

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COURT

11 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Mr Paul Walker, Chair of Council (in the Chair), The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Caroline Austin, Ms Bethany Ainsley, Ms Mady Baugh, Ms Lil Collingham-Clark, Professor Richard Davies, Ms Hilary Florek, Mr Nick Forbes, Ms Sarah Glendinning, Dr Stacy Gillis, Mrs Olivia Grant, Ms Sarah Green, Professor Nigel Harkness, Ms Jacqui Hodgson, Professor René Koglbauer, Dr Jo Matthan, Ms Catherine McKinnell, Emeritus Professor Ian Postlethwaite, Ms Sanjee Ratnatunga, Professor Maggie Roe, Sir Nigel Sherlock, Ms Sarah Stewart, Professor Tom Ward and Mr Paul Woolston.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Mr Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Mr Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance) Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Ms Sian Breen (Executive Assistant) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

MINUTES

The Chair welcomed the following new members to their first meeting of Court: Mady Baugh, Sarah Glendinning, Jacqui Hodgson, Jo Matthan, Catherine McKinnell, Ian Postlethwaite and Maggie Roe.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2022 were approved as a correct record.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document A)

2. MEMBERSHIP

Received:

(a) The membership of Court for 2022-23.

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

(Circulated with the Agenda as Documents B and C)

3. **MEMBERSHIP OF COURT STEERING COMMITTEE 2022-23**

Reported that:

The membership of Court Steering Committee for 2022-23 was as follows:

Members

Ms Sarah Stewart (Chair)
Ms Hilary Florek
Mr Vikas Kumar
Professor Chris Day
Mr Paul Walker

Observers

Professor Jane Robinson
Registrar

4. **HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Reported that:

- (a) The Chancellor had confirmed that Honorary Fellowship Award Ceremonies can be scheduled to coincide with her annual visit to the campus in May each year for the Poetry Festival.
- (b) The Honorary Fellowship Ceremony in 2023 will be held on Thursday, 4 May.

Considered:

A report from Court Steering Committee recommending individuals to receive the award of Honorary Fellowships of the University in 2023.

(Circulated with the agenda as Document D)

Noted that:

- 1. Due to the suspension of awards during the pandemic, it was recommended that four awards or above should be conferred.
- 2. Court Steering Committee promoted the idea of having themed events in future with the Ceremony in 2023 having a focus on alumni engagement and philanthropy.
- 3. Reserve candidates had been identified in case any of those identified did not accept the award.
- 4. One of the reserve candidates would also fit into the alumni engagement and philanthropy theme so it was suggested that five awards were conferred in 2023.

Resolved that:

The award of an Honorary Fellowship in 2023 be offered to the following:

Mrs Lesley Braiden MBE, former Academic Registrar at the University
Mr Anthony Hutchings, former Chair, US Friends of Newcastle University Board
Mr Andrew McDonald, former Treasurer, US Friends of Newcastle University
Ms Hilary Parker, Chair of the Trustees of the Development Trust

Mr Steve Puckett, Board Member of NUIS/NewRIIS at the University's campus in Singapore

5. **MAIN PRESENTATION**

Received:

A presentation on the University's Lifelong Learning and Future Skills work from Professor René Koglbauer, Dean of Lifelong Learning and Professional Practice. The slides are appended to these Minutes for members' information.

Noted that (presentation):

1. Professor Koglbauer supports Executive Board in the delivery of the University's work pertaining to Lifelong Learning and Professional Practice, including skills.
2. A critical skills gap exists across the whole of the UK, particularly in high-level skills, including manufacturing and digital.
3. Advanced vocational training participation levels are historically low in the North East (falling behind the rest of the UK).
4. In the FE Skills White Paper (DfE, 2021) & Skills Bill, the Government identified issues and generated policy documents in response to the skills gap.
5. Newcastle University is a member of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning as well as the Lifelong Learning Commission and as an HE provider will be active in responding to the identified challenges in the skills agenda.
6. In the Skills Bill it is proposed that a Lifelong Learning Entitlement will replace the current student funding model and will be available to all UK adults. Consultation results had not yet published.
7. Universities and Further Education Colleges will be part of this new education for all policy landscape and will have to adjust their portfolios accordingly.
8. The Lifelong Learning Entitlement will (initially) focus on Levels 4 to 6 with flexibility to take credits from multiple providers.
9. The Skills Policy Pathways will include credit bearing short courses and employer-FE/HE provider Degree Apprenticeships.
10. The University is already part of an HE Short Course Trial with a Level 6 Health Informatics Course. The University also offers Degree Apprenticeships and is in the process of launching a Level 5 apprenticeship.
11. The University already works with a number of industry partners and has chosen electrification as a particular area to develop. The University is working with the North East Institute of Technology and is in the process of setting up an Institute of Electrification and Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (IESAM) to produce a pipeline of future talent.
12. This agenda is not just about opportunities for new students but also upskilling of existing workforces.

13. The University's ultimate goal is to see colleagues and students climb a skills ladder through its role as an education provider, research and innovation hub and employer.

Noted that (discussion):

1. Electrification is a perfect priority as a key component in the Net Zero agenda, but it would be useful to include all modes of transportation, including aviation skills, in future planning.
2. In the context of social mobility, the University needs to ensure that the gaps of access to education and skills do not widen.
3. Students from non-traditional backgrounds who sign up for short courses or apprenticeships will be supported by student advisers and outreach officers to help them through the whole process.
4. The challenge of involving those from non-traditional backgrounds is difficult but the University is working with local Job Centres and ensuring credit-bearing short courses are developed with this demographic in mind.
5. The University is also working with local schools to support their curriculum development at Key Stage 5 (6th form) which will feed into this agenda.
6. A cultural change within universities is required to embed this agenda within the traditional HE offer.
7. Future workforce planning should be approached not just with a focus on roles but crucially on skills required to fulfil them.
8. All local colleges need to be partnering with the University in this space and regional Skills Improvement Plans need to have University input.
9. It will be important to ensure EDI considerations are embedded in this agenda.
10. The skills agenda also needs to have a broader focus to include creativity. The University's experts in the cultural history of the region should help to tell the story of this agenda and how it is underpinned by the many local innovators of the past.
11. It will be important to ensure Degree Apprentices are part of the student community. It was confirmed that Degree Apprentices have access to Skills Coaches along similar lines to Personal Tutors.
12. There is a limited evidence-base at present to underpin this new direction (e.g. Lifelong Loan Entitlement), so scenario-planning is at the heart of developments in this space.
13. Non-traditional background or mature students will face many financial issues and focus groups to look into this and all other aspects of the development of the skills agenda offering should be considered.
14. There may be something to learn from other countries with similar models as part of scenario planning.

Resolved that Professor Koglbauer be thanked for an excellent and stimulating presentation and that this topic should return for further discussion at a future meeting.

6. 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. Court records its deep regret at the death of The Queen and sympathy for the members of the Royal Family.
2. The University has formalised its partnership with the National University of Water and Environmental Engineering (NUWEE) in Ukraine and is working with several partners to provide funded research fellowships to academics who are at risk and scholarships for students affected by the conflict.
3. For the first time from one city outside London, both Newcastle and Northumbria Universities have been shortlisted for University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards. Newcastle has been shortlisted in recognition of its commitment to Environmental and Social Justice and Northumbria for their growing their critical mass of researchers over the last decade. Both institutions released a joint press release highlighting how positive this is for the city.
4. Newcastle University was ranked first in the UK – and 8th in the world - out of more than 1,400 universities globally in the latest Times Higher Education Impact Rankings for the University's performance against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. However, there have been more mixed results domestically where rankings are heavily dependent on the National Student Survey (NSS). It seemed that our students were not happy with the University's response to the pandemic among other issues and, led by Professor Tom Ward, our Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, the University is taking steps to respond to student concerns.
6. Despite the NSS our overall student recruitment position is good as we have filled all undergraduate places with high tariff students and hit our international targets.
7. There is also positive news to report with regard to Access and Participation with the higher education regulator OfS confirming that the University is making good progress in the delivery of its current Access and Participation Plan. Most metrics relating to Widening Participation are improving.
8. In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the University has matched UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s increase in its minimum stipend for research students with a 13% increase for University funded students and we have also increased the amount of funding available to students through the Student Hardship Fund.
9. Among a large number of staff successes highlighted were Professor Colin Rees's election as President of the British Society of Gastroenterology and awards for a number of colleagues in recognition of an exceptional body of work throughout their working lifetimes. These included Professor Nicola Curtin (Heatley Medal and Prize from the Biochemical Society), Professor Pauline Dixon (Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences) and Professor Martin Embley (Royal Society's Darwin Medal). In

the context of EDI and the University's work on Sustainability, it is gratifying to see that Professor Lidja Siller of the School of Engineering has been named as one of the Women's Engineering Society Top 50 women in engineering for her work on carbon capture research.

10. Following the appointment of Professor Brian Walker as Deputy Vice-Chancellor in succession to Professor Julie Sanders, the University is appointing an Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. The portfolios of the senior team have been adjusted following Professor Sanders's departure, with Social Justice now being part of Professor Jane Robinson's remit as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Engagement and Place; and Environmental Justice is now part of the remit of Professor Richard Davies, reflected in a change of title to Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global and Sustainability.
11. The next major capital improvement being considered is to replace the existing Castle Leazes student accommodation with new a completely new build following consultation with our current students together with prospective students and parents/guardians.

Noted that (discussion):

1. The joint statement from the two universities on their shortlisting for University of the Year was well received by the local community and businesses.
2. The Government has reduced the number of providers for Teacher Training with 12 universities not receiving re-accreditation. Newcastle University has been re-accredited but the region faces a number of challenges in terms of a shortage of teachers going into schools and the need to collaborate with appropriate regional partners to address the issues faced.
3. The University would be considering help not only for students in the cost-of-living crisis but also for colleagues, especially on lower grades. The University is accredited with the Living Wage Foundation and would implement a recently announced uplift that would benefit many colleagues.

7. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S QUESTIONS

Received from Olivia Grant:

I note that over recent years several academics have come under pressure regarding issues that some may see as controversial or even judged by some individuals or groups to be 'unacceptable'. Often the response to these academics has been bullying or 'naming'. In that context my question is "What experience has there been of this in Newcastle university and what policies and practices are in place to ensure freedom of speech and thought and how has the university sought to support academics in the event of this occurring?"

Received:

An oral response from the Registrar.

Noted that:

1. The University Statutes provide a clear commitment to academic freedom and the University Vision and Strategy endorses academic freedom as a core value of the

institution. The University also adheres to the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers, including the commitment to exercise and develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought throughout their careers. As a mark of its commitments, Newcastle became a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum in 2018. The Magna Charta is an affirmation of the fundamental university principles of autonomy, academic freedom in research and teaching, and the safeguarding of students' freedoms.

2. One notable example of an academic colleague coming under pressure regarding issues that might be deemed controversial came in 2021, when a lecturer from the School of Modern Languages was sanctioned by China for their work on the persecution of the Uyghur community. This case was the focus of attention by the national media. The University issued a statement declaring its full support for the member of staff, and shortly afterwards, the Russell Group of universities - of which Newcastle is a member - issued a statement of principles underlining its determination to protect freedom of expression and academic freedom.
3. In terms of support for colleagues, Executive Board held a discussion on freedom of speech in December 2021. A number of potential scenarios relating to what could be deemed contentious or divisive individuals or views were explored (some based on events seen on other campuses) and Executive Board were asked to consider their approach. It was agreed that as a general approach the University would do whatever it could to facilitate these types of events but they would be considered on a case by case basis. The safeguarding of any speaker and or academic involved as well as the safeguarding of any groups or individuals impacted was discussed but again it was agreed that this would need to be specific to each case. Another discussion will be held once the Freedom of Speech bill is passed (the delays we have seen were not anticipated at the time). Since then the exercise has also been carried out with senior officers, heads of unit and the EDI team.

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

Received a document updating Court on the presentation received in October 2020 on Community Unity.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document F)

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None raised.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Reported that:

- (a) The next meeting of Court will take place at 10:30 on Friday 5 May 2023 in the Keeton-Lomas Lecture Theatre, Armstrong Building. **[Members were asked to add this date to their diaries pending a meeting request which will be sent nearer the time.]**
- (b) Court Steering Committee has agreed that a presentation on Inclusive Innovation, combining the topics of Electrification and Healthy Ageing, should be the main item on the agenda.