NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

25 June 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, Professor Brian Walker and Professor Phillip Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Phil Ansell, Professor Caroline Austin, Miss Lucy Backhurst, Mr Mike Davison, Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Mr Jack Green (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Joan Harvey, Mr Jonny Hall (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Helen Jarvis, Professor Peter Jorgensen, Dr Phillip Lord, Mr Raff Marioni (President, Students’ Union), Dr Nick Megoran, Dr Julie Morris, Dr Joanne Smith-Finley, Professor David Thwaites, 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), Mrs Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Dr Simon Meacher (Governance Manager).

Apologies: Dr Stacy Gillis, Dr Carmen Hubbard, Miss Martha King, Dr Andrew Pike, Professor Daniel Siemens, and Professor Jane Pollard.

MINUTES

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

70. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting of Senate on 30 April 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

71. 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. Fees and Funding

The report from the major review of post-18 education and funding, chaired by Sir Philip Augar, had been published on Thursday 30 May. On the same day, a report by KPMG (commissioned by the Department for Education) on the costs of undergraduate courses had also been published. The Augar report was non-binding, and it was unclear to what extent its recommendations would be prioritised by a future Prime Minister.

As had been expected, the main recommendation in the Augar report had been a cut in tuition fees from £9,250 to £7,500 per year for all subjects, which could be introduced for
2021 entry. The lost fee income would be replaced by government in full by increasing the teaching grant, leaving the average unit of funding unchanged at sector level in cash terms. The replacement funding would be used to both rebalance funding towards high-cost and ‘strategically important’ subjects and support disadvantaged students through increased ‘Student Premium’ funding. Alongside the proposed reduction in fees, other main recommendations included a re-introduction of maintenance grants of £3,000 per year for those household incomes of less than £25,000; government intervention on student number controls if the sector had not improved recruitment practice and student outcomes by 2022/23; the removal of funding for most foundation years attached to degree courses; changes to the terms and conditions of loan repayments; and the redirection of £1billion of capital funding from higher to further education to support flexible lifelong learning.

The KPMG report found that the average unit costs by subject group were all substantially above Augar’s proposed ‘reasonable base cost’ of £7,500. The findings supported arguments that some higher costs subjects were under-funded, but the report could be read as showing a surplus in other subject areas and there was a risk that this would be simplistically interpreted as showing inefficiency.

The estimated gross impact of the proposed fee changes for Newcastle University would be £10m in 2021/22 rising to £31m in 2025/26 onwards. Achieving the recommendation of no change in unit of resource for three years would require efficiency savings of up to £15m per year and the impact of the fee reductions would be in addition to those savings. If, as recommended by the report, the shortfall was made up by additional high cost subject funding and additional student success funding then the net impact would be significantly lower and, as Newcastle taught an above average mix of higher cost subjects, could be fully mitigated.

2. Newcastle University London

The Vice-Chancellor and President, together with other members of Executive Board, had attended a formal meeting with INTO University Partnerships on 4 June 2019 to discuss the future of Newcastle University London. Members of the OfS Student Protection and Market Exit team were scheduled to visit the University on Wednesday 10 July to discuss the London campus and their involvement. Council would be provided with a further update at its meeting on 15 July.

3. League Table Rankings

The QS World University Rankings 2020 had ranked Newcastle University 146th in the world out of 1,000 institutions (down 5 places on 2019), while the responses from over 44,000 employers ranked the University 89th in the world for employer reputation.

The University had been ranked in the Top 100 Universities in the world by the latest CWTS Leiden Ranking, an improvement of 40 places. In the most recent rankings (for the proportion of publications in the top 10% most cited) published on 15 May the University ranked 91st worldwide, up from 131st in 2018. Newcastle was also placed fifth in the UK for the proportion of our publications with female authors – a new Leiden Ranking indicator of gender differences in publication output.

In The Complete University Guide 2020 University League Tables, published on 1 May, the University was placed 22nd overall, out of 131 institutions, and scored particularly highly (88.5 points – top 10 in the UK) for graduate prospects - a measure of how employable a student is after graduating with their first degree. Newcastle had the region’s highest number of courses featuring in the subject tables at 41 - with 16 placed in the top 10 nationally.
The University had been ranked 23rd in the world for its commitment to sustainable development in the inaugural Times Higher Education Impact Rankings which recognised 500 global universities for their contributions to issues including climate change action and sustainable consumption. Based around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the rankings assess universities across three broad areas: research, outreach and stewardship. The University was ranked second in the world under SDG 12 ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’, while the University places seventh in the world and top in Europe under SDG 13, ‘Climate Action’. It was also ranked 11th under SDG17 ‘Partnerships for the Goals’ and 28th in SDG9 ‘Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure’.

4. Race Equality Charter

The University had become a member of the Race Equality Charter to help to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Membership of the Charter would go a long way towards supporting the University in its commitment to recruit the best students and staff regardless of their background. A key part of this commitment centred on developing more diversified education, and taking steps to reduce attainment gaps between different groups of students.

5. Climate Emergency

Following the University’s declaration of a climate emergency in April, Executive Board had discussed how to make further substantial progress in the decarbonisation of University activities. Significant progress has already been made, led by the Sustainability team, but the rate of change needed to increase.

6. Athena SWAN

The Newcastle Law School had been awarded Athena Swan Bronze, taking the number of academic units holding this award to nine. The Faculty of Medical Sciences held a Silver award covering all of its academic units. The University also held a Silver institutional award.

7. Brexit

On 28 May, the UK government had confirmed that EU students starting a course in England in 2020/21 would be guaranteed home fee status and remain eligible for financial support for the duration of their courses. The guarantee will apply even in a ‘no deal’ Brexit scenario, and followed extensive efforts by the sector to lobby government to provide certainty for prospective EU students, given the recruitment cycle is already well under way. There was no evidence currently of a decline in applications from EU students, however the University’s reliability on recruitment from the EU was low (c.5%) when compared with other Russell Group institutions.

8. Expanding Excellence in England (E3) Fund

Newcastle, together with Northumbria University, had been awarded £8m from the government’s E3 fund for a Hub for Biotechnology in the Built Environment. The hub was a collaboration between the two universities that would develop biotechnologies to create a new generation of buildings which were responsive to their environment, grown using engineered living materials, metabolise their own waste, and modulate their microbiome to benefit human health. The project received the largest investment out of 13 bids to receive funding by Research England.
9. Newcastle University Academic Track

The first round of open recruitment for Newcastle University Academic Track (NUAcT) fellows had been completed. In excess of 750 applications were received and, following a thorough shortlisting process, 40 candidates were invited to interview. 22 offers had been made with all but two being accepted. The quality of the applications, which included many University employees, had been very high.

10. North East Child Poverty Commission

It had been announced that Newcastle University would host the North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC). The move would create new opportunities for academics, voluntary organisations and local authorities to work together to address the causes of poverty and its impact on families and communities. The University had a strong track record of leading research on a range of issues relating to poverty and inequalities and how they affect children and young people. The Commission will be housed in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, allowing it to benefit from the expertise across the whole University in these areas.

11. Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe

Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) had announced that it would invest €20 million across Europe in research projects under the theme ‘Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe’ exploring subjects ranging from housing and healthcare to food and festivals. From more than 200 applications, just 20 projects were successful in gaining funding, of which two were being led by academics at Newcastle University. The first of these – “en/counter/points: (re)negotiating belonging through culture and contact in public space and place” – would be led by Dr Susannah Eckersley from the School of Arts & Cultures with academic partners from Warsaw University Institute of Sociology; Potsdam Centre for Contemporary History; University of Amsterdam; and Politecnico di Milano. The second, ‘Everyday experiences of young refugees and asylum seekers in public spaces’, would be led by Professor Peter Hopkins (Dean of Social Justice), working with Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Germany; Utrecht University, Netherlands; and Liege University, Belgium.

12. Implementing our Vision and Strategy

Changes to Faculty join-up and Professional Services’ structures had been proposed to help implement the Vision and Strategy. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who had oversight of the implementation of the Vision and Strategy would take on line management responsibility for the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors with effect from 1 August 2019. The Vision and Strategy commits us to build “effective, agile, resilient and cost-efficient Professional Services across the University.” In order to address this, there would be a move to a more devolved model with three major service hubs with three budget post-holders for Professional Services with effect from 1 August 2019. The budget holders would be the Registrar, the Executive Director of Finance, and a new Executive Director of Academic Affairs.

Resolved that Senate approve the change to the membership of Executive Board to include the Executive Director of Academic Affairs.

13. George Brown Endowment Fund

The University Endowments Group had referred to Senate a proposal to fund a commission of artwork by Turner Prize Winning Artist Lubaina Himid to celebrate the opening of the University’s Frederick Douglass Centre. The only relevant endowment
fund that could potentially fund this was the George Brown Endowment. The University had put into operation a long-term strategy to honour the legacy of Frederick Douglass, of which the commissioning of the artwork was an important strand.

**Resolved that Senate approve the use of £35k from the George Brown Endowment to fund a commission of artwork for the Frederick Douglass Centre.**

14. **Staff Successes**

The Vice-Chancellor and President had been elected to serve as a member of the Universities UK board from 1 August, and as chair of the N8 Research Partnership.

Professor Bernard Golding (School of Chemistry) has been named winner of the prestigious Robert Robinson Award from the Royal Society of Chemistry. The research in medicinal chemistry that he initiated at Newcastle University in the 1980s helped lead to the anticancer drug rucaparib (Rubraca).

Professor Mary Herbert, Professor of Reproductive Biology, has been elected as a Fellow to the Academy of Medical Sciences. She joins 50 new Fellows, leading national figures within biomedical and health sciences, who have been selected for their outstanding contributions to advancing medical science, cutting edge research discoveries, and translating developments into benefits for patients and wider society.

Newcastle University Library achieved national recognition for its outstanding contribution to information literacy, by scooping a prestigious LILAC (information literacy conference) award. Learning developer Terry Charlton won the Digital Award for Information Literacy after working with the Library's academic liaison team to produce a portfolio of innovative online education resources to enhance information literacy education.

15. **Public Orator**

In accordance with Senate Standing Order XI which stated that: “The Public Orators shall be appointed by Senate after considering a report of a Committee. One of the Public Orators shall be designated as the Senior Public Orator who shall have responsibility for allocating the duties across the year. The Public Orators shall normally hold office for three years”, the sub-group of Honorary Degree Committee on the appointment of a Public Orator had recommended the appointment of Dr James Harriman-Smith, School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics as replacement for Professor Selina Stead from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2022.

**Resolved that Senate approve the appointment of Dr James Harriman-Smith, School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics as Public Orator from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2022.**

16. **Reports from Committees of Senate**

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

The Committee had considered reports from the branch campuses at its most recent meeting. The Quality Assurance Agency would be carrying out a Transnational Education review in Malaysia this year and NUMed (although not its MBBS provision) had been selected to be part of the review.
An online academic induction would be launched in August and would be run as a MOOC on the FutureLearn platform. The course would complement existing induction arrangements. The Students’ Union had been a full partner in the development.

Following broad consultation, the Committee had agreed revised options for Student Evaluation of Teaching aimed at addressing current problems with continuing a consistent approach to gathering evaluative data at a module level in a proportionate way. End of module evaluations would cease with an increased emphasis on stage evaluation, mid-module evaluation, non-questionnaire evaluation, and student representation. Each stage evaluation would include a single free-text question for each of the modules on which a student had been registered.

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

The Committee would be hosting extended meetings in 2019-20, the first of which in September would focus on the place and global aspects of the University’s work and in particular the emerging Place network with Pittsburgh University. A broad academic engagement was being sought for some planned conferences and events over the next three years. The September meeting would be open to all staff.

**University Global Committee (UGC) – Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global**

The Committee had been monitoring taught postgraduate international student recruitment. Firm acceptances were currently up by 24% on last year, and the University was confident that a significant number of these would convert due to the level of bookings for Pre-Sessional English courses.

Other areas of focus for the committee included re-evaluation of Tier 2 partners; maximising the value of the University’s South East Asian hub; the potential development of a University presence in North America; and responding to the call for evidence for the Sir Adrian Smith review of future frameworks for international collaboration on research and innovation.

**University Research Committee (URC) – Professor Brian Walker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources**

The Committee had considered implementation of the University Research Strategy, University readiness for the Research Excellence Framework, and the research income budget. These issues had also been a focus for a Joint University Research Forum involving representatives from all three faculties.

72. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 10 JUNE 2019**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 10 June 2019. [Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

73. **NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CENTRES OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

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

Noted that:
1. The consolidation of the University’s multi-disciplinary research into Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs) was one of the ‘transformative initiatives’ in the University Research Strategy launched in October 2018. NUCoREs would consolidate the University’s research assets around coherent research domains to avoid duplication, enhance critical mass, prioritise investments in research, and provide a narrative for the institution’s research activity that was understood inside and outside the University.

2. Four NUcoREs were on a trajectory that would be ready for a launch in October: Regulatory Science; Heritage; Data; and Energy. A second wave of NUCoREs was expected in the Autumn term. It was anticipated that all centres would draw in additional staff and research-active students as they became more firmly established.

3. It was proposed that within three years, a portfolio of NUCoREs would have replaced the existing University Research Centres. NUCoREs may host sub-Centres in the interests of maintaining brand identity, progressing a distinct programme within the over-arching domain of the NUCoRE, or managing a substantial strategic funding award. University Research Centres that were supported by external funding or which had external partners were more likely to be retained.

4. The development of NUCoREs had already brought about a tangible positive change to the atmosphere of conversations about research at the University, and had included discussion about how NUCoREs would contribute to research-led education.

Resolved that Senate approve the four Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence in Data, Energy, Heritage and Regulatory Science.

74. MAGNA CHARTA LIVING VALUES PILOT

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

Noted that:

1. The University was taking forward its commitment as a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum. In addition to the four key sub-committees of Senate working on aspects relevant to their remit, Newcastle had also now become one of the pilot universities for the Living Values Project.

2. As a member of the project Newcastle would be working with the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) to look at both the ways values are being embedded in our work but also the successes and challenges of putting values into action. The University had been assigned an MCO ambassador who would visit the University in August to discuss the work. This would be followed by conferences in Canada and Italy which a number of colleagues would attend. This work would centre on the role of our core values in our core activities, with a special focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and global social justice including action on climate change.

3. It was suggested that Senate could devote a future White Space agenda item to discussion of values and principles of the Magna Charta Universitatum that were not otherwise covered by the Living Values Pilot.

75. SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

Received a paper from Professor Phillip Wright, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

1. The report provided a summary of activity undertaken to date and the actions that were outstanding. It was proposed that Science and Engineering Excellence should be closed as a discrete project and that the actions should be integrated alongside delivery of the broader SAgE Faculty Strategic Plan.

2. The Faculty had reviewed on the reorganisation experience leading to the following key reflections:
   - The additional support required to establish and develop a multidisciplinary school from a series of discrete units.
   - There had been insufficient focus on internal communications and change management.
   - The higher than expected turnover in administrative staff resulting in disruption and frustration at a challenging time.

3. In December 2018, the new Faculty structure had been reviewed via a staff survey, workshops and focus groups with staff exploring specific areas for improvement identified in the analysis of survey outcomes: management structures; strategy and leadership; service delivery; developing effective communications; and developing an inclusive culture. The outcomes of the review had fed into the development of Faculty and local unit action improvement plans which were being integrated into School and Faculty strategic planning.

4. A number of Senators referred to concerns made in the faculty that the reorganisation had been a negative experience for staff. Some concern was expressed that the report did not provide appropriate coverage of the way change had been experienced by these staff.

5. It was suggested that staff who had reservations about the reorganisation could engage with the working groups tasked with exploring the areas for improvement identified in the survey to address their concerns in a constructive fashion.

6. It would be helpful to revise the report prior to its consideration by Council, and in so doing demonstrate how the risks identified when the project was first proposed had been mitigated.

7. The reflections on the reorganisation experience had been shared with colleagues working on other major reorganisation projects, such as the review of the Faculty of Medical Sciences. It was suggested that Senate should use a future White Space agenda item to reflect more broadly on effective approaches to consultation, listening, building trust and taking collective responsibility.

76. **BUDGET 2019-20**

Received a presentation from Mr Richard Dale, on behalf of Executive Board.

Noted that:

1. The main elements of the University’s financial strategy were to maintain a robust balance sheet, deliver value for money on all its activities, invest in the academic and student experience, and improve its market share within the Russell Group.

2. Operational performance in 2018-19 was ahead of budget in almost all areas, however, the University was faced with a series of headwinds which included home student demographics, research income trends and margins, Brexit, a potential increase in
employer pensions contributions, and the possible implications of the Augar report on post-18 education fees and funding.

3. The University wanted to avoid ‘planning blight’ but needed to be mindful of future risks. There was a critical need to address marketing and grow international student numbers in a sustainable manner, as well as IT issues, student wellbeing concerns and future efficiency improvements whilst delivering on the Vision and Strategy. The institution’s capital plan also needed to be delivered in order for the University to remain competitive.

77. 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 F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:

Professor Robin Humphrey, with effect from 1 October 2019
Professor Simon Pallett, with effect from 1 August 2019

78. 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: 1 May 2019
(b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 1 May 2019
(c) University Research Committee: 8 April 2019

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G-J. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

79. MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

Sabbatical Officers 2019-20

The following had been appointed Sabbatical Officers of the Students’ Union for 2019-20 and would be members of Senate for the same period:

President          Miss Katie Smyth
Education Officer  Mr Pablo Charro de la Fuente
Welfare and Equality Officer Miss Sara Elkhawad

Student Representative on Senate

Resolved that Senate co-opt Ms Karina Sorrels (Postgraduate Officer of the Students’ Union) to the membership of Senate for 2019-20.

Senate Elections 2019

The following members of staff had been elected as Professorial and Non-Professorial members of Senate for a period of three years from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022:

Professor Ashley Adamson (Institute of Health and Society)
Professor Nils Braakmann (Newcastle University Business School)
Dr Kirsten MacLeod (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics)
Professor Ted Schrecker (Institute of Health and Society)
Professor Konstantinos Stellos (Institute of Genetic Medicine)
Dr David Stewart (School of Mathematics, Statistics and Physics)
Professor Stefano Utili (School of Engineering)

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Resolved that Senate appoint Dr Phillip Lord as its representative on Environment and Sustainability Committee until 31 July 2020.

Senate-appointed Chairs and members of University Committees

Resolved that Senate approve the recommendations in Document K.

80. CONGREGATIONS CEREMONIES

December 2019

Congregation ceremonies would be held on 2-6 December 2019 in the King’s Hall, Armstrong Building.

July 2020

Congregation ceremonies following the end of the Summer Term 2020 would be held on 8-22 July 2020 in the King’s Hall, Armstrong Building.

81. EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF SENATE 2018-19

Senators are asked to complete an effectiveness questionnaire on an annual basis. The questionnaire would be circulated for completion by all members at the end of the academic year. A report on the findings of the questionnaire would be prepared for review at a meeting of Senate early in 2019-20. The findings of last year’s questionnaire were provided for information.

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

82. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

Senate noted the final version of the University’s Access and Participation Plan for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25 as submitted to the Office for Students.

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

83. 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.

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

Noted that:

Senate received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

Resolved that Senate record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.