

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

THE FIFTY-FIFTH ORDINARY MEETING OF CONVOCATION

Saturday 16 June 2012

Present: Mr AE Jones (in the chair); Mr V Allen; Miss SJ Bevan; Professor C Brink (Vice-Chancellor); Dr G Burton; Dr RJ Butterfield; Mrs C Butterfield; Dr EW Chesters; Dr P Chitsabesan; Mrs PM Chrisp; Mrs K Clemmetsen; Dr S Coleman; Dr P Coyne; Dr HM Coyne; Mr KG Crofton-Martin; Ms SL Davies; Miss R Draper; Mr RE Eden; Mr E Ekwo; Dr JS Elfardag; Mr DR Fitzpatrick; Mr IH Forster; Dr J Gale; Dr PW Gale; Dr D Gascoigne; Mr RJ Green; Mr CC Goldthorpe; Mrs U Hall; Dr K Harland; Mrs CM Harvey; Dr DJ Hetherington; Mr C Homer; Mrs J Homer; Mr PBF Hood; Mrs E Hood; Mr DJ Howarth; Mr CL Humphreys; Mr TF Hutchings; Dr RM Jameson; Dr WB Lishman; Mrs RE Lishman; Mr AA Logan; Mrs AM Makepeace; Dr RW McCrae; Mr JR Megson; Mr WG Oliver; Professor P Olivier; Mr E Ora; Mr HRC Owen; Dr S Papagiannidis; Professor DG Parker; Mr JDRB Percy; Mrs PAM Percy; Mrs MD Penn; Mrs JA Penny; Mr H Regnart; Dr LM Rozner; Mr MJ Scott; Mr M Scrimshaw; Mr PW Skevington; Mr M Stoddart; Mr ICF Symes; Mr RM Theaker; Mrs SM Walker; Professor AJ Walton; Mr FT Walton; The Rt Hon Lord Walton of Detchant; Revd RC Wardale

In attendance: Miss TA Angelopoulos; Mrs A Burton; Mrs J Clubley; Miss M Douglas; Mrs K Hendrix; Dr JV Hogan; Mr JA Johnston; Ms TM Readshaw; Professor E Ritchie;

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Convocation held on Saturday 20 June 2011 were approved as an accurate record.

DOCUMENT A

2. MATTERS ARISING

The Chair reported that Convocation would receive updates on questions raised at last year's meeting as part of the Vice-Chancellor's statement. This included the implications of the introduction of the Health and Social Care Bill, changes to visa requirements for international staff and students and the employability of our graduates.

It was reported that the Russell Group has recently been expanded to include York, Exeter, Queen Mary's and Durham and now has 24 members.

3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S STATEMENT 2011-12

Received: The Vice-Chancellor's Report to Convocation, 16 June 2012.

Noted:

- (a) That as anticipated, the new fees and funding regime has been introduced with most of the previous state funding for teaching being replaced by student fees, thus confirming the government's ideology as queried by Mr Horace Regnart at last year's meeting. The University has received notice of the first tranche of consequent HEFCE teaching grant cutbacks for 2012-13, of 20%. This is the first tranche of the eventual cutback of 80% over time.

- (b) The government has also introduced a new student numbers “core and margin” model that enables universities to recruit as many students with AAB qualifications as they wish in September 2112. In 2113 this will change to ABB and possibly so on, until there is a completely open market in student recruitment. One of the consequences of this is that conversions from applications to registrations are now less certain and we have to work harder to attract high quality students. In addition, the UK Border Agency has introduced visa restrictions and a requirement on universities to monitor the attendance of international students.
- (c) We have been preparing for all of these changes under the umbrella of “Project 2012”, through which we have been addressing four guiding questions: what will we charge, what is the deal, how do we recruit and how do we deliver? The first three of these have been completed and the fourth is progressing well.
- (d) In view of the University’s need to strengthen its efforts in positioning and communication, we have appointed a Director of Public Relations, Ms Abi Kelly. A PR strategy is under development and will be considered by University Council in September.
- (e) Much of our work over the last year has been aimed at enhancing the student experience at Newcastle. Our efforts are being recognised through improving scores in various surveys and league tables, including
- The National Student Survey 2011, the overall student satisfaction score increased to 89% (from 87%);
 - We were ranked 12th in the Sunday Times University Guide in 2012;
 - In the International Student Barometer 2012, we came 6th in the Russell Group (1st for arrival, living & learning; 2nd for support), 7th in the UK, and 45th in the world (out of 208 participating institutions)
 - 94.3% of our graduates were employed within six months of graduating, 77.7% of them were in graduate level jobs.
- (f) Our research income was up on previous years, showing a slight increase (~4%), but 2010/11 was a good year for Research Council awards, Newcastle ranked 13th by value of awards. The number of projects awarded in year has increased significantly (35%) compared with the previous year (584 to 785) with a corresponding increase in award value of 14% from £81.3M to £92.7M.
- (g) We now have a full suite of three Societal Challenge Themes, Ageing (Newcastle Initiative on Changing Age – NICA, Director Professor Tom Kirkwood); Sustainability (Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability – NIREs, Director Professor Paul Younger) and Social Renewal (Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal – NISR, Director Professor Mark Shucksmith) Each of these have a range of engagement activities regionally, nationally and internationally.
- (h) Our international activities have been progressing well. The official opening of NUMed, Malaysia took place in November 2011 and we are expanding the range of

engineering programmes that we deliver in Singapore. We will also be opening a Confucius Institute in September 2012 in collaboration with Xaimen University in southern China. This will provide a key focus for the dissemination of Chinese language and culture in the North East, providing courses in Chinese language, culture and contemporary Chinese society for a range of groups including the business community.

- (i) Financially, 2011-12 has been a fairly difficult year, but Newcastle remains well placed and we expect to achieve our budget whilst retaining healthy cash balances. We have reasonable confidence about overall student recruitment although AAB recruitment remains a concern. Overall our priorities continue to be the protection of our core academic resources and student experience, to grow non regulated income, and to secure non pay efficiencies through centralised procurement and process efficiencies.
- (j) We have continued to rejuvenate the campus including the refurbishment of the Students' Union building and the creation a new Student Forum that will be ready by September 2012. The Armstrong building refurbishment phase 2 commences in Summer 2012 and there are a number of refurbishment projects planned to improve student accommodation.
- (k) Environmental sustainability remains one of our key objectives, and we have achieved some impressive results and one or two awards. We achieved Gold Eco Campus status and our bid for Platinum status is under way and we were awarded a "First-class Honours" in the People and Planet league. The proportion of staff travelling to work by car reduced from 40% in 2004 to 22% in 2010, and our recycling rate for 2009/10 was 93%.
- (l) Thank you to all staff, students and supporters for the successes enjoyed by the University during this year,

Contributions and questions from the floor:

- (a) Mr John Percy (BSc Mining Engineering 1962) asked about the possibility of Alumni being able to book accommodation in student residences during the vacation period for holidays. It was confirmed that this was indeed possible and enquiries would be warmly welcomed.
- (b) Dr Donald Gascoigne (MB BS 1951) enquired about the plans for Kensington and Park Terrace. The Vice-Chancellor explained that Park Terrace will be demolished and rebuilt as student accommodation, while Kensington Terrace will be refurbished as accommodation largely for postgraduate students.
- (c) Mr Desmond Fitzpatrick (BA Economics 1955) was unhappy about the proposal to develop the wall of the Arches that was exposed following the demolition of the Museum of Antiquities, into a "green wall". The Vice-Chancellor explained that several options had been considered for this, including the re-creation of a lodge/pavilion type structure as had been in place many years ago. The decision not

to build here but to create a green wall instead, was partly due to the costs involved, but largely because it is felt that this would detract from the “opening up” of the Armstrong Building that had been achieved by the removal of the Museum of Antiquities.

- (d) Cathryn Harvey (BA Sociology & Social Administration 1969, DipSw 1984 , MEd 1995) congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on the work that has been done on enhancing the campus. It was generally agreed that the campus has improved immeasurably over recent years and the University should be commended on the care and attention given to these improvements.
- (e) Lord Walton of Detchant, (MBBS 1945; MD 1952; DSc 1972; Hon DCL 1988), gave an update on the statement that he made at the previous meeting concerning the education of the health professionals. When the Health and Social Care Bill was being introduced eighteen months ago, it was opposed by a large number of health professionals as it said nothing about the education of that group. When the Bill was discussed in the House of Commons, approximately three quarters of its clauses were not discussed, however, at the House of Lords stage, 375 amendments were passed and the Bill was much improved.

A national organisation, “Health Education England” (HEE) has been created. The purpose of the new organisation is to ensure that the health workforce has the right skills, behaviours and training, and is available in the right numbers, to support the delivery of excellent healthcare and health improvement. HEE is a central part of the new education and training system within which, the Postgraduate Deaneries will be preserved.

The Chair of Convocation highlighted Lord Walton's significant contribution to this Debate.

4. INTERNATIONALISATION

Received: A presentation from the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ella Ritchie, on Internationalisation.

Noted:

- (a) Around 20% of our students are international and diversity is an important feature of University life.
- (b) Many forms of partnerships span the breadth and depth of internationalisation activities in a HEI. As part of the development of our Internationalisation Strategy, the 'type' of partner was considered and a distinction made between ' foundation partnerships ' and strategic partnership and an acknowledgement that each need varying levels of institutional sign-off, buy-in and commitment. In addition we acknowledge that partners are not just universities but many types of organisation.
- (c) In keeping with and in order to enhance our global position, we are developing significant strategic alliances with many of the very best universities and

institutions in the world, these include: Shanghai Jiaotong University in China ; Xiamen University in China; Monash University in Australia and Groningen University in the Netherlands.

- (d) We have developed in-county delivery operations in Singapore (SIT) and Malaysia (NUMed). At the NUMed Campus (in South Malaysia), we are looking to develop our presence beyond Medicine and Biosciences. In Singapore, where we are the lead international partner, we are delivering a number of programmes in collaboration with the Singapore Institute of Technology. In both cases our aim do to deliver a broadly equivalent student experience as that in Newcastle, accepting the inevitable cultural differences.
- (e) Our overall aim is to recruit and retain strong and diverse cohorts of highly-quality international staff and students, develop and maintain international opportunities for staff and students and attract the highest quality international researchers to Newcastle for research collaborations.
- (f) Our alumni can play an important role in partnership development and nurturing of relations. There is more we can do, for example through development of lifelong relationships with our alumni.

Contributions and questions from the floor:

- (a) Mr Christopher Goldthorpe (Agriculture 1962) asked whether Newcastle University had to follow Malaysian government policy in restricting racial intake to the medical programmes. The Registrar explained that this University will always select students according to our admissions policy and only on merit, however, we cannot control the scholarships offered by the Malaysian government. Having said that, by building the new campus and inviting us to deliver programmes there it is clear that they do wish to widen their intake.

5. ALUMNI CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Received:

An oral report from the Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group (ACG), Mr Ian Forster and a written report by Jane Clubley, Director of Development. **DOCUMENT B**

Noted:

- (a) Mr Forster thanked the Development and Alumni Relations Office staff for the tremendous support that he has received as the Chair of the ACG.
- (b) He reported that the newly elected members of the ACG have integrated well and have been receiving lots of new ideas from fellow Alumni with whom they are linking successfully.
- (c) As requested last year, the Group is undertaking a review of its constitution and election process, and will report back to Convocation next year with some proposals

6. HONORARY DEGREES 2010-2011

Reported:

(i) That Honorary degrees were conferred on the following individuals at the Honorary Degree Ceremony held on 13 and 14 July 2011:

- DLitt** **Mr David Almond**, award-winning writer who specialises in children's literature.
- DCL** **Mrs Olivia Grant OBE DL**, retiring Chair of the University's Council and Pro-Chancellor.
- DCL** **Mr Ian Gregg**, retired Executive Chairman and Managing Director of Greggs the Bakers.
- DCL** **Ms Dianne Nelmes**, award-winning investigative journalist and media executive.

(ii) That Honorary Degrees were conferred on the following individuals at the Degree Ceremony held on 12 December 2011 to mark the end of a year-long programme of events on the theme of 'Sustainability',

- DCL** **Sir Jonathon Porritt**, one of the country's best known and respected environmentalists, writers and campaigners for sustainability.
- DCL** **David Nussbaum** became Chief Executive of the WWF-UK in 2007 and chairs the international WWF network's Global Climate and Energy Initiative.
- DCL** **Sir John Beddington** is the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, and has previously been adviser to a number of government departments including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- DCL** **Chris Mullin** was MP for Sunderland South for 23 years. He served for four years as Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee and later as a minister in three departments – Environment, International Development and the Foreign Office.

7. HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS 2010-2011

Reported:

That Honorary Fellowships were conferred on the following individuals at a ceremony held on 10 October 2011:

Sir Peter Carr

Chairman of NHS North East, Sir Peter has an involvement with NHS organisations dating back to the 1990's. An active member of the University's Court, Nominations Committee and the Newcastle University Business School Advisory Board, Sir Peter has long-standing links with the Faculty of Medical Sciences and central to the strategic partnership between the University and the NHS.

Mrs Margaret Levy

From 1986 Margaret held a number of positions at the University which included the role of Secretary in the Department of Primary Health Care, followed by similar jobs in Population and Health Sciences, the Institute for Health & Society and Medical Education Development. Margaret became Chair of the Trustee Board of the Retirement Benefit Plan (RBP) in 2008.

Mr Mark Scrimshaw

Mark graduated from this University with a BA History (1976) and served as deputy president in the Union Society from 1974-75. He has produced and directed over 80 documentary features for the BBC, winning several regional, national and international awards for his work. Former Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group (ACG) for six years, Mark is still a 'member' of the ACG after successful re-election. Mark is also a member of the University's Court.

8. DEATHS AND OBITUARIES

A list of deaths is available on the Alumni website.

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/involved/strategic/convocation/obituaries/2010.htm>

9. CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair reflected on the physical and intellectual strengths of the University, which he felt had never been stronger, and encouraged our Alumni to accept that they are part of a dynamic and changing community that is exciting and moving with the times.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Reported:

The provisional date for the Fifty-sixth Ordinary Meeting of Convocation is Saturday 15 June 2013.

Ruth Draper
Acting Secretary to Convocation
19 June 2012