NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
JOINT MEETING OF SENATE AND COUNCIL

16 April 2018

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Dr Phil Ansell, Professor Caroline Austin, Professor Helen Berry, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Paul Christensen, Ms Sarah Craggs (Welfare & Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Nicola Curtin, Professor Richard Davies, Dr Emma Foster, Dr Jonathan Galloway, Dr Stacy Gillis, Mr Jonathan Glass, Dr Ruth Graham, Mrs Teresa Graham, Professor Nigel Harkness, Dr Joan Harvey, Dr Helen Jarvis, Dr Phillip Lord, Ms Adrienne McFarland, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Dr Sara Maioli, Dr Nick Megoran, Ms Dianne Nelmes, Dr Andrew Pike, Sir Mike Rawlins, Mr Ronnie Reid (President, Students’ Union), Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Klaus Schoefer, Professor Jackie Leach Scully, Professor Chris Seal, Mr Rowan South (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Miss Holly Waddell, Professor Brian Walker, Mr Paul Walker, Ms Vicky Wright, Professor Nick Wright, and Professor Phillip Wright.

In attendance: Mrs Lesley Braiden (Academic Registrar), Dr Colin Campbell (Director of Strategic Planning), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Officer (Governance)), and Mrs Judith Whitaker (Executive Director of Human Resources).

Apologies: Professor David Burn, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Lindsey Ferrie, Professor Peter Jorgensen, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Professor Jane Pollard.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Received introductory remarks from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Day, Chair of Senate.

2. Discussion Sessions

Session 1: University Vision and Strategy

Received a PowerPoint presentation from the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs on the promotional campaign for the roll-out of the Vision and Strategy.

[Refer to slides 1-10 of PowerPoint presentation filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1) The University’s new Vision and Strategy will be launched in September, starting with a series of events for staff at each of the University’s four main locations (Newcastle, London, Malaysia and Singapore). A year-long launch campaign will follow that aims to bring the Vision to life with five separate events for other stakeholders.

2) The Vision and Strategy will be predominantly web-based, and will feature a series of online stories with a focus on people and places that embody the University’s core areas of excellence, our guiding principles and values. The staff launch will take
place after the Great Exhibition of the North and this year’s Clearing exercise have concluded, in order to maximise impact.

3) Senate and Council have been consulted on, and have endorsed the wording of the new Vision and Strategy, which is available on the staff intranet, as well as the revised timeline for implementation.

4) Members of Council and Senate offered positive feedback on the promotional campaign and agreed the design concept of the external-facing version of the Vision and Strategy.

Received an oral update from the Vice-Chancellor and President on the University’s intended approach to monitoring progress against its Strategy.

Noted that:

1) The University will not have an overarching institutional objective relating to league table position due to the range of external factors that could affect this that are outside the institution’s control. It is anticipated, however, that delivery of the vision will improve the University’s profile and reputation which would result in a position in the global top 100.

2) The number of institutional Key Performance Indicators reported to Council will be streamlined. Each of the individual strategies underpinning the Vision and Strategy will have three or four measures that will be reported on at regular interval, although the nature of the measures may change from year to year. Council will be consulted on the suggested Key Performance Indicators.

3) There was support for the University taking a light metric touch, whilst remaining focused on delivery and quality.

4) Institutions could be judged externally by metrics beyond its control such as graduate earnings. The University would lobby to ensure that graduate earnings outcomes data took location of work into account as well as graduates’ own perceptions of the value of their degree and their reasons for choosing particular professions.

Session 2: Supporting Strategies

2.1 Received a PowerPoint presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching setting out the University’s draft Education Strategy.

[Refer to slides 1-10 of PowerPoint presentation filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1) The University Education Strategy will be the means through which the education element of the University’s new Vision and Strategy is implemented.

2) The Strategy is deliberately short in order for it to gain currency and do provide a clear reference point for strategic decision making.

3) The Strategy focuses on four key themes: research-education links; student engagement with their learning; holistic student development; and technology-enhanced learning. These four key themes have emerged through the extensive
consultation undertaken since September 2016 and aimed to give the Strategy its distinctiveness.

4) The term education will replace the current phrase ‘learning, teaching and student experience’. This reflects ‘education’ being one of the fundamental purposes of the University as set out in our Statutes. It is also based on education being a broad term that encompasses both the opportunities provided through all academic programmes and those available through extra- and co-curricular provision.

5) The educational aims of the Strategy are to:
   - Provide an outstanding educational experience rooted in strong disciplines and enhanced by a broad range of experience.
   - Encourage and promote opportunities for multi- and interdisciplinary encounters.
   - Maintain and promote the academic rigour and stretch of our programmes.
   - Inspire, challenge, support and care for our students.
   - Provide an inclusive and international collaborative learning community.
   - Empower our students to be creative, innovative, enterprising and global in their outlook.

6) A number of key projects and developments would be undertaken as institution-wide initiatives, in order to promote and facilitate the development of the quality and nature of a Newcastle University education set out in the University Education Strategy. One of these would be a curriculum review across all taught programmes over up to five years to ensure that they deliver the educational vision set out in the Education Strategy.

7) Plans for a Doctoral College were at an early stage, however, the University aspired to improve the experience of doctoral students through the sharing of practice and the provision of more physical space, as well as the promotion of interdisciplinary doctoral studies. The intention was to build on excellent practice where this existed.

8) The Graduate Attributes Framework would set out the personal attributes and skills that characterise a Newcastle University graduate, and embed the development of these attributes and skills across our programmes and our co- and extra-curricular provision.

9) The University would work with employers in designing the Framework. Commercial awareness was an important attribute that would benefit graduates. Academic staff would have the flexibility to determine how the Framework should be embedded within their programmes.

10) Particular support was expressed for the emphasis on the importance of students developing as critical global citizens.

11) The University would seek to engage alumni who had graduated from all four of its locations in helping to deliver strategy-related activities that underpin the theme of education for life.

12) The Education Strategy would be considered by Senate and ultimately for approval by Council in June 2018.

2.2 Received a PowerPoint presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources on aims and guiding principles for the developing Research Strategy.

[Refer to slides 1-22 of PowerPoint presentation filed in the Minute Book.]
Noted that:

1) The University was developing its objectives for research against an external backdrop of increased government expenditure on research and development (about 20% growth aimed at leveraging national investment from 1.7% to 2.4% of GDP within ten years), and the implementation of the Industrial Strategy.

2) There were compelling imperatives for a change of direction with institutional research strategy, not least given that Newcastle’s research income levels have not been rising in the face of substantial increases in the average research income achieved by other Russell Group research-intensive institutions.

3) Although the University is investing in academic staff on Teaching and Scholarship contracts, when compared with the majority of its competitors it was failing to develop home-grown research staff and to attract career development fellowships in sufficient numbers. The forthcoming proposal for an Academic Track pathway and a renewed emphasis on research, as well as teaching-driven appointments, would help with the development of a research talent pipeline. In turn, an increase in researcher numbers would feed through to higher research power and QR income.

4) Whereas the University was providing extensive internal funding for research, via the Research Investment Fund, for example, other institutions were achieving greater success in attracting external grants to fund short-term research contracts and there is a big administrative burden in managing all the internal investment schemes that exist currently.

5) Research intensivity at Newcastle currently stood at 22% compared to the Russell Group median of 27%. Research funding obtained by the University would need to grow by around 35% to reach the Russell Group median for intensivity.

6) The University as a collective would need to improve its research performance, and there would be no individual targets. Consultation on the developing Research Strategy had shown that there was a genuine appetite for change and growth in research intensivity, however, it might be necessary to do more to reassure staff that research strategy would not be used for individual performance management purposes.

7) Although the University had the capacity to grow its research intensivity quickly, internal barriers to this growth – including administrative and bureaucratic hurdles, and the need to protect time for research – would need to be overcome.

8) To achieve growth in research intensivity and power, while maintaining a creative and innovative environment for all researchers, investments need to be prioritised and balanced. The role of Research Centres should be evaluated, to ensure that these were representative of the University’s strongest research and aligned with external priorities.

2.3 Received a PowerPoint presentation from the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation and Business setting out the institution’s place-based strategic priorities.

[Refer to slides 1-3 of PowerPoint presentation filed in the Minute Book.]

Members of Council and Senate considered whether the University should:

(i) Do more to open up our campus and facilities to the community?
(ii) Align its research with the needs of local companies and creative partners?
(iii) Work harder to get students from underrepresented groups in the region into our university?
(iv) Do more “stuff” off campus in the community?
(v) Help local people to develop their skills through increased CPD provision and apprenticeships?
(vi) Be more active in helping local charities?

In response, members of Council and Senate participated in group discussions and commented that:

- The University should record and communicate outreach activity more effectively, and consider the merits of an overall policy for Corporate Social Responsibility.
- The University should undertake more initiatives jointly with university partners in the North East, and seek greater cooperation, as opposed to competition.
- More engagement with the community was desirable, with the University acting as host providing time and space for activities relating to its core mission. Support for providing more CPD and for student-led activities was also expressed with an emphasis on the digital as an enabler in this space.
- Further development of degree level apprenticeships and lifelong learning should be considered.
- There should be more of a focus on sustainable planet initiatives.
- The University should aim to help more people stay in the region for employment and nurture a sense of belonging to the region.
- Access to buildings and facilities could be expanded to the community though the costs and challenges of this were also recognised.
- A public lectures series featuring all Newcastle University staff could be introduced.
- The University should look to make the Northern Powerhouse work for the North East.
- Incentives for staff to commit to the University’s place objectives should be considered.

Overall there were points raised about what “Place” means in this context and how we communicate across the institution and to stakeholders. Need to make it dynamic and not static and intrinsically connected to the global was underlined. There was also a wider sense that this was part of the articulation of the public good aspect of HE.