Present: The Chancellor (in the Chair), Vice-Chancellor, Mr Alan Clarke, Mr Andrew Davison, Mr Colin Fitzpatrick, Mr David Flory, Mrs Olivia Grant, Ms Sarah Green, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Mick Henry, Mr Mark I’Anson, Mr Antony Jones, Miss Florence Kirkby, Professor Patrick Lavery, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mr Richard Maudslay, Mr Hector MacDonald, Mrs Helen McArdle, Dr David Moffatt, Ms Lorna Moran, Ms Fiona O’Connor, Ms Sue Pearson, Baroness Joyce Quin, Mr Ronnie Reid, Sir George Russell, Mr Mark Scrimshaw, Sir Nigel Sherlock, Professor Mark Shucksmith, Mr Greg Smith, Mr Michael Stephenson, Ms Sarah Stewart, Professor Phil Taylor, Dr Robert Teoh, Ms Hannah Underwood and Mr Rob Williamson

In attendance: Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Alice Lang (Executive Assistant) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

The Chair welcomed Professor Helen Berry who attended the meeting of Court in her role as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Chair congratulated our longest serving Honorary Member of Court, Miss Florence Kirkby, on her candidacy in the recent Local Council elections.

The Chair asked Court to remember Professor Paul Younger, former Pro-Vice-Chancellor and member of Court, who died last month.

The Chair asked Professor Phil Taylor to introduce the venue for the meeting to members of Court. Professor Taylor noted that he had been involved in the design of the building which now houses our School of Computing. It was noted that the building is a research laboratory in itself which measures air quality, thermal performance and rain water flows and members would be able to look at 3D Urban Observatory data following the meeting. The building has a sustainable drainage system developed with Northumbrian Water and solar panels which can measure energy usage. The building is also a base for the EPSRC National Centre for Energy Systems Integration, directed by Professor Taylor, which is a resource for industry and academia.

1. MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document A)
2. REPORTS FROM COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Received:

(a) First Report from Court Steering Committee
(b) Second Report from Court Steering Committee
(c) Third Report from Court Steering Committee

(Circulated with the agenda as Documents B, C and C)

Noted that:

Ms Claire Morgan was unable to attend her last meeting of Court and the University wished to record its gratitude to Mrs Morgan for her role as Court member, Chair of Court Steering Committee and for her willingness to continue in both roles for a further year following her appointment to Council to aid succession planning.

Resolved that:

Membership of Court Steering Committee

i. Mr Rob Williamson be appointed Chair of Court Steering Committee for one year in the first instance, as his current term of office on Court is due to end on 31 July 2019.

ii. Ms Sarah Stewart be appointed as a member of Court Steering Committee for a period of two years in the first instance as her current term of office on Court will end in July 2020.

Lay Membership of Court

i. The following members be re-appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2018 until 31 July 2021, subject to their willingness to continue to serve:

   Ms Parveen Akhtar  
   Mr Alan Clarke  
   Professor Patrick Lavery  
   Ms Pummi Mattu  
   Ms Lorna Moran  
   Ms Chi Onwruah  
   Mr Jonathan Parkinson  
   Dr Robert Teoh  
   Ms Angela Woodburn  
   Mr Paul Woolston

ii. The following be appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2018 until 31 July 2021, subject to their willingness to serve:

   Ann Marie Cairns, Newcastle University Graduate (MSc Medical Statistics 1979), President, International Markets, MasterCard Worldwide  
   Lil Collingham, Newcastle University Graduate (BA History, 2010), North East Director, Teach First
Hilary Florek, Newcastle University Graduate (BA Hons English Literature, 1984), Chair of the Marine Management Organisation.

iii. That two other candidates be held in reserve and offered membership of Court should one of the individuals in (b) above decline.

Honorary Fellowships 2018

Honorary Fellowships should be conferred on the following candidates at an Awards Ceremony and Dinner to be held on 8 October 2018:

Mrs Veryan Johnston
Lord Frank Judd

3. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY’S ENERGY RESEARCH

Received:

A presentation on the University’s Energy Research from Professor Phil Taylor, Head of Engineering and Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering. (The slides from the presentation have been published on the Court web pages at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/executive/governance/court/presentations.htm)

Noted that:

Presentation

1. Since the first Science Central (now Newcastle Helix) plans were made there has been a tremendous advance with some of the proposed buildings now open for business with more under construction.

2. The presentation focussed on what we call the ‘Urban Energy Trilemma’, which is articulated by three key challenges making energy affordable, sustainable and secure.

3. Research is addressing a 4D Energy Challenge – Decarbonisation, Decentralisation, Digitalisation and Democratisation.

4. Research is multidisciplinary, particularly in the £20m EPSRC National Centre for Energy Systems Integration, a consortium of 5 research intensive universities working with Siemens and other industry partners to co-ordinate all energy research in the UK.

5. We are also part of an £11m Supergen Energy Networks Hub.

6. The University is also a partner in the £65m Faraday Institution, funded by the Industrial Society Challenge Fund, where we are working with other universities particularly researching battery technology and how it can facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy.

7. The Urban Sciences Building is also a power plant supplying some surplus energy for the city as a whole.

8. The University is also one of only 13 universities in the world to have Global Partnership status with Siemens.
9. In 2017 29% of the UK’s electricity came from renewable energy and windfarms are now cheaper and more effective than nuclear plants. However demand outstrips the capacity of the network.

10. The current UK energy sector is fragmented across many dimensions – within industry, government, academia and between each of these sectors. Only a limited amount can be achieved separately and a more holistic approach needs to be taken across all sectors.

11. Energy costs are too high for some sectors of society and industry, security of supply is variable with remote areas poorly served, there are cyber security vulnerabilities, the impact of climate change and potential issues arising from geo-political events also present challenges.

12. Predictions show that by 2050 80% of people will be living in urban environments so we are focussing much of our energy research on cities.

13. The electricity and gas distribution networks are completely separate but there needs to be more integration such as hydrogen generated by windfarms going back into the National Grid and academia needs to ensure that private energy companies work together more.

14. The University’s energy research and digitalisation is using artificial intelligence and data science, though our work with the Alan Turing Institute, to deal with uncertainty and complexity in energy systems. We are also focussing research on electric vehicles with smart charging releasing vehicle energy back into the National Grid.

15. In addition we are working on autonomic energy systems which are self-organising and self-healing.

16. The University is creating a digital twin of the UK’s energy system and working to improve cyber security for energy systems.

17. The next week will see the launch of Mindsphere, a Cloud Enabled Systems Lab created in partnership with Siemens.

18. By 2020 we hope to have autonomic energy systems in place which will be self-organising, self-healing and self-protecting with algorithm selection creating the optimum energy system.

19. There are many challenges ahead and many possible futures but flexibility is the key, with new ways of working and new skills required to meet the challenges. Collaboration between academia, government, and industry will be crucial.

20. Honesty, leadership and willingness to take risks will be important factors in the need to accelerate progress.

Discussion

1. The next five years are likely to see the further marginalisation or disappearance of the coal industry in the UK with an expansion in the off-shore industry and the blending of natural gas and green hydrogen.

2. The importance of involving undergraduate students in our energy research was stressed and it was confirmed that this is already achieved through the use of our energy research
facilities for teaching, student research and the use of case studies to set undergraduate project assignments. Students have been involved with designing energy systems on the Helix and at Cockle Park through site visits and data provision, followed by learning and teaching exercises.

3. Government target setting does not always achieve the required outcomes, with lack of will to be tough on the energy sector and it was noted that generating a building boom for housing is not enough in itself; designing and building energy efficient homes is crucial. In addition, successive governments have not introduced building regulations tough enough to lead to more energy efficient housing. The University is currently working with the North East Housing Association together with Legal and General to promote more energy efficient buildings and has already worked with Gateshead Council to build more low carbon, energy efficient housing.

4. In terms of low carbon energy it is better to build new as retro-fitting is costly and does not achieve optimum efficiencies. Once again a holistic approach is best as, for example, with poorly heated tower blocks leading to costly health issues for the residents.

5. Private landlords are also crucial to the issue of better energy efficiency as, without government incentives or enforceable regulations, they will not see this as a priority in their properties. In addition Combined Heat and Power Systems (CHP) are not always conducive to private homes.

6. The University’s Cockle Park Farm has a weak grid connection due to its rural setting and, working with academics and students in agriculture, the University has installed an anaerobic digester to recycle farm waste.

7. The University’s energy research is used for commercial purposes in terms of selling energy unused by Cockle Park, the provision of University technology in commercial apps and through the work of our Industrial Innovation Board which shares our ideas with commercial partners. Links between academia and industry are also fostered by the University’s participation in the national Energy Systems Catapult programme.

8. The unethical culture within the oil industry continues and it is difficult for academia to influence this, though the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals present an opportunity for change.

9. The monopoly culture within industry is also a barrier to change but the University is working with commercial companies to develop algorithms for a more efficient phone system and we are influencing the Regulator to deal with monopoly issues.

10. Our energy research outreach is evidenced through the University’s role as an enabler in the creation of Gateshead Council’s Northern Energy Centre and globally, Professor Taylor is advising the Singapore government on sustainability issues.

11. The lifecycle of energy infrastructures is around 40-50 years and changes in government, powerful competing commercial interests and the time taken to embed new innovations present challenges to achieving optimum sustainability.

12. The University’s commitment to sustainable energy is evidenced by having a policy now in place to divest from any companies who do not have a clear sustainability strategy, showing a willingness to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
13. It is important to maximise energy research impact in reputational terms and Professor Taylor confirmed that he had just returned from Hong Kong where he had presented to their Scientific Advisory Board. It was also confirmed that energy research is one of the key strategic areas to be promoted in the University’s new Vision and Strategy.

14. Global vested interests are a barrier to change with private companies still making huge profits from fossil fuels.

15. Scandinavia is currently leading the way in energy efficiency with 70% of Denmark’s energy use being renewable and hydroelectric power generated in Norway also benefitting neighbouring countries.

16. The importance of educating future generations was stressed as the power to influence and enthuse primary school pupils in this subject could have a positive long-term impact and counteract the general lack of public understanding of sustainable energy issues.

17. Professor Taylor does give a number of annual talks in schools but stressed the importance of PhD students who seem to connect well with school pupils in this regard. A recent project, whereby students and school pupils made films to be shown at a specially arranged film festival on sustainable energy was highlighted as a success in this area.

18. The need to attract more women into the academic and industrial energy space was noted.

Resolved that:

Professor Taylor be thanked for his informative and stimulating presentation and it was noted that he personally, and our energy research are a great asset to the University.

4. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

Received:

A report from the Vice-Chancellor and President on current issues within the University.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document E)

Noted that:

1. The launch of the new Vision and Strategy has been postponed due to the recent industrial action. It was stressed that, following on from the excellent presentation just received, the University’s energy research will be one of 5 beacons of excellence highlighted.

2. Industrial action has been suspended pending the findings of an expert panel which is considering the difficult issues arising from the pension scheme valuation. The Joint Negotiating Committee of employers and trade union members will meet in September to consider the findings of the panel but there are still difficult times ahead for the University and for the sector as a whole.

3. The new Higher Education Minister, Sam Gyimah, has launched a major review of post-18 education focussed on improving accessibility, choice, competition, skills provision and value
for students and taxpayers. The possibility of the introduction of differential fees would present a huge challenge to the sector and this arises from a public and media perception of an unfair system. The Government is considering the reintroduction of maintenance loans although it was noted that student loan debt is not part of the budget deficit.

4. The Vice-Chancellor congratulated all concerned with the seamless transfer of the School of Pharmacy from Durham University, which now sees Newcastle University with one of the few medical schools to include Pharmacy in its provision.

5. The University’s success in securing HEFCE Catalyst Funding is a perfect example of the University’s response to industry’s concerns, with the School of Computing contributing to upskilling the workforce to address the national data analytics skills shortage with the creation of an industry-led Data Science MSc programme.

6. The University had also been awarded a share of £1.5m by HEFCE to improve support for the mental health and wellbeing of postgraduate research students.

7. Both international and home students are happy with the University’s provision as evidenced by the International Student Barometer 2017 results, with a 93% satisfaction rating, together with the recently published Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey results, which ranked the University 7th in the UK for student experience.

8. Newcastle University is the first winner of the NICE AdviSeME Prize for its novel prognostic skin cancer test. This represents a success in the commercialisation of our research with a spin-out company to market this healthcare product in due course.

9. An event was held in February to celebrate the discovery of Rubraca, a life-extending drug in the treatment of ovarian cancer. The future licensing of the drug in Europe and the US represents a huge income generation and reputational opportunity for the University.

10. A bionic hand, developed by biomedical engineers at the University, that can ‘see’ objects and pick them up by itself has won a prestigious 2018 Netexpo UNESCO Award. Selected from over 2,000 innovations from around the world, the ‘hand that sees; has been given the award of recognition of its “potential to have a profound and lasting impact on society”.

11. Together with Durham, Northumbria and Sunderland universities, Newcastle has been awarded £4.9m by the government to form the Northern Accelerator, which will build upon the success of university spin-out companies and encourage more start-ups.

12. Professor Nigel Harkness, currently Head of the School of Modern Languages, has been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with effect from 1 September 2018.

13. A high proportion of the resident population of Jesmond are students and, following a year-long initiative to help improve relations with residents, the University and the Students’ Union had launched the Best Neighbour on Campus award. The introduction of the award had resulted in some negative press which criticised the need for such an initiative, rather than the fall in numbers of complaints and better relations with residents which had resulted.
Discussion

1. The industrial action resulting from the USS pension deficit was the most painful issue for the University in recent years. The pension scheme created by Parliament in the 1970s now faced financial challenges due to longer life expectancy and the financial crisis of 2007-8. A number of miscommunications of the issues put out on social media, together with USS’s under-communication of the complexity of the situation, had not helped an already difficult situation. It was noted that continuing publicity surrounding the salaries of senior staff does not facilitate good industrial relations.

2. Brexit could potentially have a detrimental impact on our Widening Participation goals. The government’s own impact assessments had predicted a severe impact on our region as a whole and the University needs to utilise the expertise and contacts of its lay members of Court to ensure that the needs of the sector are communicated at every level. It was noted that currently EU student application numbers are buoyant but the University had recently lost one of its leading academics due to Brexit. The University will continue to work to mitigate the impact of Brexit on Widening Participation students.

5. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S QUESTIONS

Received from Olivia Grant:

Some years ago there was discussion of moving to offer two year degree courses, but this was not felt to be useful or appropriate in the context of the nature of studying at Newcastle University. Given the recent press coverage of potential reviews of the overarching government related governance and funding structures for Higher Education in England, have members of the University senior executive or VC had any further thoughts on this matter? What are the hopes of the University of what might be achieved by the review into HE?"

Received from David Moffatt:

I would like to hear of progress on Advancement’s ‘Branches’ programme. The last information that I am aware of is that Advancement was to further address supporting branches overseas (Singapore and Hong Kong) and discuss with Union officers which student societies would be interested in an alumni chapter and was to procure a platform to facilitate this. An update on this would be welcomed.

I am sure many of us watched the programme on Universities’ spending, particularly targeting Vice-Chancellors (27-02-18). Did the University make any formal response individually or as part of a group?

Received:

Oral responses from the Vice-Chancellor.

Noted that:

Response to Olivia Grant’s question

1. The University’s Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC), has considered the government’s consultation on the proposed revised model for funding accelerated, two-year undergraduate degrees.
• That undertaking an undergraduate degree in two years would very significantly reduce the opportunity for students to engage in the extra- and co-curricular opportunities offered by the University. These activities made significant contributions to the broader education and development opportunities available to students. Reducing the opportunity for students to take such opportunities was not consistent with the commitments in the draft Education Strategy to support the holistic development of students. There were particular concerns about the impact of this for students from non-traditional backgrounds, as the co- and extra-curricular activities offered this group significant opportunities to develop the networks, and social and cultural capital that would support them in developing their future careers.

• That offering accelerated, two-year undergraduate degrees had significant implications for staff. Any move towards such a model would require significant increases in academic staff numbers, to allow the additional teaching required while also ensuring that staff were able to take annual leave and undertake research and scholarship.

• That there was little evidence of significant untapped demand in England for accelerated, two-year undergraduate degrees.

• That there were likely to be significant additional further costs arising from accelerated degrees, which were not accounted for in the DfE’s proposed revised financial model (for example increased needs for extended 24/7 provision of learning resources and study facilities). Furthermore such provision would be likely to require significant development of underlying IT systems and business processes by the University, all of which would incur cost.

2. Members of ULTSEC identified a number of significant issues and challenges arising from offering accelerated, two-year undergraduate degrees: It was also noted that the University currently offered two-year undergraduate degrees through Newcastle University Singapore, which was in response to a very specific context and circumstances. The University should not rule out offering two-year undergraduate degrees where a similarly strong strategic case was demonstrated.

3. ULTSEC resolved that the University should remain open to the possibility of offering two-year degrees in specific, appropriate circumstances, but that there was no appetite for a broader development of such degrees.

Response to David Moffatt’s question 1

1. The University continues to support the recruitment, communication and activities of various branches e.g. Blue Star (Boat Club Alumni Society); the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Graduate Society North of England (UNuTGS), a local membership (fee charging) society; the US Friends of Newcastle upon Tyne; Newcastle and Durham Medics; the Agrics Society; NUBS alumni branches.

2. We have registered the Hong Kong alumni ‘chapter’ and Dr Lawrence Li (MBBS, 1977) has agreed to Chair this group, we are in the process of helping them put an annual programme together that will have a professional development/networking focus.

3. Dr Robert Teoh is advising us on the requirements to establish an alumni ‘chapter’ in Singapore where legal formalities are required to establish such bodies.
4. We have proposed a retired staff ‘chapter’, and Cathryn Harvey, former Academic Registrar, has been leading on this.

5. An online platform to facilitate alumni special interest groups and chapters has been procured and is in the process of being implemented. There is a task and finish group comprising Careers, NUSU and alumni staff to oversee this. The platform will also facilitate alumni to student and alumni e-mentoring; access to online library resources; an alumni e-directory.

6. We also have an ‘international alumni rep’ role, and where there are more than 5 reps in a region, we will explore the creation of a ‘chapter’.

Discussion

1. Following the dissolution of the Alumni Consultative Group in 2014, which was not well communicated to Alumni, there is no pathway for feedback from the Alumni apart from the annual Convocation meeting.

2. The University values the role of Alumni and is working to ensure that their views are fed into the University through representation on key committees. The benefits of this were clear in the Chair of Convocation’s *ex officio* membership of Court, together with a number of lay members from the Alumni community, with their important contributions to these discussions.

Response to David Moffatt’s question 2

In preparation for Channel 4’s programme on University spending, the journalist in question was provided with details of the total sums claimed in expenses by the members of Executive Board from 2008 to the present date. This information is extracted from the University’s electronic expenses system with a request to note that some of the travel expenses claimed by the members of Executive Board may be externally funded by third party organisations and the costs of the trips are reimbursed by them after the event. Newcastle University was not featured in the programme, which assumes that there was nothing adverse for the journalist to report.

Resolved that:

A report on future communication between the University and the Alumni be received by Court at its next meeting.

6. **PAST COURT PRESENTATIONS: UPDATES FOR MEMBERS**

Received a briefing paper updating Court on the presentation received by Court at its meeting in May 2016, delivered by Professor Nick Wright on Science Central.

(Circulated with the agenda as Document F)

7. **SEALING REGISTER: [STATUTE 17(1)(b) – COMMON SEAL]**

Reported that:

(a) In accordance with Statute 17(1)(b), one of the powers of Court is ‘to make regulations for the custody and use of the common seal of the University’.
(b) Court agreed In October 2008 that entries in the Sealing Register should be certified by the Vice-Chancellor or a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or another member of Court as well as by the Registrar or the Executive Director of Finance or Director of Estates.

Considered:

A recommendation that, with immediate effect, the Head of Legal Services and Intellectual Property be authorised to certify entries in the Sealing Register in addition to the Registrar, the Executive Director of Finance and the Director of Estates.

Resolved that:

The above recommendation on the use of the Sealing Register be approved.

8. HONORARY DEGREES

Reported that:

Honorary Degrees Committee invites nominations in writing for the following year's Congregations. Any member of Court, Council or Academic Board or of the alumni present at meetings of Convocation at which the request for nominations is tabled, may make a nomination, and support for nominees for honorary degrees should be sought only from these bodies. Where several members make a joint nomination, one should be shown as the nominator and the others as supporters.

Received:

Principles for the award of Honorary Degrees outline the criteria for awarding honorary degrees and should be consulted before making a nomination.

The Committee welcomes nominees from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Nominations for 2019 will close on 18 June 2018. To make a nomination please complete an Honorary Degree Nomination Form.

(Circulated with the agenda as Documents G and H)

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None raised.

10. MEETINGS 2018-19

Reported that:

(a) Meetings of Court in the forthcoming academic year will be held on:

- Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 1030
- Friday 10 May 2019 at 1030
(b) Court Steering Committee has agreed that a presentation on Graduate Employability and Student Entrepreneurship should be the main item on the agenda for the October meeting.

(c) This year’s Honorary Fellowship Awards event will be held on Monday 8 October 2018. Members are asked to note the date at this stage, with invitations to follow in due course.