NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

20 November 2019

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Nigel Harkness, and Professor Phillip Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Ashley Adamson, Miss Lucy Backhurst, Professor Nils Braakmann, Mr Pablo Charro de la Fuente (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Miss Sara Elkhawad (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Stacy Gillis, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Dr Helen Jarvis, Dr Phillip Lord, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Ms Claire Morgan, Dr Julie Morris, Dr Andrew Pike, Professor Ted Schrecker, Professor Daniel Siemens, Dr Joanne Smith-Finley, Miss Katie Smyth (President, Students’ Union), Miss Karina Sorrels (Postgraduate Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Konstantinos Stellos, Dr David Stewart, Professor David Thwaites, Professor Aad van Moorsel.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of People Services), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).

Apologies: Professor Richard Davies, Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon, Dr Carmen Hubbard, Professor Nick Megoran, Professor Stefano Utili, Professor Brian Walker.

MINUTES

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 25 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

24. 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.]

Reported:

1. The Chancellorship

Following this meeting of Senate, a joint meeting of Senate and Court would be held to consider a recommendation for the appointment of a new University Chancellor. The working group which had been meeting to identify a successor to Sir Liam Donaldson would present the name of a distinguished individual to the joint meeting which would be requested to make the recommendation of the appointment to Convocation. This joint
meeting would be followed immediately by an extraordinary meeting of Convocation which would be asked to confirm the appointment.

### 2. Frederick Douglass Centre

On Wednesday 13 November the University celebrated the official opening of the new £35m Frederick Douglass Centre on the Newcastle Helix site, supported by a programme of events, open to the public and for staff and students, exploring the theme of global social justice. A highlight of the programme was the opening ceremony for the Frederick Douglass Centre which was performed by Frederick Douglass’s great-great-great-grandson, Kenneth B Morris Jr, on the 52nd anniversary of the award of an honorary degree to Martin Luther King. The Vice-Chancellor offered congratulations to all involved with the events and his personal thanks to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the team who had made the arrangements for the week.

### 3. Real Living Wage

It was announced on 11 November that the University had been accredited as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage Foundation. Around 700 University colleagues will benefit from an uplift to the minimum hourly wage. The accreditation is a marker of the University’s commitment to creating a fairer and more just society and goes some way to recognizing the invaluable role our lower paid staff play in university life.

### 4. Climate Conversation

Members of the University community came together on 15 November to identify opportunities to work together in response to the climate emergency as part of a programme of events themed around global social justice. The aim of the event was to create space to debate the changes the University needs to make in light of the climate emergency declaration. The meeting generated a lot of stimulating ideas that would contribute to the University having an affordable roadmap towards net zero carbon emissions by 2040. Senate will receive a summary of the events in due course.

### 5. UCU Industrial Action

The UCU industrial action ballots regarding pay, casualization, equality and workloads and proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme closed on 30 October 2019. Overall, 79% of UCU members who voted backed strike action in the ballot over changes to the USS (84.4% at Newcastle University on a 57.1% turnout). 74% of members backed strike action in the ballot on pay, casualisation, equality and workloads (78% at Newcastle University on a 56.8% turnout). The UCU subsequently announced that it intends to take strike action at 46 institutions in relation to USS pensions, and at 57 institutions in relation to pay and working conditions. The strikes are planned for 8 days commencing Monday 25 November to Wednesday 4 December 2019, and these are due to be followed by continuous ‘action short of a strike’.

### 6. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

A very encouraging set of results in the 2019 PRES had recently been considered by University Education Committee. In terms of Newcastle University’s overall satisfaction, 83.9% of students agreed with the statement ‘Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme’. This was 2.9% higher than the Russell Group average and 3.2% higher than the sector average, and represented an increase of 10% since 2015. The University was in the first quartile for overall satisfaction for both the Russell Group and the wider sector. Within the individual areas, scores of 90% and above were achieved in five of the eight areas: Supervision, Resources, Progression,
Research Skills and Professional Development. Senate recorded its thanks to all members of staff involved in PGR supervision for high sector performance.

7. **Fire in Student Accommodation at Bolton University**

Following the recent fire in student accommodation at Bolton the University has written to students to stress that the health, safety and well-being of our students was of the utmost importance. Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in 2017 all of the University’s owned and partner accommodation was reviewed and surveyed. The Fire Service confirmed that there were no issues identified at any of the University’s owned accommodation; where there were concerns in our partnership schemes immediate action was taken to ensure there was no danger to the health and safety of residents.

Regular inspections of all accommodation and constant communications with the Fire Service has not identified any further issues. The situation would continue to be monitored but students who were in any way worried or concerned should contact Dr Colin Campbell, Executive Director of Academic Affairs.

8. **Staff Success**

Professor Muzlifah Haniffa (Institute of Cell and Molecular Biosciences) has been awarded the 2019 Foulkes Foundation medal as a “rising star” making a significant impact on UK biomedical research. This was the second time a member of University staff had received this award.

9. **Reports from Committees of Senate**

**University Education Committee (UEC) – Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education**

The Committee considered the outcomes of the University’s participation in both the Postgraduate Research and Taught Experience Surveys. Results in the PTES were not been as positive as those for PRES, although there had been an improvement in how students viewed their experience at Newcastle. When compared with other Russell Group universities, however, there were question areas similar to the National Student Survey where the University’s results were in the third quartile. It was hoped that actions that the University has identified to address NSS results would also impact positively on taught postgraduate students.

The Committee agreed modified programme approval processes to allow for the consideration of specific requirements for degree apprenticeships, of which the University currently had three with a total of 17 participants.

The Committee held initial discussions around the introduction of a new framework for assessment design. It was hoped that the framework would help to reduce over-assessment which students had highlighted as an issue in the latest National Student Survey results.

**University Engagement and Place Committee (UEPC) – Professor Julie Sanders, Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

The Committee recently held the first of two extended meetings this academic year in a workshop format. The format had worked very well, providing a valuable opportunity for additional colleagues to attend. Topics had included the University of Pittsburgh: International Place-Based Network and the Newcastle Agreement. Timelines were May 2020 for the former and a March 2020 conference for the latter.
University Global Committee (UGC) – Dr Stacy Gillis on behalf of Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global

The Committee considered positioning and alignment with environmental responsibilities in light of the Global Strategy key performance indicators which included a focus on increasing mobility. The Committee has also been devoting a lot of its attention to Europe post-Brexit and the question of how to continue engaging with European partners. A potential bid to the European Universities Alliance was under discussion.

University Research Committee (URC) – Professor Stephanie Glendinning on behalf of Professor Brian Walker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources

The Committee has revised its terms of reference to align with the remit of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Strategy and Resources, which included innovation. Recent trends in the award of funding and grant applications had been noted, in light of which the Committee has discussed ways of supporting staff to submit research proposals. A new group has been formed to support the development of excellent researchers which it was agreed that a member of Senate should join.

The REF Code of Practice submitted to Research England has been formally approved.

Senate approved the revised terms of reference and name change to the University Research and Innovation Committee.

25. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 14 OCTOBER 2019

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 14 October 2019.

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

26. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

1. The ‘White Space’ agenda item had been introduced by the Vice-Chancellor as an opportunity for Senators to raise matters relating to important academic matters that might not otherwise be known to most Senators and request further investigation or consideration of such matters. It would be for the Vice-Chancellor to propose how such matters should be addressed. In most cases this would be by referring the issue to the relevant University committee.

2. Members agreed that Senate had become a more collaborative environment over the past two years.

3. In terms of how items could be proposed for discussion, it was suggested that there should be an element of spontaneity that offered members the flexibility to introduce a topic with the proviso that Senate would need to return to it once detailed consideration had been given to it by a sub-committee or other body. It was agreed that White Space should be a standing agenda item.

4. The topic of democracy in the University was proposed. It was suggested that it would be useful for Senate to discuss how staff and students feel their voice could be better heard, and how they can play a part in shaping decisions. The results of the Pulse Survey could be used to help frame the discussion.
27. **ENGAGE AND ASPIRE**

Received a presentation from Mrs Lynne Howlett and Mrs Lisette Nicholson (Assistant Directors of People Services).

Noted that:

1. As reported previously at Senate, on 22 January 2019, a discovery phase had been undertaken to understand the scope and variety of approaches to performance Development and Review within the institution. Extensive consultation with University colleagues and desk-top research had taken place. Feedback from colleagues had suggested that their preferred process would be flexible, supportive and developmental with a future focus.

2. The Engage and Aspire programme aimed to develop a culture in which all colleagues could be engaged, and in which everyone’s contributions, both on an individual and collective level, could be aligned.

3. A design and test phase was now underway, with pilot groups testing a set of working principles and draft values framework with different demographic groups across the University. A new approach to Performance Development and Review was being piloted that sought to move away from a one size fits all approach and which embraced a forward-facing ‘coaching’ style. The groups would report their findings and recommendations to Senate in June 2020. A phased roll-out would then be implemented during the next academic year.

28. **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN**

Received a paper from Professor Julie Sanders, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate considered a draft of a short version of the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which was required as part of the institutional Athena SWAN submission. A more detailed Strategy and action plan would be brought forward for consideration later in the academic year.

2. Senate was broadly supportive of the Strategic Plan. It was suggested that further thought might be given to providing more detail in the document on collaboration, what was meant by ‘sector leading’, foregrounding the University’s work on social justice, and how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and positive discrimination relate to each other.

29. **ATHENA SWAN**

Received the draft institutional Athena SWAN submission from Professor Julie Sanders, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate considered the draft institutional submission for Athena SWAN silver status and supporting action plan. The drafts were still evolving and would take feedback about
the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and recent feedback from Executive Board into account.

2. The definition of the Teaching and Research (T&R) contract type needed to be revisited.

3. It had been identified by the University that there was a need to increase the representation of men and BAME individuals on the University Self-Assessment Team for Athena SWAN, and to understand how to better engage men and BAME individuals in the gender agenda.

4. It was being proposed that mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training should be introduced so that all staff understand Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles and how these could be embedded.

5. Senate recorded its gratitude for the outstanding work on the submission by the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

30. **MAGNA CHARTA OBSERVATORY LIVING VALUES**

Received a paper from Professor Julie Sanders, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The University is a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum and was engaging in the Magna Charta Observatory Living Values pilot project as a way of enhancing its work. The Committee considered a report produced for a workshop held for universities participating in the pilot held in Hamilton, Canada in October 2019. The report identified the thematic areas of work on which the University was focussing the pilot in the Newcastle context.

2. As previously agreed with Senate, the University’s responsibilities as a participating institution feed into the work of the four Senate sub-committees. A key characteristic of the Living Values initiative was the central importance of broader dialogue within the pilot institutions, and it was therefore vital that the thinking on the identified themes, and the living values that underpin those priority areas, should be further developed and explored in schools, institutes, faculties and professional services teams in locally contextualised ways. This work would help shape the outcomes and findings of the pilot through the year.

3. Future events like Heads of Unit forums, Professorial Forums, Faculty and School Executive Boards and away days/internal conferences and seminars would be used to develop and test approaches. Ideas and comments from Senate on the forms this engagement might take were invited.

31. **UNIVERSITY STATUTES**

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

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

Noted that:

1. The last major set of changes to the University Statutes had been approved by the Privy Council in 2011. Since then a number of issues had been identified that merited review.
It was proposed that the University move in the direction recommended in the independent review of governance conducted by Advance HE. Furthermore, an important underlying drive behind the proposed alterations was to update the language on equality, diversity and inclusion.

2. A modest reduction in the size of Council had been proposed by the independent governance review conducted by Advance HE and presented in January 2019. It noted that the size of Council was 25 compared to a Russell Group average of 22 and specifically proposed to reduce the elected academic members from five to three. There was already some flexibility in the number of lay members which could be reduced without changing statutes. Under the proposed changes Senate would reduce the members it elects from the current three to two, one professorial and one non-professorial, and one of the two members staff elected directly onto Council would be a Professional Services member of staff.

3. One member of Senate expressed grave concern about the proposed reduction to academic representation on Council and this was supported by other members.

4. Under the changes being proposed, one member of Professional Services staff would be added to the membership of Senate. It was now commonplace for research universities to include such membership.

5. Under the existing arrangements the members of Senate elected onto Council come off Senate whilst still serving on Council. It was proposed to extend the duration of membership on Senate for the academic members of Senate elected onto Council. This would increase the total academic membership of Senate, but would address the current anomaly, which weakened the lines of communication and representation, whereby the members of Senate elected onto Council ceased to be members of Senate during their period on Council.

6. Senate supported the inclusion of a Professional Services elected member on Council.

7. Changes to the Powers of Senate were proposed to permit the withdrawal of degrees or other qualifications in exceptional circumstances. It was suggested that there could be greater clarity about the circumstances in which exercising this power could be considered.

8. The changes would next be considered by Council on 16 December and by Court in May 2020, prior to being sent to the Privy Council for final approval.

32. GUIDANCE ON PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT FOR USE IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

Received a paper from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, on behalf of Executive Board
[Circulated as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University’s General Regulations included provision for alternative arrangements to be followed in emergency circumstances, if a University-wide emergency had been declared by a resolution of Senate.
2. In accordance with General Regulation E43-45, an emergency situation meant any event beyond the reasonable control of the University, including without limitation, strikes or other industrial disputes.

3. In light of the impending industrial action due to commence on Monday 25 November, members of Senate were invited to discuss and comment on the proposed revised Guidance in the event that an emergency was declared through a resolution of Senate. It would empower Deans, Heads of Academic Units, Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (DELTs), Chairs and Conveners / Secretaries of Boards of Studies, Boards of Examiners and Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committees to take decisions and responsibilities relating to procedures and approaches which fell outside the normal regulations, in order to protect the interests of students, and the maintain academic quality and standards.

4. The Office for Students expected to be informed of any reportable events that could materially affect a provider’s ability to comply with its conditions of registration. This could include disruption resulting from industrial action.

5. Following reflection on the use of Personal Extenuating Circumstance procedure by students during the previous period of industrial action in February and March 2018, a new separate process had been introduced which would allow students to report on their experience during the emergency. This process would be used in place of many of the Personal Extenuating Circumstance submissions made during the last industrial action and a separate online mechanism had been produced for this purpose.

6. Guidance relating to taught postgraduate students had been clarified and a new section on supervision of research postgraduates had been added.

7. A report on how the regulations had been used and the impact of the emergency situation on the student experience would be considered by Senate later in the year.

Resolved that:

1. Senate declare a University-wide emergency.
2. Senate authorise the use of the Guidance on Programme Delivery and Assessment for use in the declared emergency.

33. NEWCASTLE STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received a presentation from the Newcastle University Students’ Union.

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

Resolved that the President and Chief Executive be thanked for their informative presentation.

34. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEE OF SENATE

The following meetings of Senate committees had taken place and the minutes from each committee were provided for information:

(a) University Education Committee: 9 October 2019
(b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 16 September 2019
(c) University Global Committee: 19 September 2019
(d) University Research Committee: 9 September 2019

[Circulated with the agenda as Document K-N. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]
35. **LIBRARY RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Received the revised set of Library Rules and Regulations.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

36. **NU WOMEN ANNUAL REPORT**

Received the NU Women Annual Report.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

37. **REPORTED BUSINESS**

Received a report of action taken in accordance with agreed procedures, approved where necessary by the Vice-Chancellor and President 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 Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]