Vision 2021: A World-class Civic University

Strategic Overview

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– on behalf of the Strategy Group, Executive Board, Senate, and the Heads of Academic and Service Units Forum

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1 Background

Newcastle upon Tyne is one of the oldest university towns in England in the sense that there has been teaching in it for an internal university qualification for longer than in any English town except Oxford, Cambridge, London and Durham. It is also the only town in England where university teaching began in the faculty of Medicine.

… In a practical every day sense, its history is in outline very similar to that of the other nineteenth century English foundations such as Manchester, Liverpool or Bristol. Like them, it was established as one result of the growth of population in a clearly defined region. To some extent it grew as the region grew and in its early days its main, though not exclusive, function was to supply trained men and women to the industry and the professions in the four northern counties of England.

E.M. Bettenson

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne: A historical introduction 1834-1971

Newcastle University, as is shown in this extract from its history up to 1971, took shape as a civic university, in response to the regional demands of the industrial economy. Since the early days of the origin of a College of Medicine in 1834, through the foundation of a College of Science in 1871, and its successor Armstrong College in 1904, to the eventual formality of getting its own University Act in 1963, it has maintained strong and productive links with civil society in its city and region. For a long time the North East of England was a powerhouse of the industrial economy, and the various shapes and structures of what eventually became Newcastle University provided the intellectual underpinning for the economic and industrial activities of this important region. The first Chairs at the Colleges were not only in fundamental disciplines such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Arts and Literature, but also in the regionally important applied sciences such as Geology, Mining, Naval Architecture, Engineering and Agriculture.
“Newcastle” became a brand name worldwide, known as a hub of industrial activity, with a strong civic university as its intellectual underpinning.

This combination of being globally ambitious and regionally rooted also underpins Newcastle University’s vision for the future. We see ourselves not only as doing high-quality academic work, measured and judged against the best done anywhere in the world, but also as choosing to work in areas responsive to large-scale societal needs and demands, particularly those manifested in our own city and region. We believe in and strive for world-class academic excellence – but excellence with a purpose. We work not only on the supply side of knowledge creation and dissemination, but also respond to the demand side of societal challenges. We are not only a large employer and a magnet for tens of thousands of young people, but an integral part of civil society. That is the hallmark of a civic university.

We believe that our success as a civic university will in itself become an exportable commodity, since the search for such a combination of global excellence and local relevance is one replicated in many places in the world.

2 Vision and Mission

In Newcastle and the North East of England, as in many industrialised regions, the economic drivers have changed, and therewith the demographic, social and cultural circumstances of civil society. Employment opportunities have diversified. The age demography is changing. Sustainability in terms of energy, infrastructure and environment has become a universal quest. Societal challenges are manifested both globally and locally. In consequence, the knowledge business of research and development, education and skills, is becoming ever more important.

These changes, which require both reflection and adjustment, are often summarised by saying that we are moving into a knowledge-based economy. But knowledge has always been our business. Clearly, then, in these new circumstances the long-held ideals of Newcastle University are more relevant than ever. And that defines our vision for the University – the kind of university we wish to be:

Our vision is of Newcastle as a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence.

As a civic university, we need to be responsive to the needs and demands of civil society for knowledge that will address societal challenges. As a world-class university, we must be active and internationally competitive at the supply side of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination. And that defines our mission statement – what we aim to do. We aim:

- To be a world-class research-intensive university
- To deliver teaching and facilitate learning of the highest quality
- To play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England.
3 The University Community

A university is a place … whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge; … a place for the communication and circulation of thought … It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, … discoveries verified and perfected, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. … We must consult the living man, and listen to his living voice …

John Henry, Cardinal Newman
The Idea of a University, 1852.

There are many conceptions of what a university is and should do, and many attempts at capturing the essence of a university while allowing for diverse manifestations. Indeed, in outlining our vision for Newcastle University as a world-class civic university we add another such characterization. Indubitably a university is about knowledge. But, as JH Newman argued, and many others have echoed, knowledge is produced by people. And, we would add, knowledge is produced for people.

A shorter characterization is that a university is a place where students and academics congregate, and are supported by professional support staff, buildings and equipment, to engage in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, the facilitation of learning and the inculcation of skills. We see our distinctiveness as a civic university in adding the further dimension of engaging with civil society in the question of what knowledge and learning is for, and who it is for.

Newcastle University, therefore, gives pride of place to our people. Our academics, our students and alumni, and our support staff are part of a single knowledge community, participating in research and innovation, teaching and learning, and engagement with civil society.

4 Principles and Values

There are certain fundamental values shared throughout the higher education sector to which we are committed, including: academic freedom, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, a sound academic disciplinary base, a methodology based on reason and evidence, social responsibility, and transparency.

In addition, we:

- are committed to excellence
- value diversity
- respond to societal challenges
- accord parity of esteem to research and teaching
- educate for life
- are globally ambitious and regionally rooted
- invest in excellent staff.
5 Functions and Structures

Arising from the three elements of the mission statement, we have three core academic functions:

- Research and Innovation
- Teaching and Learning, and the Student Experience
- Engagement.

Strategic leadership of each of these is provided, on a university-wide basis, by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Delivery of the core functions occurs in our three core academic structures, which are the three Faculties, each led and managed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

- The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- The Faculty of Medical Sciences
- The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering.

Each Faculty consists of a number of Academic Units, typically a School or a Research Institute, each led and managed by a Head. The core functions and core structures combine to form the academic map of the University, in which we envisage the Faculties as vertical columns, with the core functions as cross-cutting institutional activities. Interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities are coordinated and supported by the functional PVCs, while academic staff are line-managed within the Faculties.

The academic enterprise is supported by a number of corporate activities within the Professional Support Services, led and managed by the Registrar.

The University is led and managed by the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Board, consisting of the three Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the three functional Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources, the Registrar, the Executive Director (Finance) and the Executive Director (Human Resources). Executive Board functions to an agreed set of principles, and each year agrees a set of recurrent and project-related responsibilities.

The University Council is our governing body, Senate is the academic decision-making body, Court is an advisory body, Academic Board represents our academic and professional staff, the Union Society represents our students, and Convocation represents our alumni.

6 Institutional Objectives and Strategy

We have a Strategic Plan for the University, which describes how we aim to realise our vision and mission. The implementation of our strategic plan, and our day-to-day operations, are rooted in our principles and values. We unpack the vision and mission into a number of institutional objectives, categorized in terms of our core functions, core structures and corporate activities. The strategic plan articulates the strategies we follow to achieve these objectives. Each strategy, in turn, cascades down to more detailed goals and targets.
As a University, our institutional objectives are to achieve:

- Top 20 in the UK for research quality and power
- Top quartile in the UK for student satisfaction and student experience
- Focus on selected societal challenge themes
- A significant international profile
- Financial and environmental sustainability.

7 Core Function Objectives

Our overall institutional objectives are refined in terms of our three core functions.

7.1 Research and Innovation: Our overall objective is to be a world-class research-intensive university. Under this heading we group objectives regarding the classic conception of blue-sky research, the idea of research responding to societal needs and challenges, the promotion of an interdisciplinary approach in doing so, the application and commercialisation of research, and the broad ideas of innovation and entrepreneurship, including the engagement from our research base with Business and Industry. Our Research and Innovation Strategy specifies the following objectives:

7.1.1 Grow areas of strength and address areas of weakness to achieve international excellence in all we do.
7.1.2 Identify institutional challenge themes responding to societal needs and demands.
7.1.3 Develop an innovation culture embedded throughout the University.

7.2 Teaching and Learning, and the wider Student Experience: Our teaching and learning philosophy is based on the concept of education for life. By that we mean two things: providing knowledge and understanding that will last a lifetime, and providing knowledge and experience relevant to life and the world around us. As emphasised in our Learning and Teaching Strategy we wish to deliver teaching of the highest quality, and to provide an environment within which effective learning can take place as part of an enjoyable and formative student experience. We will:

7.2.1 Deliver research-informed teaching and training in a professional, challenging and engaging way.
7.2.2 Deliver curricular and extra-curricular provision which ensures graduates are well equipped for further training, research or workforce needs.
7.2.3 Create opportunities for students' personal and professional development.
7.2.4 Deliver all modules and programmes to agreed specifications.
7.2.5 Ensure that our programmes meet relevant accreditation and quality standards.
7.2.6 Foster a culture of independent learning, critical thinking and enterprise.
7.2.7 Conduct an active programme of raising aspirations and widening participation.

Students are at the centre of the learning experience, and their feedback lies at the heart of our future strategy. Our students are therefore encouraged to be active educational citizens. In addition to an excellent education, informed by leading
edge research and scholarship, we aim to provide an enjoyable and formative student experience, through a wide variety of enterprise and volunteering activities, student societies and an active presence in recreational and competitive sport. Key enablers for this are our Ncl+ programme, with its slogan “A degree is not enough”, and an active Students' Union.

As a research intensive university we recognise and value the importance of growing our postgraduate student community. Training high quality research students is vital not only to replenishing the academic base, but also to maintaining the flow of graduates to strengthen our regional, national, and global knowledge economy. We value our international students for their contribution to the university and the diversity of backgrounds and ideas they bring. As a civic university we contribute to the regional and national skills base by our high proportion of professionally-accredited degree programs, and by a portfolio of courses in Continuing Professional Development.

7.3 Engagement: As a world-class civic university, our engagement with civil society is integral to ensuring that our academic and professional activities have genuine economic, social and cultural benefits at all spatial scales:

- Regional: e.g. contributing to harmonious community relations whilst promoting diversity in North East society; and contributing to the economic resilience and success of the region.
- National: e.g. configuring our activities to enrich intellectual culture, influence public policy development and promote commercial enterprise.
- International: e.g. using our teaching and research activities to address global societal and economic challenges and promote intercultural understanding, under the leadership of academics who enjoy the highest ranks of esteem in their respective professional Academies.

Our engagement activities, while carried out in the sense of good citizenship, are firmly and specifically based on our academic expertise and experience. In consequence, all our Academic Units are expected to build up an engagement portfolio based on their research and teaching activities. Likewise, student and alumni activities form an important part of our institutional engagement profile. Within the city of Newcastle we have two broad thrusts of engagement: cultural and scientific. Our Engagement Strategy specifies the following objectives:

7.3.1 Attract top talent to settle in the North East.
7.3.2 Develop and implement the concept of Newcastle Science City.
7.3.3 Contribute our facilities, knowledge and skills to support healthy growth of civic and regional culture.
7.3.4 Use our global standing and intellectual capital to influence and inform national debate.
7.3.5 Implement strategic partnership initiatives to address major global challenges relating especially to health, wellbeing and sustainable development.

8 The Faculties

All our academic work, in each of our three core functions, is carried out within the Faculties, and more particularly within the Academic Units making up the Faculties. This
is where the academics work, and the students study. The Faculties are operational and managerial entities, whereas the core functions have an institution-wide coordinating role. While we articulate our institutional goals in terms of the three academic core functions, we carry them out within our Academic Units. It is vital that the work done within the Faculties meshes with our institutional objectives. Accordingly, each Faculty has its own strategic plan on how to support and attain our institutional goals in the context of its own disciplinary clusters.

The three Faculties jointly subscribe to the following core strategic objectives:

8.1.1 Achieve and sustain research excellence.
8.1.2 Deliver a high quality student experience on all programmes.
8.1.3 Embed the drive, ambition and capabilities needed to excel in both teaching and research.
8.1.4 Strengthen and deepen our international activities and reputation.
8.1.5 Expand postgraduate recruitment based on an international reputation for excellence.
8.1.6 Make a distinctive contribution to the development and delivery of societal challenge themes.

Within the context of Faculty plans, each Academic Unit has its own strategic plan. Each Head of an Academic Unit is responsible for implementing an annual workload allocation model, to deliver on the core functions. We have a generic Academic Job Summary describing the mutual expectations between the University and the individual academic. Each academic member of staff is expected to update his/her Curriculum Vitae on a regular basis, using our online MyProfiles system, not only to list research publications but to give a rounded description of activities in each of our core functions, as well as service to his/her Academic Unit and the University generally. Drawing on this data, each Academic Unit produces an annual report every year.

Reflecting their distinctive academic foci and current priorities, the three faculties have established specific strategic objectives.

8.2 The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS):

8.2.1 Use the University’s major cultural investments for the academic benefit of the Faculty and wider community.
8.2.2 Establish an internationally renowned Business School.
8.2.3 Realize the full potential of established and emerging capabilities in distinctive areas of creative practice.
8.2.4 Create a Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies to strengthen our external profile and as an engine for interdisciplinary enquiry.
8.2.5 Leverage our leading edge research, focusing in particular on the Faculty’s role in shaping professional practice, in the analysis and formation of policy, and enhancing the quality of life.

8.3 The Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS):

8.3.1 Lead the University in developing ageing and chronic disease as a societal challenge theme.
8.3.2 Leverage our cutting edge research in ageing, cancer, genetics and stem cells, molecular and cell biology, neuroscience and health services research to become a world class centre for Translational Medical Research.
8.3.3 Work with stakeholders including the NHS and other employers, professional bodies and sponsorship agencies to ensure that graduates are fit for purpose and that our programmes meet workforce needs.

8.3.4 Facilitate, guide and ensure the development of the MBBS (Malaysia) programme.

8.3.5 Increase partnerships with companies through collaboration based on skills, know how and inventions as a major contribution to Newcastle City of Science.

8.4 The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (SAgE):

8.4.1 Become a world-class research centre by leveraging our top-ten RAE2008 status in Engineering and Agriculture.

8.4.2 From a sound disciplinary base, develop international excellence in teaching in all our STEM subjects.

8.4.3 Increase engagement with the public and private sector through collaboration based on skills, knowhow, inventions and knowledge transfer, thereby making a major contribution to Newcastle Science City.

8.4.4 Develop significant partnerships with selected international academic establishments to globalise our teaching and research, including in-country delivery such as the Marine Engineering programme in Singapore.

8.4.5 Lead the University in developing sustainability as a societal challenge theme.

9 Enabling Objectives

We do not regard the University in the first place as a business, because our primary motive is not profit but academic excellence. However, we endeavour to be businesslike in our activities in order to attain our academic goals. We therefore identify the following enabling objectives.

9.1 Student Experience

9.1.1 Encourage and support an engaged and participative student community and ensure that the learner voice is at the heart of our strategy.

9.1.2 Provide opportunities for the student community to participate in social, cultural, sporting and community activities.

9.1.3 Provide high quality, accessible and innovative student services to aid students' learning and development.

9.1.4 Deliver high quality learning support and fit for purpose learning spaces, ensuring that all students can access relevant information easily and flexibly.

9.1.5 Ensure student accommodation gives value for money and meets the diverse needs of the student body.

9.1.6 Enhance students' physical and psychological wellbeing.

9.2 Human Resources

9.2.1 Develop an efficient, effective and sustainable employment environment

9.2.2 Improve the profile and performance of the University by recruiting and developing high calibre employees with appropriate external recognition.

9.2.3 Develop a high performance culture in which delivery to agreed standards and objectives is the norm.
9.2.4 Be a great place to work with employees committed to University objectives and valued for their contribution.
9.2.5 Promote diversity, flexibility and innovation by developing organisational capability and culture.
9.2.6 Promote a safe and healthy environment in which students and staff take a proactive approach to their own health and safety.

9.3 Financial

9.3.1 Create capacity for strategic development by achieving an annual historic cost surplus of at least 2% of income, with a medium term target of 4%.
9.3.2 Deliver Value for Money in all our activities.
9.3.3 Grow income faster than our peer group.
9.3.4 Identify and exploit opportunities for new areas of profitable income.
9.3.5 Maintain a robust balance sheet with sufficient cash reserves to meet our financial obligations.
9.3.6 Provide enterprise resource planning services which are top quartile in HE and meet our legal and ethical obligations.

9.4 Strategic Positioning

9.4.1 Strengthen the strategic positioning and visibility of the University in regional, national and global markets.
9.4.2 Develop and implement an internationalisation strategy.
9.4.3 Attract academically well-qualified students, from UK and international markets.
9.4.4 Ensure excellent relationships with alumni.
9.4.5 Foster a sense of University community and engagement through excellent internal communications.
9.4.6 Promote cultural diversity.
9.4.7 Increase the number of philanthropic supporters of the University.

9.5 IT and Information

9.5.1 Exceed current best practice standards for IT and develop new information resources and services for learning and teaching.
9.5.2 Develop high capability computing services and innovative resources to support world leading research.
9.5.3 Use IT to transform administrative and academic processes across the University.
9.5.4 Support the effective management and dissemination of the University’s intellectual assets.
9.5.5 Deliver information securely and within the law.
9.5.6 Develop information governance and data ownership processes across the University.

9.6 Estate

9.6.1 Improve the condition of our buildings and their fitness for purpose.
9.6.2 Implement the Coherent Campus initiative.
9.6.3 Ensure effective utilisation of space and improve the net:gross space ratio.
9.6.4 Deliver “full life cycle” value for money on all major capital projects.
9.7 Environmental Sustainability

9.7.1 Reduce our carbon emissions by 10% by July 2013.
9.7.2 Reduce our water and waste footprint, reduce energy consumption and encourage biodiversity.
9.7.3 Encourage sustainable travel options.
9.7.4 Play a leading role in promoting sustainability as part of our civic responsibility.

10 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are a measure of progress towards meeting our strategic objectives. Accordingly, our KPIs follow the same categories as our list of objectives above. We report to Senate and Council on each of these categories of KPIs at least once per year, the report being delivered by the relevant member(s) of Executive Board. We benchmark our performance against a Comparator Group of city-based and civic-oriented universities.

11 Risk Management

Risks are potential events which may prevent us from reaching our strategic objectives. We follow an approach of being risk-aware rather than risk-averse. Being risk-aware requires the early identification and evaluation of risks, with a consequent strategy of risk mitigation, a control status at any given time, and an eventual reporting route.

Our Risk Management Strategy distinguishes project risks, which are specific to each of our various projects, from corporate risks, which arise from our recurrent business.

Project risks are identified and evaluated for each project, in a risk register drawn up as part of the project management strategy for that project. The risk register will evaluate each risk in terms of likelihood and impact, name a risk owner, and list risk mitigation controls. The project manager takes overall responsibility for risk management, and reports to the project owner, who, for major projects, is a member of Executive Board. Depending on the magnitude of the project and the evaluation of the risks, the risk management report may go from Executive Board to the Audit Committee, to serve before Council.

Corporate risks arise from the pursuit of our strategic objectives, categorised in terms of our three core functions and our corporate activities. The corporate risks are identified and reviewed each year for the year ahead in our Corporate Risk Register, and are the responsibility of members of Executive Board, as indicated by our core functions and structures, and specified in our Delegations Document. The Risk Register for the year ahead, as well as a Corporate Risk Management Report on the previous year, serves before the Audit Committee of Council at least once a year.

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