NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

8 March 2016

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Nick Wright, Professor Phillip 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, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Stuart Dawley, Mr Dominic Fearon, (President, Students’ Union), Professor John Fitzgerald, Dr Ruth Graham, Professor Nigel Harkness, Dr Joan Harvey, Professor Tom Joyce, Ms Abi Kelly, Dr Sara Maioli, Mr Matthew Price (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Klaus Schoefer, and Mr Steve Williams.

In attendance: Mrs Lesley Braiden (Academic Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer, Governance).

Apologies: Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland (Deputy Director of Human Resources), Dr Lindsey Ferrie, Professor Neill Marshall, Dr Lindsay Pennington and Dr Ruth Valentine.

Mrs Naomi Oosman-Watts, Assistant Director (Career Management), Careers Service, attended for Minute 57.

The Vice-Chancellor was not present for Minute 63. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor was in the Chair for Minute 63.

M I N U T E S

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

53. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 19 January 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

54. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

There were no outstanding items on the business tracking form.

(ii) Honorary Degrees [Minute 27, 17.11.15 & Minute 41, 19.01.16]

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar.

Noted that:

1. Five honorary degrees were to be awarded during the July 2016 congregation ceremonies – three on Wednesday 13 July and two on Friday 15 July.
2. With regards to the December 2016 ceremonies, two of the four nominees had accepted the invitation to receive an honorary degree linked to the societal challenge themes. Two responses were awaited.

3. Members of Senate were invited to submit nominations for a special honorary degree ceremony to mark the 50th anniversary of the Martin Luther King receiving his Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law. This ceremony would take place in November 2017. Members of Senate were advised that the deadline for nominations for this special ceremony was Friday 6 May 2016.

4. Nominations were also invited for the award of honorary degrees in July 2017 the deadline for which was Friday 29 July 2016. Nomination forms could be obtained from the Honorary Degrees website: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/congregations/ceremonies/honorary/

55. 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. Raising the Bar: Implementation Update

Two workshops, one for Heads of Academic Unit and another for invited professors, had been scheduled on the topic of ‘Research Expectations, REF and PDRs’. It was intended that the output from these workshops would be a best practice guidance note on how the PDR process should operate taking into account the Research Expectations.

It was possible that there would be a phase of the Raising the Bar initiative that would address learning and teaching expectations. This would relate also to the expected Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Additional workshops were to be arranged prior to the summer break and members of Senate were invited to submit possible discussion topics.

3. Smart Data Institute

The University had submitted an expression of interest for the establishment of a National Institute for Smart Data Innovation for which a capital grant contribution could be obtained from government. In the event of a successful bid, it was proposed to locate the Institute on Plot 3 of Science Central thereby establishing a critical mass on the site.

4. University Research Centre – Change of Title

Resolved that Senate approve the change of title of the McCord Centre for Historic and Cultural Landscape to the McCord Centre for Landscape.
5. **Richardson Road development and renaming of the student accommodation**

Senate noted that at its meeting on 8 February 2016, Council had agreed that the new student accommodation to be built on Richardson Road would be given the more general name of Park View Student Village and that the individual blocks would be named after the well-known local National Trust residences. It was suggested that the source of the wealth used to construct the properties ought to be ascertained.

6. **International Student Recruitment**

There had been a downturn in the numbers of international postgraduate students registering at the University during the current academic year and this presented challenges for the budget. A sub-group of Executive Board was to meet following Senate to consider this issue in more detail and to identify actions that could be taken to improve recruitment rates.

7. **Item Submitted by a Member of Council**

At its meeting on 8 February 2016, Council had received an item from one of its members requesting recruitment data for senior positions within SAgE. The information had been requested to determine whether internal applicants were applying for these positions since no internal applicants had been appointed to such posts in the past 12 months. It was suggested that this created the perception amongst existing staff that they were not valued by the University management.

Whilst there had been no internal appointments made to senior positions within SAgE, a review of the recruitment data for the University as a whole revealed that overall, 7 out of 15 vacancies had been filled by internal applicants (including one acting Head of School).

It was confirmed that the University management did value its staff and that, together with its students, they were considered to be its key resource. Recruitment exercises had established that internal candidates were competitive when considered alongside external candidates for senior post. It was suggested, however, that action could be taken to increase the number of internal candidates being shortlisted for senior positions within SAgE.

8. **Etherington Review of Fundraising Regulation**

The review of fundraising regulation undertaken by Sir Stuart Etherington had not taken into account the position of higher education institutions and the particular relationships established with alumni. As a result, the sector had requested that it be exempt from the implementation of the proposed recommendations. The government’s response to this request had yet to be determined.

9. **European Union Referendum**

The Vice-Chancellor was one of 103 university leaders to sign a letter pointing out the value to the Higher Education sector of the UK’s membership of the European Union published in the Sunday Times on 21 February 2016.

The University had received approaches from a number of MPs wanting to find out more about the importance of the EU for higher education institutions.

A recent meeting the Students’ Union Council had considered a motion on the EU referendum at which strong support had been expressed for the ‘remain’ position. It had been agreed that the benefits of voting should be promoted to students and the facts
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around remaining in the EU should explained. Visits to the student residences were to be undertaken for this purpose.

Whatever the outcome of the EU referendum there was a risk of it being followed by a period of political instability which could lead to increased volatility for the sector.

10. Northern Powerhouse Conference

The Vice-Chancellor had been a speaker at the recent Northern Powerhouse conference at which the issue of skills had been a major topic. Apprenticeships were also a key consideration and the University would need to give further thought to how they could be included as part of its offer.

11. HEFCE Grant Letter

On 4 March 2016, HEFCE had received the funding letter from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) confirming the funding to be provided to the sector for 2016-17.

The letter confirmed that the funding for all but two of the research councils was to be cut in 2016-17. An as yet unallocated Global Challenges Research Fund of £120m had been established and it was thought that it might be possible for the University to draw on this to support its Societal Challenge Themes.

BIS had confirmed its intention to include the research councils under a new “Research UK” banner and signalled the likelihood that QR funding would be moved from HEFCE to RUK. The Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) was to be continued.

With regards to teaching, HEFCE had been instructed to maintain support for STEM subjects and this would provide a long-awaited, albeit modest, increase in funding for medical subjects. The direction of future funding to support Widening Participation activities required further clarification.

HEFCE had been formally requested to administer the process for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Submission of Value for Money reports would become a mandatory requirement and the sector would be expected to follow the government’s position on severance payments.

56. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Received:

(i) The draft of the Engagement Strategy presented for consultation by Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement, on behalf of Executive Board.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(ii) A PowerPoint presentation on the draft Engagement Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement
    [Copy of PowerPoint slides files in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The draft strategy did not define the forms that engagement activities could take since these would be different for each academic. It was proposed that it might be helpful to include a few examples for the benefit of new academic staff.
2. During the consultation process it was explained that the University did not wish to interfere with engagement activities already underway but, instead, sought to understand and facilitate existing activity. Staff were invited to share their experiences of partnership working, both positive and negative. Staff were also invited to share their contacts and, whilst their might be some resistance to this, it was considered that this would bring benefits to all in the longer term and would allow a more co-ordinated approach to be adopted.

3. It was considered that the draft Engagement Strategy provided a useful revaluation of the term ‘Engagement’ and set it in a much broader context than the recent focus on impact case studies had provided.

4. The draft strategy had been reviewed to ensure it was consistent with the aims set out in Vision 2021. Responsibility for each of the identified KPIs had been allocated.

5. The consultation process would continue and the final version of the Engagement Strategy would be presented to Senate for approval at its meeting on 28 June 2016.

Resolved that Professor Davies be thanked for an informative presentation.

57. EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTERPRISE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Received the draft of the Employability and Enterprise Strategy presented for consultation by 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 strong outcomes for the proportion of students in graduate level employment but in recent years its position in the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide (GUG) had declined due to the improvements in performance by other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Employability and Enterprise Strategy set out the action to be taken to reverse this downward trend. There was also a need to prepare appropriately for the likely inclusion of the employability rates as a metric in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

2. Actions that could easily be introduced to improve the University’s performance in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey included determining the optimum time to conduct the survey and ensuring contact details were up to date. It was also necessary to ensure the coding of jobs was accurate. A review of the data from the most recent survey had established that, had the University achieved a marginal increase in positive responses, it would have been placed in the top 20 for Graduate Prospects in the GUG.

3. Placements were being used increasingly by employers as a recruiting tool. With this in mind it was proposed to extend the availability of work-related learning to all students and Executive Board had recently approved a placements strategy to facilitate this. Staff were invited to share their knowledge of employers who had offered a particularly positive placement experience to students to help inform the implementation of the strategy.

4. Checks would be put in place to ensure the quality of the placements. A quality assurance framework was already in place to monitor student placements.
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5. It was proposed that the University should harness the skills and experiences of its alumni to develop networking and mentoring opportunities for students.

6. It was suggested that the term ‘work-related learning opportunities’ should be defined within the strategy.

7. The final version of the Employability and Enterprise Strategy would be presented to Senate for approval at its meeting on 28 June 2016.

Resolved that Professor Cholerton and Mrs Oosman-Watts be thanked for their informative presentation.

58. PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT

Received a progress report on the Public Relations Strategy presented by Ms Abi Kelly, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The promotion of REF case studies had been stepped up via the use of social media campaigns and animations. These activities would be directed at the academic community and timed to coincide with the QS and Times Higher academic surveys. South East Asia was a key target since this was a part of the world where the University secured few votes in these surveys. To address this, the University had sponsored a series of televised debates on Channel News Asia and a digital media campaign was also to be undertaken.

2. Enhanced support for academic conferencing had led to an increase in events and the number of delegates visiting the campus.

3. The University had entered into a partnership with ‘The Conversation’, a research news website with a significant readership. This partnership allowed the University to expand its reach for its research with one article on Lewy Bodies Dementia by Professor Ian McKeith being read by over 35,000 people.

4. Despite developments and improvements in many areas the overall KPI position for Public Relations strategy remained at Amber/Green, mainly as a consequence of the University’s league table performance.

Resolved that Ms Abi Kelly be thanked for an informative presentation.

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

Received:
(i) The reports from the meetings of ULTSEC held on 9 December 2015 & 3 February 2016.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Documents F & G. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]
(ii) A report from ULTSEC on University terms dates and semester dates for 2018-2021.
    [Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Concern was expressed at the proposal to roll-out stage questionnaires and the possibility that these could lead to questionnaire fatigue if undertaken alongside existing
module questionnaires. In response it was noted that an alternate year approach had been considered but comments from students had suggested that they welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback each year. It was confirmed that the frequency of stage questionnaires would be reviewed as part of their implementation.

2. With regards to online plagiarism checking, clarification was requested as to whether there was a consistent policy across the University as to the level of similarity that was identified before it was brought to the attention of the student. It was noted that where sources were attributed then it was unlikely that a disciplinary case would be brought but there would always be a level of judgement required. The comment on the need for a consistent position across the University would, however, be referred to ULTSEC for further consideration.

3. With regards to the semester dates set out in Document H it was clarified that Semester 3 was applicable to postgraduate students only.

Resolved that Senate approve the University term dates and semester dates for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

60. ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT CASEWORK

Received the Annual Report on Student Casework for 2014-15 presented by Professor Suzanne Cholerton on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. There had been an increase in the number of academic appeals being brought which was largely attributed to a change in regulations in 2014-15, which allowed for only one resit attempt as of right, when previously there were two.

2. A fall in the number of disciplinary cases could, in part, be attributed to the implementation of the University’s Noise Nuisance Protocol. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of repeat noise nuisance offences by students.

3. An Internal Audit of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) procedures had taken place during 2015 and, as a result of this, improved procedures and guidance documents were to be prepared.

61. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY APPROACH TO THE COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY ACT 2015: UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Received:

(i) A report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board
(ii) Newcastle University’s Policy for External Speakers (new)
(iii) Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech (revised)

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

Noted that:

1. The wording of the Prevent legislation was considered to be unhelpful since it required ‘full’ risk mitigation of external speaker events and it was considered impossible for this to be achieved.
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2. It had been confirmed that the legislation applied to any external speakers at the University, not just those involved in large or high profile events. The University had given careful consideration to the implementation of the legislation to ensure that internal procedures did not result in unnecessary bureaucracy.

3. It was yet to be established whether visiting speakers from other UK Higher Education Institutions would be covered by the Prevent procedures at their home institution or whether the University’s own Policy for External Speakers would need to be applied.

4. Point 4.2 of the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech referred to a ‘breach of Code of Practice’ and ‘persons committing offences’. A breach of the Code would not automatically constitute an offence and it was recommended that this should be made explicit in the document.

5. It was proposed that defining the University’s risk appetite in relation to the Prevent agenda might be a useful exercise. The reputational risks of an event occurring of which the University had no prior knowledge were considered to be greater that those that might result from a known event that had been allowed to take place. Unknown events would therefore carry the greatest risk for the University’s reputation.

Resolved that subject to the amendment noted under point 4 above, the University’s Policy for External Speakers and the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech be approved.

62. 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 N. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on Professor Michael Whitaker with effect from 1 April 2016.

63. VICE-CHANCELLORSHIP

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar.

Noted that:

1. The Vice-Chancellor position had been advertised in Times Higher on Monday 7 March 2016. Applications were invited and the external search agents would also be identifying suitable individuals to approach. The closing date was 11 April 2016 following which a longlist would be prepared for consideration by the selection committee.

2. Once a shortlist had been prepared formal interviews would take place and also a number of smaller informal meetings with individuals responsible for key areas of the University’s activities such as Learning and Teaching, Research and Engagement.
3. A joint meeting of Senate and Council would take place on 11 July 2016 to consider the recommendation made by the selection committee with a view to appointing the next Vice-Chancellor.

64. FEES SCHEDULE

Received the fees schedule for 2016-17 and programme fees for 2017-18 which had been endorsed by Executive Board.

[Resolved that the Fees Schedule for 2016-17 and the programme fees for 2017-18 be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.]

65. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE GREAT NORTH MUSEUM BOARD

Received the annual report from the Great North Museum Board.

[Resolved that the Annual Report from the Great North Museum Board be approved.]

66. FACULTY APPOINTMENT ON HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Reported that Professor Nigel Harkness had been appointed as a member of Honorary Degrees Committee by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences until 31 July 2018.

67. DATES OF MEETING OF SENATE 2016-17

Noted that meetings of Senate would take place at 2pm on the following dates in 2016-17:

- Tuesday 4 October 2016
- Tuesday 15 November 2016
- Tuesday 24 January 2017
- Tuesday 7 March 2017
- Tuesday 2 May 2017
- Tuesday 27 June 2017

There will also be a joint lunch with Council at 1pm on Monday 3 April 2017 to be followed by a joint meeting from 1.45 – 5.00pm.

68. SENATE DINNER

Noted that Senate Dinner would be held at 6.30pm for 7pm on Tuesday 15 November 2016.

69. 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.

[Resolved that the Reported Business be noted.]