

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COURT

12 OCTOBER 2021

Present: Mr Paul Walker, Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council (in the Chair), The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Caroline Austin, Ms Bethany Ainsley, Ms Charlotte Carpenter, Ms Antonia Cundy, Dame Jackie Daniel, Professor Richard Davies, Mr Andrew Davison, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Mr Colin Fitzpatrick, Councillor Nick Forbes, Mrs Olivia Grant, Professor Nigel Harkness, Mr Ajay Khindria, Mr Vikas Kumar, Professor René Koglbauer, Professor William Maloney, Mr Hector MacDonald, Mr Richard Maudslay, Ms Sophie McDermott, Ms Lorna Moran, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Ms Fiona O'Connor, Ms Abigail Pogson, Professor Jane Robinson, Ms Sanjee Ratnatunga, Mrs Angela Russell, Professor Julie Sanders, Sir Nigel Sherlock, Professor Mark Shucksmith, Ms Sarah Stewart, Ms Hannah Underwood, Dr Ruth Valentine, Mr Rob Williamson, Mr Paul Woolston and Baroness Wyld.

In attendance: Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs), Mr Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance elect), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Ms Rachael Lennon and Ms Rachel Pattinson (joint Strategic Cultural Partnership Managers) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

The Chair welcomed the following new lay members to their first meeting of Court: Ms Bethany Ainsley, Ms Charlotte Carpenter, Ms Antonia Cundy, Dame Jackie Daniel, Mr Mark l'Anson, Mr Vikas Kumar, Ms Abigail Pogson, Ms Sanjee Ratnatunga and Baroness Wyld.

The Chair welcomed the following new *Ex Officio* members of Court: Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering and Ms Angela Russell, University Treasurer.

The Chair welcomed Rachael Lennon and Rachael Pattinson joint Strategic Cultural Partnership Managers, who attended for the main presentation.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document A)

2. MEMBERSHIP

Received:

(a) The membership of Court for 2021-22.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document B)

(b) A document detailing the profiles of members of Court.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document C)

3. **MEMBERSHIP OF COURT STEERING COMMITTEE 2021-22**

Reported that:

The membership of Court Steering Committee for 2021-22 is as follows:

Members

Mr Rob Williamson (Chair)
Ms Fiona O'Connor*
Mr Sarah Stewart
Professor Chris Day
Mr Paul Walker

Observers

Professor Jane Robinson
Registrar

*Ms Fiona O'Connor had indicated her wish to resign her membership of Court Steering Committee with immediate effect.

Considered:

A recommendation from Court Steering Committee that Ms Hilary Florek be appointed to the vacancy on Court Steering Committee with immediate effect until 31 July 2024 (when Ms Florek's current term on Court is due to end). Ms Florek had indicated her willingness to serve subject to the approval of Court.

Resolved:

That Ms Hilary Florek be appointed to serve on Court Steering Committee with immediate effect until 31 July 2024.

4. **MAIN PRESENTATION**

Received:

A presentation on the University's work with cultural stakeholders and partners. The presenters will be Professor Julie Sanders, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Professor Jane Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Place.

(Slices circulated with the Agenda as Document D)

Noted that (presentation):

1. The University has a number of partnerships with cultural organisations in the North East and culture is a key area of expertise for the University with many academic practitioners in the field.
2. The University operates its own cultural venues such as The Great North Museum, The Hatton Gallery (these two in partnership with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums) and the new Farrell Centre which will be opening in 2022. Exhibitions at cultural venues are connected to study and research at the University.

3. The University has many UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Arts Council England (ACE) supported projects.
4. The Pop Art Exhibition at the Hatton which runs until January 2022 was recommended to members.
5. The guiding principle of 'working together' sees the University working closely with a number of cultural partner organisations including Northern Stage, The National Trust, Seven Stories, New Writing North, Bloodaxe, the Baltic, The Sage Gateshead, Gem Arts and Cap-a-Pie.
6. The National Trust relationship is a new innovation in terms of education and research work already undertaken by staff and students.
7. The Seven Stories and Vital North Partnership work is long-standing and has contributed to both impact in case studies and educational programmes and opportunities in the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics.
8. In terms of our partnership with New Writing North one important innovation is a Climate Writer in Residence, Linda France, now supported by ACE funding. This is helping with the build-up/build-out of COP26 and to write the Net Zero narrative working with key University colleagues and the general public.
9. The University has a long-standing relationship with Bloodaxe, publishers of the University's Chancellor, Imtiaz Dharker, among others.
10. The University is particularly happy to be working with Gem Arts, a long-standing leader in community engagement and the cultural space.
11. Through the Newcastle Centre for Literary Arts Poetry Festival our Chancellor will be hosting an event next May along with the Poet Laureate in our Frederick Douglass Centre, which will be schools and young people focused.
12. The University also works with a wide ecosystem of freelance practitioners acting as a convenor and enabler.
13. Three case studies were presented:
 - a. The Frederick Douglass and Global Social Justice Week in 2019 and commissioned work from Gem Arts and Northern Stage's Young Company.
 - b. The ENERGIES Exhibition, which explored the industrial changes affecting Blyth in partnership with Headway Arts. The exhibition brought 9 regionally based artists together with local communities and is part of the University's contribution to developing an investment plan around Blyth.
 - c. The University also works with Cap-a-Pie Theatre Group and recent engagement is around our Climate Action Research where our engineers and scientists worked with schools and young people asking how they would like to tell the climate story to adults. This initiative is up for a Green Gown Award for benefiting society and addresses the climate agenda working with our scientists and engineers to tell the story through the arts. The work will be shown at COP26 in Glasgow.
14. The NE has seen recent growth in the creative industries by 68% and we are working with the North of Tyne Combined Authority on the establishment of a

cultural fund to support cultural creatives in the NE. The University also leads the NE Creative Fuse initiative, which is funded by the EU and ACE and also works through the North East Cultural Partnership to consider how we can support creative skills across the wider region.

15. Wor Culture was a perfect example of our convening power, particularly during the pandemic. This was a series of online events which engaged with the community to consider a number of culture-related topical issues. While this initiative was facilitated by the University, it was owned by the sector.
16. The University is also a partner in the Civic University Network which brings together universities which are developing and building their work on engagement and place. Newcastle University is leading the theme around culture and arts in terms of how we can bring the University together with the community and arts practitioners.
17. Members were asked to note that on 19th October the Chief Executive of the Arts Council would be presenting an Insights Event which would be streamed and open to the public.
18. An expression of Newcastle as a fully functioning Civic University is a great example of our guiding principles in action and we are using our cultural venues to explore ideas of sanctuary and belonging.

Noted that (discussion):

1. This presentation illustrated the progress the University is making embedding itself in the cultural sector.
2. The University's award of an Honorary Degree to Kathryn Tickell (also a lecturer in our School of Arts and Cultures) and our use of a Northumbrian Piper at all of our degree ceremonies connects well with local musical traditions. Many international students and their families appreciate the Northumbrian Piper at ceremonies and the University should look to showcase this tradition during Freshers' Week and particularly through the high-profile lecturers on our Folk Degree (Kathryn Tickell, Catriona McDonald and Nancy Kerr-Elliott). The Northumbrian Pipers Society and Magnetic North East would also be happy to work with the University.
3. Place making needs to be thoughtful and intentional and the University needs to be conscious of the voice and agency that we can enable but not attempt to drive.
4. The University wants to contribute to mitigating the impact of learning loss across all school areas and one example is in the Climate Literacy space. The DfE has asked how we can work with schools in this area and our Climate Catastrophe work is a perfect opportunity to do this.
5. Professor Alison Shaw leads in terms of Access and Participation and Inclusive Newcastle and would be happy to hear the ideas of Court members as to how we can contribute to learning loss.
6. Rachel Pattinson highlighted that many of our partners already work with children and young people. The Great North Museum welcomes school visits and early

years groups together with the Special Collections Team in the Library who work with schools.

7. Many cultural organisations also did wonderful work during the pandemic to reach out to school children.
8. Gem Arts values its partnership with the University and works with schools to promote international music. The University's work is important in promoting different cultural communities in terms of equality, equity and diversity. The University can help to ensure people from all social and cultural backgrounds can access the arts.
9. It is exciting to note that the Lindisfarne Gospels are coming to the Laing Art Gallery and the University is considering how we can connect this with literacy initiatives.
10. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost thanked members of Court for their engagement and activity in this space and highlighted the importance of the Cultural Sector and the opportunity to come together to be transformative in this space in the future."

Resolved:

- i. The Chair extended Court's thanks to all in the University who are involved in this area.
- ii. The University to give thought to how cultural events could be promoted to Court members.
- iii. If any Court member has any ideas in this space they should contact the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.

5. **VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

Received and considered:

A report from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document E)

Noted that (report):

1. With respect to Covid-19 there is broadly good news at the moment. Concerns that students returning to campuses all over the country would lead to a spike in cases were not realised. The rate of cases at Newcastle is about 1/10th of the country as a whole. There are very high vaccination rates among students with many having acquired immunity through previous infection. In this area the number of cases in the 18-24 range are still falling. There were also concerns that large numbers of staff returning to campus may lead to anxiety about face to face teaching but the majority of staff have been happy to return to campus to contribute to our efforts to give as normal a student experience as possible. Sir Patrick Vallance's view at a recent Russell Group meeting was that the increased risk of more normal societal behaviours is being balanced by vaccine take-up, with current intelligence suggesting the booster vaccines would be effective against most

variants. The main risk is thought to be other infections which may play more of a role in public health this winter.

2. The Vice-Chancellor noted the pleasing news that Professor Suzanne Cholerton, the former Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, had been awarded an OBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours.
3. The final closure of Newcastle University London took place on 30th September with support put in place for those students who wished to stay in London for the remainder of their teaching rather than transfer to Newcastle.
4. Recent good news regarding rankings included the University's place in the top 150 in The Times Higher World Rankings, a rise of 32 places and our highest position for over a decade. This is due to our improvement in the hard metric of research citations of colleague's published work. In addition, The Times Higher Education Impact rankings are relatively new and assess over 1200 universities in terms of their sustainability efforts. Our position of 2nd in the world for responsible consumption and production shows how highly an objective group of peers rate our work in this area.
5. The USS pension scheme continues to be a problem as we near the end of the 2020 valuation. UUK has put forward a solution to the deficit problem which keeps the contributions of employers and employees largely the same. This has been accepted by the trustees and the pension regulator but UCU are balloting members for industrial action. The formal consultation period for all USS employees will run from November through to January next year. It is hoped to start the new contributions and benefits by April 2022.
6. The Living Wage Foundation awarded its Campaign of the Year Award to the University in collaboration with Tyne and Wear citizens.
7. The Pride of Newcastle Awards acknowledge the work of students and staff and it was pleasing to see recognition for the volunteering work done by our Medical Students and others to help frontline NHS workers during the pandemic.
8. The University had poor results in the National Student Survey this year. While those surveyed had gone through two bouts of industrial action followed by Covid, our position of bottom in the Russell Group is a cause for concern. The new PVC Education, Tom Ward, is leading on a fundamental consideration of putting students more at the centre of our day-to-day activities. Tom is working with each unit to see what they need to do to improve the student experience. With face-to-face teaching and a more normal experience scores should go up but we cannot be complacent and need to consider why our scores have been falling over recent years. We want to empower units to respond to the particular issues in their areas rather than embark on a more "top down" exercise.
9. The University has introduced EU UG/PG Research Scholarships in response to lower recruitment from Europe as we consider European students important to maintain true cultural diversity.
10. The University is doing a great deal of good work in the Engagement and Place space, contributing to the social and economic wellbeing of the City, the region, nationally and internationally through our campuses overseas.

11. In particular we worked with the North of Tyne Combined Authority to host a Green Economy Summit in June, which brought together global experts, industry and public sector leaders to explore how the region can lead the drive towards Net Zero and an economy powered by clean jobs and growth.
12. In response to financial cuts to Official Development Assistance announced by the Government, the University effectively used our own funds to mitigate some of the damage in this area, particularly relating to the two University ran GCRF hubs which had lost substantial funding.
13. It has become clear that the electric vehicle industry and the batteries needed to power it will be located in the North East, either in Blyth or at the Nissan Plant. One of the main incentives for businesses wishing to come to this area is the opportunity to work with the University's experts in this space and the University will be at the heart of this electric revolution going forward.
14. The forthcoming 150th Anniversary of the College of Physical Sciences (Armstrong Building) presents a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the innovations over the last 150 years with a comprehensive programme of events to be organised.
15. The Stephenson Building is now partly demolished and will be replaced by a £70m state of the art building which, amongst other things, will provide a "front door" to our School of Engineering.
16. The return to campus has been broadly positive for students and staff. We are strongly advising the use of face coverings while in large group teaching sessions, with some initial resistance replaced by a positive response when asked. Students have 50% of teaching face to face with some flipped classroom teaching, i.e. watching a lecture online followed by the opportunity to ask questions in person.

Noted that (discussion):

1. The University and its staff should be congratulated on the success of its work with the battery industry, and it is important to articulate what a marvellous University staff and students are part of.
2. Good communication is vital regarding the USS, particularly in the context of pensions being difficult to understand for most beneficiaries. UUK, the Russell Group and the Trustees are all working on how best to articulate the situation.
3. Following last year's cyberattack, the Vice-Chancellor was asked how the University had responded and strengthened its systems to ensure the University is more resistant to future attacks. The University has strengthened its defences in as many controls and protections as possible. Constant vigilance is in place with a major programme of further investment in this area approved by Council.

6. **PAST COURT PRESENTATIONS: UPDATES FOR MEMBERS**

Received a document updating Court on the presentation received in October 2019, delivered by Ms Sally Ingram, Director, Student Health and Wellbeing Service – on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document F)

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None raised.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Reported that:

- (a) The next meeting of Court will take place at 10:30 on Friday 8 April 2022 in the Frederick Douglass Centre on the Newcastle Helix site.
- (b) Court Steering Committee has agreed that a presentation on the work of the University's National Innovation Centres for Ageing and Data should be the main item on the agenda.

9. **CHANCELLOR'S INAUGURATION – SAVE THE DATE**

Reported that:

- (a) Planning has commenced for the Chancellor's Inauguration Ceremony on 12 July 2022. The Inauguration Ceremony will be held in the afternoon and will include conferment of Honorary Degrees.
- (b) It is proposed that the Honorary Fellowships to Marni Myers and Greg Smith be awarded as part of the Dinner in the evening. Both recipients have been informed of the date.

Members were asked to add the date to their diaries pending the issue of official invitations.