewing students as consumers. The reference to improving international student diversity across subjects was welcomed.

5. It was confirmed that admissions data provided the main evidence base for the statement on page 5, that ‘there is little indication, to date, of a shift away from demand for traditional, full-time study on campus...’. It was acknowledged, however, that the University must remain receptive to alternative modes of delivery.

6. The factors affecting the choice of new entrants and those who decline the University’s offers, as noted at the bottom of page 5, are not listed in order of importance but it was confirmed that all are evidence based. KIS data is thought to have only a limited influence on student choice, with the main influences being NSS results and league tables. HEFCE has confirmed that it plans to make improvements to the KIS data to ensure it is more user-friendly.

Resolved that the Student Recruitment Strategy be approved, subject to the agreement of Council at its meeting on 17 June 2013.
73. APPLICATION STATISTICS FOR SEPTEMBER 2013

Considered a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on the current position regarding undergraduate and postgraduate applications for 2013, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Tabled at the meeting as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University has issued 20% more offers than at the same point in the previous year’s cycle and applicants are now responding to the offers which have been made. Approximately 80% of applicants have responded to date.

2. Core offers are more likely to be accepted, which is explained by there being fewer of these available across the sector. There has been a 4% increase in the number of acceptances for the Faculty of SAgE when compared with the same point in the previous year.

3. The system of postgraduate offers is less structured and more fluid but applications and acceptances have increased in all categories and across the University as a whole.

74. NEW SINGAPOREAN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Considered a report outlining a new governance structure for the University’s operations in Singapore, from Professor Ella Richie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The University’s activities in Singapore have expanded over recent years to such an extent that the governance structures that were in place had become unsuitable.

2. Two new posts are to be established – a Head of Academic Operations and a Chief Operating Officer – both of whom will report to the Dean (Singapore). The NUIS Board is also to be strengthened.

3. There are now approximately 30 staff and 800 students in Singapore following six different subjects. The new governance structure will ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to address any further expansion in activity in the immediate future. They will also enable the Dean (Singapore) to focus on targeting the research funding opportunities that are available in Singapore.

75. STUDENT ATTENDANCE MONITORING

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

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

Noted that:

1. As advised in a letter from UKBA in February 2013, the University must put in place a system which allows it to identify when a student has stopped studying. It has been agreed by Executive Board that this should be by means of a corporate system.
2. A consultation process has been followed and it is proposed that fixed scanners should be installed in venues with a capacity of up to 60. A pilot is currently underway in a number of venues in the Business School.

3. Consultation has established that paper lists are inappropriate for use in larger venues and it is envisaged that fixed scanners will be installed in all laboratories regardless of capacity. Where fixed scanners are not installed, portable scanners are recommended rather than class lists as this will enable a prompt response in the event of a Home Office visit.

4. It was noted that class lists have the advantage of allowing signatures to be checked to verify whether a student signed in in person rather than another student doing it on their behalf. Scanners would not provide this safeguard.

5. The proposed system has been discussed with the University’s local Home Office representative and a further meeting is to take place in the near future. The University’s proposed solution is expected to be acceptable to the Home Office since some other universities already have scanners in place.

6. The Students’ Union had held a referendum on student attendance monitoring, the results of which showed that the majority of students would prefer a student engagement system rather than an attendance monitoring system. The fact that all students are to be treated equally under the University’s proposals regardless of nationality was welcomed.

7. The main priority for the University is to ensure that it has a system in place that will meet the Home Office’s requirements. Once this has been established it will then be possible to develop and enhance the system to encourage student engagement on programmes.

8. Point 13 of Appendix 1 notes that ‘Faculties may draw up Faculty guidelines, provided that they meet the University minimum requirements.’ It was suggested that there was a need for a central point of contact to review individual faculty arrangements to ensure consistency and that the faculties should be encouraged to implement light-touch arrangements as far as possible.

Resolved that Senate endorse the principle and specific recommendations for student attendance monitoring as set out in Appendix A of Document G.

76. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received the Annual Report from University Research Committee which has been endorsed by Executive Board.

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

77. UK PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

Received a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, and Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

1. The UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF) outlines a national framework for recognising and benchmarking teaching and learning support roles within Higher Education. The University is required to apply for re-accreditation from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as a Recognising Body for the UK PSF.
2. Re-accreditation will ensure the programmes which the University offers to all newly appointed staff can be clearly mapped to the UK PSF which in turn will allow national professional recognition by the HEA.

3. HESA surveys are increasingly requesting information on the professional teaching qualifications of academic staff and it is possible that this could develop into a future metric for league tables. Re-accreditation by the HEA will ensure the University is well prepared for this development, although there is scope to further improve the quality of data held in this area.

4. It was noted that the proposals noted in Document J were welcomed by the student body. It was considered that the time required by staff to achieve additional teaching qualifications would ultimately be to the benefit of students.

78. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE XIAMEN UNIVERSITY GROUP

Received a report from Professor Ella Ritchie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Developing relations with Chinese institutions is a key aspect of the University’s Internationalisation strategy. Xiamen University is one of a number of Chinese institutions with which the University is developing a relationship but the partnership with Xiamen could be viewed as more comprehensive since it is to be developed on a number of levels.

2. Increasing relationships with Chinese institutions will allow the University to better understand the Chinese education system and also its Chinese intake.

3. Further discussions are to take place regarding the development of the identified themes and the delivery of teaching.

79. NEPTUNE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SUBSEA AND OFFSHORE ENGINEERING

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

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

Resolved that Senate congratulate Professor Wright and his colleagues on the successful bid to the HEFCE catalyst fund.

80. APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC ORATOR

Considered 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 Professor James Steele CBE be appointed as Public Orator with effect from 1 August 2013 for a period of three years until 31 July 2016.

81. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY AND FACULTY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

Considered a consolidated report from the University and Faculty Promotions Committee.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Resolved that the recommendations in Document N be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.

82. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

Received the progress report for the Human Resources Strategy from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

83. ESTATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES UPDATE AND REVIEW 2013

Received an update and review report for the Estates and Environmental Sustainability Strategies from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

84. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES

Considered a report containing recommendations for the appointment/re-appointment of Chairs and members of University committees.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the recommendations in Document Q be approved.

85. HONORARY STAFF AS PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Considered a report containing recommendations regarding honorary members of the Faculty of Medical Sciences.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the recommendations in Document R be approved.

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

Received a report from the meetings of UTLSEC held on 6 March and 10 April 2013.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document S. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

87. 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.]