Election of Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation

Background

At the meeting of Convocation in June 2018 notice was given of the need to hold elections to appoint a Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation. The electoral procedures were to be determined by Court in accordance with statute 43 which states that:

‘The convocation, from its own members, shall elect a Chair and may elect a Deputy Chair, under procedures as the Court may from time to time decide.’

Voting on this and other questions are governed by statute 49 where it is decreed that:

‘All questions in the convocation shall be determined by the votes of the majority of the numbers present and voting’.

It was noted that Convocation has grown enormously in numbers and geographical spread with currently 60% of the alumni body aged 40 or below and 30% based outside of the UK. However, there has been a considerable decline in attendance at Convocation in recent years.

At its meeting in October 2018, Court agreed to establish a working group mandated to propose an election procedure to be used which enabled greater engagement with, and representation of, the wider body of Newcastle University’s global alumni in the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair at the annual meeting of Convocation.

Key Principles

The key principles agreed by the working group for the Chair and Deputy of Convocation election process are as follows:

- A transparent and open process
- Reflecting the international and demographic nature of Newcastle University’s alumni
- Giving people the opportunity to engage globally, through the branch network
- Enabling all alumni to have the opportunity to become the Chair of Convocation

Eligibility

The working group addressed the two key elements of eligibility on which hinge the principles given above

Eligibility to Vote

The election process has to operate within the parameters of the University’s statutes; therefore in accordance with statute 49, election of the Chair and Deputy will continue to take place at the meeting of Convocation in Newcastle. However as noted above the number attending this has declined while the number of alumni and their geographical spread has grown. Therefore the working group recommends that eligibility to vote be extended to gatherings of alumni held contemporaneously at remote locations. This will include branch members who will be viewed on screen during the meeting.

The University has facilities for the meeting to broadcast remotely and to engage a limited number of alumni in a voting process. The meeting can be broadcast both with audio and visual through
Recap using the Curtis Auditorium. This would allow recognised branches to have a video conference style experience. For example, our alumni in Hong Kong could gather and participate remotely with the branch co-ordinator acting as the returning officer on site.

Eligibility to be nominated for chair and deputy chair

A clear role description will be produced and will include the requirements for the role, for example the number of times the role holder will need to be physically present on Newcastle campus per annum.

To be eligible for nomination a candidate must:

Be nominated by 10 individual members of Convocation (having sought permission of the nominee)

Election procedure

Nomination period shall open one working day after confirmation of the process by Court and close at midnight (GMT) Friday 4th October.

All nominations are to be received via email. Nominations should include a candidate statement written by the nominee (maximum of 150 words.) Nomination email address to be confirmed on agreement with NUIT.

The ballot will take place on the day of election, at Convocation on Saturday 12th October 2019.

Ms Lil Collingham-Clark
Ms Sarah Green
Dr David Moffatt
14/3/19