NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
17 December 2018

Present:  Mr Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Vice-Chancellor and President, Mr David Bird, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mrs Linda Conlon, Professor Nicola Curtin, Mr Mike Davison, Ms Teresa Graham, Mr Stephen Lightley, Ms Adrienne McFarland, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Dr Sara Maioli, Mr Raffaello Marioni (President, Students' Union), Ms Claire Morgan, Ms Dianne Nelmes, Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Selina Stead, and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance:  Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies:  Professor Caroline Austin, Dr Stacy Gillis, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mr Jonathan Hall, Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Heidi Mottram, Professor Sir Michael Rawlins, and Ms Angela Woodburn.

Professor Richard Davies attended for Minute 28.  
Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor David Burn, and Professor Phillip Wright attended for Minute 29.  
Dr Colin Campbell attended for Minutes 29 and 31.  
Mr Simon Gerry attended for Minute 38.  
Professor Suzanne Cholerton attended for Minute 39.

M I N U T E S

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Professor Nicola Curtin declared an interest in Rubraca on Item 3.3 (Report from Finance Committee).

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 15 October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed.

24. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising or outstanding actions from the previous minutes.

25. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Noted that:

1. The University had announced the departure of the Executive Director of Human Resources, Mrs Judith Whitaker. Judith had been at the University for two years during which time she had instigated a number of important projects aimed at improving the University’s performance. She had demonstrated commitment to the highest values and excellence in HR. Sadly, a combination of circumstances would see Judith leave the University with effect from February 2019.

2. A lay member of Council would be appointed to serve on the recruitment panel for the new Executive Director of Human Resources.
3. At its meeting on 19 November 2018, Nominations Committee had discussed future recruitment strategy for the lay membership of Council. It had been suggested that the University’s approach could be made more transparent, and that lay member vacancies could be publicised. Nominations Committee had also considered the size and shape of Council, and would revisit this subject in light of the report of the Advance HE external governance review.

26. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor and President’s report. Highlights of this report are discussed below.

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

Noted that:

1. **Student Recruitment**

   Early indicators for undergraduate recruitment in 2019 were not encouraging. Most areas of recruitment, with the important exception of non-EU taught postgraduate applications and offers, were currently showing year on year decreases. The Vice-Chancellor and President was chairing a task and finish group addressing this as a matter of urgency. The University was analysing and seeking to emulate marketing techniques deployed by competitor institutions, and Executive Board had approved investment in improved student marketing IT systems in support of this. It was suggested that digital expertise should be taken into account in considering the recruitment of future lay members of Council.

2. **Ed Farmer**

   Executive Board had discussed the recent inquest into the tragic circumstances of the death of former student, Ed Farmer. An internal working group had been established to look at the issues arising from the coroner’s inquest. The Vice-Chancellor and President had written to all students to reinforce the message that initiations were banned by the University and Students’ Union, and to remind students about the dangers of excessive drinking. A sub-committee of Health and Safety Committee had been established to consider student health and wellbeing and ensure that Council received assurance. A well-attended memorial service for Ed Farmer had also taken place on 10 December.

3. **Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)**

   Recent progress on USS had been discussed at Finance Committee on 4 December (see Minute 13).

4. **Athena SWAN**

   The Faculty of Medical Sciences had been awarded Athena SWAN Silver status, and the Newcastle University Business School, School of Arts and Cultures and School of Modern Languages had been awarded Bronze status. These schools joined the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics and School of Geography, Politics and Sociology as Bronze award-holders within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. In addition to the new awards, the School of Computing and the School of Engineering had been successful in having their Bronze status renewed.

5. **Grade Inflation**

   A consultation had been launched by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA). The consultation invited respondents to consider a number of
recommendations, including that universities should issue a sector-wide statement of intent, leading to actions to protect the value of qualifications over time. The aim of the actions was to enable a university’s governing body to ensure the university was protecting the value of its qualifications. An institutional response to the consultation would be coordinated by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and would be submitted to Senate and Council for information. The Office for Students would be publishing a new report on analysis of degree classifications over time at sector and provider level on 19 December 2018.

6. Widening Participation

The University had been ranked second in a group of 29 elite universities for Widening Participation admissions. The Reform ranking, in its second year, showed that only seven of the 29 institutions had hit targets set by the Higher Education Statistics Agency on increasing the number of disadvantaged students they recruited. Newcastle University had the biggest rise up the table, from 24th last year to second this year. The report praised universities that had introduced contextual admissions, taking a student’s background into account and adjusting required A-level grades, but also recommends that universities should provide detailed breakdowns of spending, to help understand which programmes are effective and value for money.

7. Unconditional Offers Pilot

Executive Board had approved a pilot for the use of Achievement Scholarships in combination with unconditional offers in undergraduate Sport and Exercise Science, Food and Human Nutrition and Music degrees. The results of these pilots would enable the University to establish the impact of achievement scholarships on conversion for students given unconditional offers to inform future undergraduate admissions strategies. SAgE would continue its existing scheme and not participate in the achievement pilot.

8. School of Engineering

After its first year since the Faculty restructuring, the School of Engineering has reported a number of positive indicators, including:
- research income at least £4m higher in 2017-18 than in any of the previous 3 years;
- a Times Higher Education World University ranking of 151-175 for Engineering and Technology – up from 190 in 2017;
- a QS World University ranking of 184 in the world for Engineering and Technology – up 22 places;
- increased rankings for two of the School’s four listed disciplines in the Complete University Guide.

9. Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences

Professor Sharon Mavin, Director of the Newcastle University Business School, and a leading figure in the field of gender in management and leadership, had been made a Fellow of the Academy of Social Scientists. Fellowship is awarded to individuals who had made a significant contribution to the areas of thought leadership, practical application or policy development in the social sciences.

10. Student Loans

The Office for National Statistics had announced that the accounting treatment would change so that student loans which were not expected to be repaid would be recognised in the national deficit when they were issued and only interest which was paid by graduates would be treated as income. The impact of this would be to add an estimated £12bn to the
deficit each year, equivalent to roughly 0.6% of GDP and set to rise as more students enter the system. This would increase the deficit by around 29% annually from its current level of £40.7bn. The accounting change would be implemented from September 2019 and would be retrospectively applied to all historic student loan finance. A change of this scale might mean that the government could be tempted to cut university funding to protect the deficit, but the sector would argue that policy should not be dictated by accounting technicalities.

The University had been preparing detailed scenario planning for eventualities arising from changes to the student loans, as well as the major review of post-18 education and Brexit. Council would have the opportunity to discuss these issues at a future meeting.

*Resolved that Council approve the request for an extension of funding from the George Brown Endowment to support the ongoing work of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace.*

27. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Received the strategic risk register summary report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. There were high net risk scores for ‘Failure to grow research power and intensity’; ‘Failure to maintain financially sustainable pensions provision’; ‘Failure to accurately create, securely manage, securely store data and protect against cyber risks’; and ‘Adverse impact following Fees and Funding Review’.

*Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the risks facing the University were being managed appropriately.*

28. **ENGAGEMENT AND PLACE STRATEGY**

Received the University’s Engagement and Place Strategy from Professor Richard Davies and Professor Julie Sanders, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The strategy concerned how the University would respond to current and future challenges at local, national and global scales by working together both within and without the institution. The University had always recognised the value of engagement but there were now numerous drivers for this type of activity, including the UK’s Industrial Strategy, national media attention around the role of universities and value of higher education, and the UK’s departure from the European Union.

2. The University’s engagement activities were wide ranging and included: co-creation of research; collaboration with businesses; voluntary groups and the creative sector; influencing policy; student placements; and public engagement in its many forms. Place-based activities were locally rooted, nationally connected and globally engaged as the University sought to maximise its global impact through research and education.

3. The specific aims of the strategy were to:
   - Work closely with regional industries and businesses to address their needs including those related to: research and development; business innovation; and
current skill shortages in their workforce and their requirement for appropriately trained graduates through mechanisms such as lifelong learning and professional practice and degree level apprenticeships.

- Be an effective partner for local government, the NHS, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, the public and cultural organisations.
- Use our global reach to increase the international connectivity of our region.
- Contribute to the vibrancy and cultural richness of our region through our expertise in creative arts practice, culture and heritage.
- Equip academic and professional staff with the skills to address policy challenges facing governments locally, nationally and internationally.
- Improve the social mobility of people from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring our education and research is as widely accessible as possible.

4. Two priority approaches would be employed by the University to deliver the aims of the strategy: the University’s place as a “Living Lab”, using its Urban Observatory, estate, incubators, national centres in ageing and data, and farms; and collaborating with partners to co-design solutions, including projects such as the Vital North Partnership, Newcastle City Futures, and Freedom City 2017.

5. Two transformative initiatives, designed to create a step change in the delivery of benefit of research and education outside of the University, had also been identified. These were: leading on the social justice agenda, and developing a culture of public engagement to support better research and education. A Dean of Social Justice had been appointed to lead the development and implementation of a vision and strategy for social justice, and Executive Board had recently agreed to the establishment of a Dean of Place and Partnerships. The University aimed to be a leader in public engagement, maximising the benefits of its research to the public of the North East.

6. The Strategy was ambitious but complex, and it might be necessary to explain it to staff and students in a more concise way and an implementation plan. The University’s Strategy Implementation Group would have a leading role in promoting the Strategy and its associated projects.

7. The University’s approach to engaging for societal benefit involved working in partnership with external stakeholders to understand society’s challenges and applying the University’s expertise in education and research to address them. The University would not be the key player in each partnership, and would need to be clear about its precise role, as well as those of its partners, initiatives linked to the Strategy.

**Resolved that Council approve the Engagement and Place Strategy.**

29. **FACULTY STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORTS**

Received the strategic progress reports from:

a) The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, from by Professor Nigel Harkness, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

b) The Faculty of Medical Sciences, from by Professor David Burn, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

c) The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering from by Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture and Engineering, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document E-G. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Noted that:

1. 2017-18 had seen significant changes to the Faculty leadership team including the appointment of a new Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dean of Research and Innovation, and Dean of Culture and Creative Arts. The Faculty had continued to explore and develop opportunities around School X in collaboration with colleagues in SAgE and Medical Sciences, planning work for a new interdisciplinary undergraduate Liberal Arts and Science offer.

2. A number of Schools had started reviews of their undergraduate and postgraduate provision, supported by the Faculty team and external critical friends, in particular in History and Education. A full postgraduate taught portfolio review had been undertaken in the Business School. Collaboration between faculties would also provide opportunities for building a greater focus on quantitative data skills into the Faculty’s degree programmes.

3. There had been a steady increase in Faculty research income over the past three years, including an increase in research council income, and awards over the past two years were promising of further growth. Large awards reflected the Faculty’s commitment to building connectivity and supporting interdisciplinary research. Major bids had been submitted to further develop partnerships with regional SMEs, particularly in the creative economy and digital fields aligning with Industrial Challenge themes.

4. The Faculty worked with partners to co-design solutions for pressing social and economic needs, one example being its long-standing partnership with regional arts organisations to offer creative arts interventions for people living with dementia and their careers. Existing partnerships in China would be built on to develop further networks to ensure the Faculty could capitalise upon UKRI and British Council grants with China, particularly in the field of the creative economy.

5. Significant contributions to two Global Challenges Research Fund bids had been examples of the types of transformative research that the Faculty was able to undertake in collaboration with global partners. The Faculty was seeking to provide students with an educational experience that embraced student and staff diversity and differing perspectives and backgrounds. This thinking would inform its strategic approach to future international recruitment and marketing efforts in order to broaden undergraduate and taught postgraduate cohorts.

6. Staff engagement with transformative change within the Faculty was encouraged through building ‘bottom-up’ initiatives, such as the review of History provision, and sharing the cultures of high-performing schools. The University’s Engage and Aspire programme was also aimed at encouraging staff to support change.

Faculty of Medical Sciences

Noted that:

1. The Faculty had had a number of significant successes during 2017-18, including the award of Athena SWAN Silver status, the development of Plot 4 on the Richardson Road site to plan more effectively for student number growth, and large research grant success for two NIHR Policy Research Units.

2. There was a desire within the Faculty for continuous improvement to be able to keep pace with its competitors and reach its full potential. This had been highlighted by several factors including:
Over the past four years total research income had remained relatively flat despite an increased pool of external funding, leading to an overall decline in market share. Since 2013/14 the proportion of publications in the top 10% most highly cited by field had stagnated. Collaborative research within the Faculty was neither as broad nor as deep as might be seen in a truly interdisciplinary organisation. The need to improve Faculty communication and marketing to present the Faculty’s strengths and activities in a coordinated manner. A steady decline in home and international postgraduate research applications since 2014/15.

3. In view of the above, the Faculty had commissioned an external review of its activities in June 2018 which largely confirmed the Faculty’s own findings and recommended a review of structures. The Faculty had subsequently undertaken a significant engagement and consultation exercise which found that staff were generally supportive of the need to change structurally and culturally. The Faculty would therefore approach Senate early in the New Year with a formal request to restructure.

4. The Faculty was developing a BSc in Dietetics that would complement its BSc Nutrition related programmes and better align the provision with strategic aims.

5. Following the creation of a new medical school in Sunderland, the Faculty had worked constructively with Sunderland University, together with local partner trusts and schools, to reaffirm Newcastle’s position as a regional medical school and ensure its offer was distinctive and of the highest quality.

6. Due to expanding student numbers NUMed was considering alternative venues for assessment from June 2019, and was awaiting approval of a bid to provide new research laboratory space, and exploring the feasibility of delivering PhD programmes.

Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering

Noted that:

1. Implementation of the Science and Engineering Excellence vision had been the main priority of 2017-18. The new Faculty structure was embedding and some challenges remained, but there had also been examples of collaboration and join-up across the Faculty enabled by the reorganisation.

2. Key challenges for the forthcoming year were addressing the recognition and requirement for culture change, promoting a team-based approach to drive excellence, increasing research and teaching income, and building the Faculty’s external profile and reputation. The Faculty welcomed an EBITDA target, rather than a student number target, to help it to be more proactive and strategic in its decision-making.

3. All Schools were engaged in portfolio and curriculum review with the aim of enhancing the attractiveness and relevant of degree programmes to an international market. Academic international champions had been established in each School to implement an international recruitment strategy.

4. Significant research achievements included valuable research partnerships with the Alan Turing Institute, Faraday Institute and UK Collaboratorium for Research on Infrastructure and Cities and projects funded by the EPSRC. In 2018-19 the Faculty would focus support on active applicants with lower funding success rates and enhancing training for academic colleagues.
5. The Faculty had appointed a Dean of Engagement and Internationalisation to develop strategy and define what engagement with non-academic organisations should be established.

6. It was the Faculty’s aim to accelerate progress with raising its international profile. Areas of strength such as data, energy and water would be given particular emphasis. The Faculty was also seeking to establish the University in Singapore as a regional hub for South East Asia with a reputation for excellence in research and teaching and a strong record of engagement with Singapore’s top universities and industry.

30. LEAZES TERRACE

Received a report from Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. At its meeting in December 2017, Council approved a review of the Accommodation Services Strategic Plan, which covers the period 2017 to 2021. The aim of the plan was to ensure that the University achieved the right mix of residential stock to meet student preferences through a balance of new build, refurbishment and private sector stock that is financially prudent and affordable. Some of our older residences, where the works required to bring the properties up to the required standard did not provide value for money, were recommended for closure. Leazes Terrace Halls of Residence was identified in the plan for closure in September 2019.

2. The University had requested unconditional offers for the property to avoid protracted planning issues or offers of occupational leases. The highest offer made on these terms was £7.2m and it was proposed that this offer be accepted.

Resolved that Council authorise the Executive Director of Finance and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to execute any agreements required to complete the sale.

31. PERFORMANCE REPORT

Received a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Council was presented with the first bi-annual summary of University performance against the new Vision and Strategy. Council had endorsed a framework for monitoring the new Vision and Strategy in June 2018. This was based on c.15 high-level indicators that would be colour-coded as Red/Amber/Amber-Green/Green for both past performance and forward trajectory. The assessment of each indicator would be based on underlying metrics, strategic risks and milestones.

2. In support of the University’s overall Vision and Strategy, and following Council’s approval of a new Education Strategy in June 2018 and a new Research Strategy in July 2018, consultation had taken place with the University Education Committee (UEC) and the University Research Committee (URC) to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and underlying metrics.

3. It was anticipated that similar KPIs would be developed for the Engagement and Place Strategy and the Global Strategy following approval of these documents. Future iterations
4. Performance reporting had been streamlined with a reduction in the total number of metrics and the integration of strategic risks and milestones to provide a more holistic overview of performance. Future Faculty Strategic Progress Reports to Council would include detailed benchmarking information.

5. Progress against the University’s four supporting strategies would be monitored regularly by the committees of Senate. Cross-cutting issues would be monitored by the Strategy Implementation Group, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The committees of both Senate and Council would continue to receive more detailed management information. Key issues arising from the analysis of management information would be reported to Council.

Resolved that Council endorse the bi-annual performance report.

32. PREVENT ANNUAL REPORT

Received the Prevent Annual Report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The Office for Students had introduced a data-based return as part of a more risk-based approach to monitoring registered providers. The return included accountability data and a signed declaration from the Chair of Council. The data needed for the return had been collated alongside a review of the University Prevent Risk Assessment. The Chair of Council had confirmed that he was satisfied that the University continued to show due regard and actively complied with the Prevent Duty.

Resolved that Council approve the Prevent Annual Report.

33. REPORT FROM AUDIT, RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Received the report from the meeting of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee held on 21 November 2018.

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

Noted that:

1. The Committee had held detailed conversations with the Vice-Chancellor and President and Executive Director of Corporate Affairs on the Public Value of Higher Education, and with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Executive Director of Finance, and Registrar, on the University’s approach to maintaining World Class Facilities.

34. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 4 December 2018.

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

1. Student numbers in total were marginally better than budget, however forecast tuition fees were worse than budget. This was the result of the mix of students with the impact of higher than budgeted Home/EU undergraduates more than offset by the shortfall in non-EU taught postgraduate students and higher than budgeted numbers of intercalating students who paid a lower fee. The lower income performance would be offset by cost savings and contingency release.

2. Research income was down year on year and below budget, but the University was aware of a number of large new awards expected to be signed during the next six months.

3. Staff growth had slowed and this would have an adverse impact on student-staff ratios. This was primarily due to a tighter labour market and delays created by University recruitment systems and processes which were being addressed.

4. The draft TRAC return for 2017/18 would be considered by Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee at its meeting in January 2019, prior to final approval by the Vice-Chancellor and President.

5. The University’s Taxation Strategy and guiding principles had been reviewed and endorsed. The Committee recommended that the Strategy should emphasise that University principles followed HM Revenue and Customs taxation guidelines.

6. Finance Committee had reviewed and endorsed the Strategic Enablers document, which would be presented to Council for discussion in February 2019.

7. The Socially Responsible Investment Policy had been updated to clarify the University’s aim to divest from thermal coal and oil/tar sand companies and all other non-progressive oil and gas companies by 2021. The Carbon Advisory Group had been reconvened to establish an agreed articulation of the University’s definition of ‘non-progressive’ companies.

8. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) Trustee had considered the responses to the statutory employee consultation and decided to implement the proposed changes without amendment. This meant that contributions would increase from April 2019, beginning with a 0.8% increase in employee and 1.5% increase in employer contributions. The Trustee needed to undertake a final employer consultation prior to completion of the March 2017 valuation relating to the recovery plan and schedule of contributions. A response from the University was required by 10 January 2019, and a copy of the University’s proposed response would be circulated to members of Council. The completed valuation would then be submitted to The Pensions Regulator for approval.

9. The Trustee had supported five out of the seven changes proposed by the Joint Expert Panel to resolve the short-term USS valuation issues, with the two not supported being the proposals to delay investment de-risking and smooth contributions over two valuation periods. The University did not agree with this position and would progress its concerns as part of its response to the March 2018 valuation proposed by the Trustee enabling them to implement the JEP recommendations that they were minded to accept.

10. The March 2018 valuation would lead to increased University costs of c. £4.8m per annum, and early indications suggested that The Pensions Regulator was minded to accept the valuation on this basis. An employer’s consultation on the March 2018 valuation would run until mid-February 2019 and Council should therefore have the
opportunity to discuss the draft University response prior to submission at its meeting on 11 February 2019. Failing this, an alternative mechanism for enabling Council to consider the response will be agreed with the Chair of Council.

11. The University had so far received one offer for the monetisation of Rubraca, promising lower than expected receipts. There were clear market messages that Rubraca was not seen as a high value opportunity primarily due to the larger capital behind three other products and the key competitor being earlier to market. Clovis, the manufacturer of Rubraca, was seen as a higher risk company which impacted on the discount rate being offered. A further meeting of the Monetisation Committee would take place on 19 December 2018.

35. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Nominations Committee held on 19 November 2018.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

36. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received the Executive Remuneration Policy.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The policy clarified and confirmed current practice in line with the Committee of University Chair’s Senior Remuneration Code, and no material changes were proposed. In drafting the document, the opportunity had been taken to more tightly define the accountabilities of the Remuneration Committee and to clarify the approval process for salary decisions for new appointments.

2. Two minor amendments were suggested: the first regarding academic positions on Executive Board (paragraph 5.1.9) and clarification around the notice period; and the second relating to non-consolidated payments (paragraph 5.2.2) which should be subject to approval by Remuneration Committee.

Resolved that Council approve the Executive Remuneration Policy, subject to the amendments proposed.

37. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 11 October 2018.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Following a referendum, Newcastle University Students’ Union had voted not to reinstate its membership of the National Union of Students.

2. There had been an agreement with Northumbria University to cancel the 2018-19 Stan Calvert Cup. The current format for the varsity was that eligibility for teams was based upon competing in BUCS. As Northumbria University had consistently reduced their BUCS programme over the past few years, the number of teams participating had vastly reduced, a position that was regarded as untenable the Newcastle University Students’ Union.

38. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT 2017-18
Received a presentation from Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, and Raff Marioni, President of the Newcastle University Students’ Union.

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

39. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY AND POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2018

Received a report on the National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2018.

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

Noted that:

1. The University’s absolute scores in the National Student Survey had fallen across all of the question domains, continuing a trend that started in 2017. Additionally, the University’s performance against its institutional benchmarks calculated by the Office for Students emphasised this downward trend. Newcastle was in the bottom quartile of full service universities for results in assessment and feedback, and in the third quartile for performance on teaching.

2. A similar pattern of declining absolute and relative performance was also evident in this year’s Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey results. This was accompanied by poorer relative performance against the rest of the sector.

3. While individual subject areas did continue to achieve strong results in these surveys, overall institutional results were showing a worrying trend of decline. The only area where Newcastle’s results were in the top quartile of universities compared to full service universities was learning resources, with core areas of education, such as teaching and assessment and feedback, showing particularly concerning absolute and/or comparative performance. Quartile performances in relation to other Russell Group universities were more positive, however, no matter how the comparator group is defined the University was in the third quartile for performance on teaching. Nevertheless, the University could point to a number of other markers, such as its ranking of 9th in the Times Higher Education Europe Teaching Rankings, that demonstrated that its teaching was of a high quality.

4. Academic units were considering their survey results leading to individual action plans that would be including in Annual Monitoring and Review reports. The PVC Education, Faculty Deans and Deputy Director of Academic Services would also be meeting with some specific subject areas to discuss their results.

40. BUILDING NAMES

Received a report from Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Council was invited to approve the following:
   - Black Horse House, the new home for NUIT, should be renamed the Elizabeth Barraclough Building
   - Claremont Tower, Claremont Bridge and the Daysh Building should be renamed as the Henry Daysh Building to reflect its unitary status after the refurbishment project
   - Room 9.14 of Claremont Tower should be named in memory of Mary Midgley
- The Claremont Building should be renamed as the Sir Terry Farrell Building
- The Innovation Centre building at Newcastle Helix should be named The Catalyst
- The “Plot 4” education building should be named The Margaret Barbour Building
- A significant room in the “Plot 4” building (probably the main lecture theatre) should be named in memory of Ethel Williams
- The Learning and Teaching Centre at Newcastle Helix should be named The Frederick Douglass Centre

Resolved that Council approve the proposed names.

41. CAMPUS FOR AGEING AND VITALITY

Received an update from Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Due to the proximity of existing University buildings and the combined University, City and Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust initiative to progress the Ageing agenda as part of the Industrial Strategy challenge, the University had expressed an interest in the site. A high-level option for the potential future use of the site had been developed which would protect the University’s academic interests.

2. Emerging University thinking for the Campus for Ageing and Vitality site had been discussed by the Estates Capital Strategic Planning Committee and had been usefully informed by expert guidance from external members of that committee.

3. The Trust wished to dispose of the site within their current financial year (by 31 March 2019) and there were two realistic options for a special purchased to acquire the site: purchase by the University, which would be part funded by a philanthropic gift of £5m, or purchase by Homes England for residential development. The valuation of the site based on the current state was approximately £7.5m.

Resolved that Council approve proceeding with negotiations to acquire the site.

42. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGIC PLAN AND KPIs

Received a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. A key component of the development and delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan was collaboration between the Occupational Health and Safety Service and Student Health and Wellbeing Service to ensure a consistent approach was taken in respect of health and wellbeing initiatives for both staff and students.

Resolved that Council approve the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan and Key Performance Indicators.

43. ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS

Received a report on proposed donations from The Heritage Lottery Fund and Sir Terry Farrell.

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

13
Resolved that Council approved the acceptance of the donations.

44. REVIEW OF STUDENT RENTS

Received a proposal for student rents for 2019/20.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document W. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Council approve the proposals for student rents for 2019/20.

45. SUMMARY REPORT FROM SENATE, 20 NOVEMBER 2018

Received a report from the meeting of Senate, held on 20 November 2018.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document X. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

46. ANNUAL ASSURANCE RETURN

Received the University’s Annual Assurance Return to the Office for Students.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document Y. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

47. NU WOMEN ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Received the NU Women Annual Report for 2017-18.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document Z. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

48. EXTERNAL SPEAKER POLICY

Received the University’s External Speaker Policy.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document AA. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

49. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Received revised Terms of Reference for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document BB. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

50. COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT 2017-18

Received the Council Effectiveness Questionnaire Report 2017-18.
  [Circulated with the agenda as Document CC. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

51. 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 DD. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

Council recorded its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.