NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

7 October 2014

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Chris Day, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Tony Stevenson, Professor Nick Wright, (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Appleby, Ms Claire Boothman, (President, Students' Union), Professor Colin Brooks, Dr Heather Brown, Dr Tim Cheek, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Professor Peter Clarke, Professor Steven Clifford, Mr Wayne Connolly, Dr Stuart Dawley, Dr Joanna Elson, Ms Olivia Jeffery (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Tom Joyce, Ms Abi Kelly, Professor Neill Marshall, Dr Sara Maioli, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students' Union), Dr Ole Pedersen, Dr Lindsay Pennington, Dr Ruth Valentine, Mr Steve Williams, Dr Tony Young, and Professor Martha Young-Scholten.

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: Professor Charles Harvey, Professor Steve Homans, Mr Mike Davison, Professor Julia Newton, Mr Tolu Kolawole, Professor Paul Seedhouse.

MINUTES

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 1 July 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.
Resolved that Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.

2. USS

In light of the proposed reforms for the USS there was a need for good communications on the reasons for the changes and their consequences. Members of Senate were invited to inform the Executive Director of Human Resources if they had any suggestions on how this could be achieved.

3. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences

Professor Charles Harvey would be stepping down as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences from 31 December 2014. Professor Neill Marshall would undertake the role of acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor from 1 January 2015 and it was hoped that a permanent appointment would be made in time for the start of the next academic year.

4. University Deanships

The possibility of establishing 3 Deanships in the areas of Sport, Diversity and Development was being considered by Executive Board. There was some support from members of Senate for the introduction of such roles on a trial basis, particularly in the areas of Sport and Diversity, although it was noted that the line management arrangements for such posts would need to be considered carefully. Members of Senate were invited to forward any further comments on the proposals to the Vice-Chancellor.

5. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

[Minute classified as ‘commercial in confidence’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

6. REPORT ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS 2014

Received a report on the National Student Survey Results 2014, 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.]

Noted that:

1. The University had achieved an excellent outcome in the latest National Student Survey and its overall satisfaction score of 91% placed it joint second in the Russell Group.

2. Schools were set a target of achieving a satisfaction score of 90% or above but consideration would be given to revising this target upwards in light of recent results.

3. In Annex 3 to Document D, despite achieving a satisfaction score in excess of 90%, some subject areas were colour coded red where their score had fallen from the previous year, even if it was by only 1%, and it was proposed that the colour coding should be reconsidered.

4. Satisfaction scores for assessment and feedback were improving but progress in this area remained slow. The Education Officer would undertake a campaign in November to canvas student opinion and to identify common views. It was noted, however, that a similar exercise was conducted in the Faculty of Medical Sciences some years ago which
identified the wide range of views amongst the student population and highlighted the difficulty in finding a solution which would suit all students.

5. It was noted that the Students' Union was placed 8th nationally with a satisfaction score of 82%, which was a considerable achievement.

7. UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS FOR 2014 ENTRY

Received a report on undergraduate admissions for 2014 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 experienced another good year in terms of student recruitment. The target set for the recruitment cycle was close to being achieved which was due to the hard work of staff across the University.

2. 73% of students recruited had achieved grades of ABB or better and the University had succeeded in growing the student population without impacting upon the quality of the intake.

3. The University had proven to be a popular choice during the Clearing process. It was thought that this was due to the University's good NSS scores, its successful use of social media and the fact that it was in a position to offer accommodation to students who applied through Clearing.

4. The Widening Participation target remained challenging and would not be met.

Resolved that the Senate record its thanks to all staff involved in the recruitment process.

8. PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE ROLE OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Considered a report outlining a proposal to introduce a new 'Associate Professor' role from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The drivers for introducing the title of 'Associate Professor' included the need to set high standards of performance as recognised by the 'Raising the Bar' programme and also the need to make the titles used for academic staff more understandable in the international market. It was considered that in some international contexts, the title of 'Reader' was not well understood.

2. A working group had been established which would consider the proposals and comments from members of Senate would be submitted to the group. Further, more detailed proposals will be submitted to Senate in due course and the Heads of Unit Forum and Promotions Committees would be consulted.

3. The proposal to introduce the title of Associate Professor, the discontinuation of the award of Readerships and the introduction of a new pay scale would address an
anomaly in the current structure whereby the positions of Senior Lecturer and Reader were on the same grade and pay scale. It was noted, however, that it would be important to get the detail right and staff who had worked their way up through the grades would need to be fairly represented amongst those granted the new title.

4. The international benefits which the new title could bring were considered by some to be beneficial but it was also noted that in some international contexts, the title of Reader was considered a quirk of the British system and was not necessarily viewed negatively.

5. There were conflicting views of the system adopted by Warwick, whereby all Readers and Senior Lecturers were allowed to adopt the title of Associate Professor. It was considered by some to provide a simple solution but the use of Associate, Assistant and Full Professor titles was also seen to be more complex and more difficult to understand. It was confirmed that models used elsewhere in the sector would be considered as part of the process.

6. The proposals would be viewed as beneficial if they helped the University to recruit high calibre staff but the criteria would need to be carefully considered to ensure this end was achieved. The view was expressed that there could be a negative impact for the University’s reputation if all current Readers were required to go through the application process in order to gain the title of Associate Professor. There could also be a risk of staff claiming constructive dismissal if they felt that the new titles had not been awarded fairly.

7. Senate should be presented with an indication of the costs involved in implementing the proposals. It was noted that there would be a short-term impact of moving staff to the new pay scales but the longer-term cost impact was considered to be minimal as staff would then follow the usual process of annual increments and/or the award of cost of living.

8. It was suggested that the proposals could be seen to downgrade the position of Senior Lecturer as a career option for those who were not research active. It was also suggested that adding an additional pay grade could be seen to increase the barriers for promotion from Senior Lecturer to Professor.

9. Providing career progression opportunities was given as one reason for the proposed changes but, it was suggested, this could be achieved simply by removing the stage of Reader. Raising the Bar was also given as a driver for the changes which could imply that the promotions criteria would be tightened to make it harder for a member of staff to be promoted to Associate Professor or Professor level and it was considered that there was a need for clarification here. A possible consequence of the proposals was that the pay of some Professors would increase. The view was expressed that staff salaries had not kept pace with inflation and there were proposals to review contributions to the USS which would reduce pay. As a result, it was suggested that it could be viewed as unseemly for the University to introduce proposals which would increase the pay of higher paid senior staff.

Resolved that Senate’s views on the proposed introduction of the Associate Professor title would be forwarded to the Working Group to be considered and further, more detailed proposals would be presented at a future meeting of Senate.

9. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES AND INSTITUTES

Considered the recommendations in the reports from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.
Resolved that:

(i) University Research Institute status be conferred upon the Newcastle University Humanities Research Institute (NUHRI) for an initial period of five years from 1 November 2014, with Professor Matthew Grenby (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) appointed as Director for the same period, subject to Council approval at its meeting on 27 October 2014;

(ii) University Research Centre status be conferred upon the Newcastle University Centre for Cardiovascular Research for an initial period of three years from 1 November 2014, with Professor Ioakim Spyridopoulos (Institute of Genetic Medicine) appointed as Director for the same period;

(iii) University Research Centre status be conferred upon the Newcastle University Centre for Fatigue Research for an initial period of three years from 1 November 2014, with Professor Julia Newton (Institute of Cellular Medicine and Dean of Clinical Medicine) appointed as Director for the same period;

(iv) University Research Centre status be conferred upon the Newcastle University John Walton Centre for Muscular Dystrophy for an initial period of three years from 1 November 2014, with Professor Kate Bushby (Institute of Genetic Medicine) appointed as Director for the same period.

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

Received:

(a) The reports from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 11 June, 16 July and 17 September 2014.

(b) The revised Terms of Reference of ULTSEC for approval.

Resolved that the revised terms of reference for ULTSEC be approved, subject to the above amendment.

11. ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))
Senator, 7 October 2014

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 L. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. The proposal to confer the title of Professor Emeritus on Professor David Mendelow had been withdrawn at the request of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences as Professor Mendelow was now working for University on a part-time basis.

2. At its meeting on 1 July 2014, Senate approved the award of the title of Professor Emeritus on Professor Ella Ritchie from 1 October 2014, following her retirement on 30 September 2014. However, Professor Ritchie continued to work with and on behalf of the University at national and international level, from which the University derives much gain. The Vice-Chancellor therefore proposed that the title of Emeritus Deputy Vice-Chancellor should be conferred on Professor Ritchie.

Resolved that:

(i) The title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on the following from the dates shown:

   Professor Tim Cawston, with effect from 1 September 2014.
   Professor Philip Lowe, with effect from 1 October 2014.
   Professor John Spencer, with effect from 1 July 2014.

(ii) The title of Emeritus Deputy Vice-Chancellor be conferred on Professor Ella Ritchie with immediate effect.

12. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Reported that the procedure for the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors, as set out in Senate Standing Order X, was as follows:

(i) The Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council any establishment of, or appointment to, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor post.

(ii) If Senate and Council approve the recommendation, a joint selection committee shall be established comprising:

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

Considered a recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor for the establishment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences post.

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

Noted that it was proposed to appoint Professor Suzanne Cholerton as one of the Senate-appointed members of the joint selection committee. The Chair of Council had agreed that Professor Neill Marshall would be appointed as one of the Council-appointed members.
Resolved that:

(i) The recommendation for the establishment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences post be approved;

(ii) Nominations for the Senate-appointed members of the joint selection committee should be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor;

(iii) Senate grant the Vice-Chancellor delegated authority to approve the remaining Senate-appointed members of the joint selection committee.

13. SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

Received the business schedule for meetings of Senate and Council in 2014-15.

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

14. MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

Reported that Mr Tolu Kolawole (PhD Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials) had been elected by the Students' Union to serve on Senate for 2014-15.

Received the membership of Senate for 2014-15.

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

15. DELEGATION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

Received Senate's delegation of powers and authority document.

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

16. 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.]