NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

22 January 2019

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Nigel Harkness (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Phil Ansell, Professor Caroline Austin, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Stacy Gillis, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Mr Jack Green (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Mr Jonny Hall (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Carmen Hubbard, Dr Helen Jarvis, Miss Martha King, Dr Phillip Lord, Mr Raff Marioni (President, Students’ Union), Dr Nick Megoran, Dr Julie Morris, Dr Andrew Pike, Professor Jane Pollard, Professor Jackie Leach Scully, Professor Daniel Siemens, Dr Joanne Smith-Finley, Professor Selina Stead, Professor David Thwaites and Professor Aad van Moorsel.

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

Dr Colin Campbell (Director of Strategic Planning) for Items 26 and 27. Professor Tim Kirk (Chair, Review of Academic Promotions Steering Group) for Item 28. Mrs Lynne Howlett and Mrs Lisette Nicholson (Assistant Directors of Human Resources) for Item 29. Dr Richard Harrison (Deputy Director of Academic Services) for Items 30 and 31.

Apologies: Dr Joan Harvey, Professor Peter Jorgensen, Professor Brian Walker and Professor Phillip Wright.

MINUTES

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

23. MINUTES

That minutes of the meeting of Senate on 20 November 2018 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. Student Recruitment
The Vice-Chancellor and President is chairing a task and finish group to address 2019 and 2020 recruitment and Executive Board have approved investment in improved student marketing IT systems as one of a raft of measures designed to increase recruitment levels for 2020 and beyond.

2. **Race Equality Charter**

   Executive Board had endorsed a proposal for the University to seek to become a member of the Race Equality Charter and commit to the process of applying for Bronze award status.

3. **Universities Superannuation Scheme**

   After considering responses to the statutory consultation, the Trustee had decided to implement changes to the Scheme from April 2019, beginning with a 0.8% increase in employee and 1.5% increase in employer contributions. Under the terms of the March 2018 valuation of the Scheme, contributions would lead to increased University costs of c. £4.8m per annum, and early indications suggested that The Pensions Regulator was minded to accept the valuation on this basis. An employer’s consultation on the March 2018 valuation would run until mid-February 2019 and Council would have the opportunity to discuss the draft University response prior to submission at its meeting on 11 February 2019.

4. **Brexit**

   The government had waived the £65 fee for EU nationals living in the UK to apply for settled status after Brexit. This had been paid by the University for its members of staff from the EU who had requested it.

   The Vice-Chancellor and President had also attended a Russell Group delegation to Berlin to meet with the U15 group of German research-intensive universities. Newcastle University had research projects and co-authored publications with all 15 institutions in the group, and the visit was aimed at fostering relationships.

5. **Widening Participation**

   The University had been ranked second in a group of 29 elite universities for widening participation admissions. The Reform ranking, in its second year, showed that only seven of the 29 institutions had hit targets set by the Higher Education Statistics Agency on increasing the number of disadvantaged students they recruited. Newcastle University had the biggest rise up the table, from 24th last year to second this year. This was testimony to the significant efforts of many University’s staff.

6. **Postgraduate Research Fee**

   There had been continuing concern within the institution about the widening gap between the Research Council postgraduate research fee and the fee charged to other sponsors and to self-funded students. Many Russell Group institutions had pegged their home PGR fee to the Research Council level.

   **Resolved that Senate endorse the reduction of the Home PGR fee for 2019 to the Research Council level, subject to the approval of Council.**

7. **Knowledge Exchange Framework**
Research England was consulting on proposals for the introduction of the government’s Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The KEF would aim to provide performance information about knowledge exchange activities that could be used internally by English universities for improvement, and externally by businesses and others to help them understand and engage with universities. Executive Board had agreed that the University should take part in a pilot of the KEF that would run for the remainder of the 2018-19 academic year.

8. **Faculty of Medical Sciences Review**

The Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) was performing well on many metrics, but from extensive consultation and discussion to date, it was widely accepted by a substantial majority of people that the Faculty could do better in its research performance and some aspects of education, strengthening the links between both in the process. The Faculty was therefore proposing a restructure that would also facilitate the implementation of the University Vision and Strategy via the embedding of transformational initiatives, and shape its deliverables to University core strategy key performance indicators.

A major consultation exercise was underway seeking to involve as many people in the Faculty as possible, and to draw on good practice from across the University, and had so far included very well-attended Town Hall and World Café events, small group meetings to discuss education strategy and strengthening research-led teaching, and focus groups with colleagues from Groningen University. Senate would receive a detailed proposal for the Faculty restructure at its meeting on 5 March 2019. If approved, the restructure would take effect on 1 November 2019.

9. **New Year’s Honours**

Received a report on New Year’s Honours.

Resolved that Senate record its congratulations to all concerned.

10. **External Examiner Fees**

A review of fees paid to external examiners for research postgraduate programmers was currently underway. A full review of undergraduate and taught postgraduate external examiner fees had been conducted in 2017/18 which compared the fee structures in operation at other Russell Group institutions as well as the fee levels used.

11. **Reports from Committees of Senate**

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

The Committee had received an update on placements activity. As of December 2018, 10% of penultimate year undergraduate students were undertaking a placement (546 students in 2018/19, up from 207 in 2015-16). The success and growth of this provision was a key element of the University’s Education Strategy. The Committee had also approved a project proposal for the development of a pre-registration online academic induction with a launch scheduled for September 2019. The course sought to help students to transition to university level study by focusing on academic skills and mindset.

**University Engagement and Place Committee (UEPC) – Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation**
Following approval of the University’s Engagement and Place Strategy by Council, the attention of UEPC was now focusing on the development of key performance indicators. Two new Dean Roles had been created to support the delivery of the core strategies: the Dean of Place & Partnerships to work in the regional and policy context; and the Dean of Lifelong learning & Professional Practice, to focus on access and participation, continual professional development, adult lifelong and flexible learning.

**University Internationalisation Committee (UIC) – Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation**

The University had recently opened an operations centre in Beijing to support recruitment and to be used as a ‘front door’ for broader activity. The University had also become a member of the China Scholarship Council, which meant it would be able to offer scholarships to high quality students, and would help to increase the institution’s profile in South East Asia. New software was to be introduced to support and improve funnel management of international recruitment.

**University Research Committee (URC) – Professor Caroline Austin, Senate representative**

The Committee had agreed that the University should participate in the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) which focussed on putting together mechanisms to improve the quality of research which was deemed trustworthy. The University is fully committed to developing and promoting research integrity across the institution on an ongoing basis. URC would consider a report regarding the University’s overarching position in relation to the Universities UK Concordat on Research Integrity at its meeting on 30 January 2019. The Committee had also continued to discuss the ramifications of ‘Plan S’, an initiative for Open Access publishing.

12. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**

Nominations were invited from Senators who wished to represent Senate on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

13. **George Brown Endowment Fund**

*Resolved that Senate approve a request for an extension of funding from the George Brown Endowment to support the ongoing work of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace.*

14. **Teaching Excellence Framework**

The government had commissioned an independent review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) required by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The review would report to the Secretary of State in summer 2019, and its recommendations would be considered before the implementation of subject-level TEF in 2021.

15. **Magna Charta Universitatum**

It had been proposed by a member of Senate that the University should consider the implications of it being a signatory of Magna Charta Universitatum. Senate’s sub-committees were asked to consider the implications of the Magna Charta for strategies within their remit.

*Noted that:*
1. There was concern that the University was not closing the gender pay gap in respect of non-clinical and support staff, however, based on the professorial pay statistics considered recently by Executive Board there was evidence that actions being taken by the University to address pay inequality were starting to have a positive effect. It was suggested that Senate be provided with a copy of the University’s next Gender Pay Gap report.

25. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 17 DECEMBER 2018

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 17 December 2018.

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

26. GLOBAL STRATEGY

Received the University Global Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The University had a critical role in shaping global society. Its global vision was to excel by being an internationally networked and diverse community of students and staff who identified as global citizens, and who could respond to global challenges through the research it undertook and the skills and knowledge it created. The Global Strategy provided an overview for how this vision would be realised.

2. The specific aims of the Strategy were to:
   ▪ Foster an environment that places international ambition and activities in the centre of our everyday thinking and working.
   ▪ Engage with our global alumni community and support professional networking and career development events.
   ▪ Build and meet the needs of and collaborate with the global network of partners, stakeholders, alumni and friends of Newcastle University.
   ▪ Provide the quality of experience that attracts and supports exceptional international students and staff from around the world.
   ▪ Work with our partners to make a positive impact in low- and middle income countries by addressing ‘grand challenges’ relevant to them and championing social justice.

3. To achieve its aims, the University had identified a number of priorities that had been developed as a result of engagement with staff, students and institutional-level university partners: internationally excellent and impactful research; education for global citizenship; building global networks with the best research and teaching teams around the world and acting as a hub for the North East region’s global connectivity; and broadening our horizons through global mobility. The priorities exemplified an emphasis upon the four institutional guiding principles which were to respond to society’s current and future challenges, to visibly lead, to work together, and to provide staff and students the freedom and opportunity to succeed.

4. In terms of transformational initiatives, there were two areas of activity that were particularly critical. Firstly, striving to increase the international diversity of the university community – for which the Newcastle University Partnership Academic Track was an important vehicle – and secondly, accelerating work to transform the University’s international presence. This would be done through strengthening the institution’s
presence and reputation in South East Asia, developing regional strategies and enhancing institutional partnerships, and building a global alumni community.

5. Senate stressed the importance of diversity of representation among leadership roles and the membership of committees and groups, and for enshrining a global outlook in the language used by the University.

6. The University would continue to commit to research that responded to global challenges. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and other UN policy frameworks were benchmarks for organising, communicating and measuring the impact of University work in these fields. The University would seek to embed the skills and knowledge identified by these global challenges in learning and teaching and raise awareness of the UNSDGs among the University community. This would be spearheaded by the Global Challenges Academy, which was established in 2016.

7. The University’s Strategy Implementation Group was considering the milestones and key performance indicators that would apply to the Strategy and by which its success could be measured, and these would be submitted to Council for consideration in due course.

8. The University would take steps to ensure that its carbon footprint does not grow as a result of the commitments made in its Global Strategy. By embracing technology for communication it could offer alternatives to carbon intensive travel such as long distance flights. Hardware and software infrastructure would need to undergo development and expansion in order to better support the University’s commitment to environmental sustainability. Enhancing virtual connectivity would also help to remove barriers for those with limited physical mobility.

9. The language of developing a University ‘brand’ would be removed as it was felt to be at odds with the University’s mission of seeking to add to knowledge and understanding and thereby contribute to international society.

10. Concern was expressed over recent moves by authorities in China to limit freedom of expression and movement. Although the University had recently established an international office in Beijing and welcomed significant numbers of Chinese students to the University each year, the University had no current plans to enter into new major partnerships with universities in China.

11. The University was seeking to deepen its research and development links with regional business and multinational corporations where potential existed to work on particular topics of mutual interest.

Resolved that Senate endorse the Global Strategy.

27. STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Received the Strategic Enablers from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The strategic enablers would inform the work and budgeting and planning of Professional Services in support of the University’s Vision and Strategy and the four underpinning strategies. The approach taken was consistent with the principles of Integrated Thinking and Reporting (ITR). This aimed to promote a long-term and
sustainable approach to strategic decision-making and to demonstrate accountability, transparency and stewardship of resources. The Strategic Enablers document would be updated periodically to reflect the changing issues that would impact on delivery of the overall Vision and Strategy.

2. The five strategic enablers were People; Infrastructure; Networks and Partnerships; Effectiveness and Financial Sustainability; and Environmental Sustainability. The University would use them to help understand co-dependencies that impact on ability to deliver the Vision and Strategy and create value for staff, students and other stakeholders. The success of this approach would be demonstrated through joined-up planning and use of resources, effective delegation, greater agility in responding to new opportunities, and risk-informed decision-making.

28. REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS

Received an update from Professor Tim Kirk, Chair of the Review of Academic Promotions Steering Group.

Noted that:

1. The steering group had been meeting for one year and its composition reflected all levels, roles and experiences. Discovery work had included the study of practice at other Russell Group institutions and Groningen University, one of Newcastle’s strategic partner institutions. The scope of the group’s deliberations had included equality, diversity and inclusion, parity of esteem, job titles, automatic progression from Grade F to G, quantitative and qualitative data used for promotion, and feedback for unsuccessful applicants.

2. The work of the group had so far led to draft revised criteria for Chair and Reader positions. Focus groups would be held to seek feedback on the revised criteria, and the interim results would be presented to Faculty and University Executive Boards. The steering group aimed to produce clearer procedural documents for promotion, backed up with more detailed guidance. It was intended that revised documentation and procedures would take effect in September 2019, in time for the next promotions round.

3. It was important to clarify and raise awareness about aspects of the promotions process, including the role of Performance and Development Review conversations, the influence of Heads of School, and the need for staff involved in decision-making to have undergone unconscious bias training.

29. ENGAGE AND ASPIRE

Received an update from Mrs Lynne Howlett and Mrs Lisette Nicholson, Assistant Directors of Human Resources.

Noted that:

1. The Engage and Aspire Human Resources modernisation programme remained in a discovery phase. This had been extended beyond the original project timeline in order to better understand the scope and variety of approaches within the institution.

2. Extensive consultation with c.500 staff in academic and professional service units had taken place so far, alongside desktop research and targeted discovery work where there were perceived gaps in provision, and discussion with trade unions. The research had also made use of data gathered for existing University projects such as Newcastle Professionals and the Review of Academic Promotions, as well as academic literature.
3. Performance and Development Review was one of the major strands of the programme, focusing on staff perceptions of value, the quality of conversations, and the skills and abilities of reviewers.

30. STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Received a paper from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Issues regarding the University’s approach to the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) had been raised in a number of areas, which created significant risks in terms of the effectiveness with which the Student Voice contributed to the development of the University’s educational provision.

2. It was felt that the Likert scale used by the University’s internal surveys to produce an arithmetic mean of the responses received had very limited value and meaning, and that the use of module evaluation results was not taking account of the validity or otherwise of module evaluation scores. Educational research had demonstrated that there were very significant biases in SET results in respect of key characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. SET results therefore had the potential to introduce elements of discrimination and bias into important, core University processes including HR processes such as probation and promotion.

3. Concerns had been repeatedly raised regarding the dangers of survey fatigue, particularly by the student body, in relation to the number of SETs students were asked to complete, and by staff about the huge amount of SET data for consideration, which prevented effective response.

4. Through its Education Strategy, the University was committed to ensuring its programmes were based on holistic, integrated programme-level learning, teaching and assessment strategies. The way programmes were currently evaluated, with an emphasis on evaluating every module every time a module is run, ran directly counter this. Furthermore, the current emphasis of SET on the individual module or member of staff did not reflect the institutional core value of Working Together, whereas delivering and supporting any given programme was a collaborative activity between academic and professional services staff, and staff and students.

5. Views were being sought across the institution about a potential revised approach which would end the practice of module evaluation across the University, but retain and increase the focus on and support for end of stage SET and the national end of programme SETs (National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys).

6. There was general support for ending the use of module evaluation questionnaires and removing their link with the promotions process. It was suggested, however, that end of stage evaluations could continue to provide opportunity for comment on individual modules as this would support staff in reflecting on their practice.

7. There should be an enhanced profile, and support, for the other routes and methods for the Student Voice to be heard, as many students did not engage with stage evaluation or as representatives on Student-Staff Committees.
31. **DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS**

Received a paper from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

1. Universities UK and GuildHE had launched a sector-wide consultation to consider the way in which undergraduate degree classification was operating across the sector, and how to ensure that public confidence in this aspect of academic standards in UK higher education could be maintained. The consultation document, as well as a report from the Office for Students, drew attention to significant increases in ‘good honours degrees’ (defined as firsts and upper seconds) over the last decade, with the proportion of these rising from 61% to 75% and the proportion of firsts alone increasing from 13% to 26%. Both reports identified what they describe as ‘unexplained’ increases in the proportion of ‘good honours degrees’ awarded for which no single action was the cause, although degree inflation was cited as a factor. Newcastle’s proportion of good honours degrees awarded had risen from 77.8% in 2010-11 to 85.9% in 2016-17, which was not deemed to be a significant unexplained change.

2. In order ‘to protect public confidence in the value of the honours degree classification system’, Universities UK and GuildHE had proposed a review by universities of quality assurance arrangements to ensure that these protected the value of qualifications over time. Under the proposed approach, all higher education providers would be required to publish a statement of intent to protect the value of honours degree over time, as well as implement a number of suggested practical measures.

3. Whilst it was important that the sector take a stance against grade inflation on protecting the academic standards of degrees, the institution’s response to the consultation should offer a clear view about the practical steps proposed that would have impact and those that would be bureaucratic. For example, the recommended use of degree classification descriptors was not welcomed and some of the terminology in the high level descriptors was not considered to be meaningful.

32. **ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))**

Reported that, in accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may accord the title of Professor Emeritus on professors retiring from the University.

Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor and President following consultation with the relevant Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, for the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus.

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

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:

Professor Eric Cross, effective from 1 January 2019
Professor Sugata Mitra, effective from 1 March 2019

33. **REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREE COMMITTEE**

Considered a report from the Honorary Degrees Committee.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Resolved that the nominations made by the Honorary Degree Committee for the award of honorary degrees in July 2019 be approved.

[Note: Senators were reminded of the continued confidential classification of the report until further notice.]

34. RE-APPOINTMENT OF A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

Reported that, in accordance with Senate Standing Order X, the Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the re-appointment of an existing Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the period of the re-appointment.

Considered a recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

[Resolved that the recommendation made by the Vice-Chancellor and President to renew the appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation until 31 July 2024 be approved, subject to approval by Council on 11 February 2019.]

35. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEE OF SENATE

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

(a) University Education Committee: 14 November and 12 December 2018
(b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 5 December 2018
(c) University Research Committee: 10 September, 22 October and 3 December 2018

[Resolved that the recommendation made by the Vice-Chancellor and President to renew the appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation until 31 July 2024 be approved, subject to approval by Council on 11 February 2019.]

36. EFFECTIVENESS OF SENATE 2017-18

Received the report from the 2017-18 Effectiveness of Senate questionnaire.

[Resolved that the recommendation made by the Vice-Chancellor and President to renew the appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation until 31 July 2024 be approved, subject to approval by Council on 11 February 2019.]

37. REPORTED BUSINESS

Received a report of action taken in accordance with agreed procedures, approved where necessary by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate and/or the Chair of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairs.

[Resolved that the recommendation made by the Vice-Chancellor and President to renew the appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation until 31 July 2024 be approved, subject to approval by Council on 11 February 2019.]

[Note: Senators were reminded of the continued confidential classification of the report until further notice.]