

**NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC BOARD  
15 February 2023**

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair) and 301 members of Academic Board. This meeting was held using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Members were visible for the duration of the meeting.

**NOTES**

**1. NOTES OF THE 27 MAY 2022 MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of Academic Board held on 27 May 2022 are available at:  
<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/executive/governance/academic-board/minutes/>

**2. MEMBERS OF COURT APPOINTED BY ACADEMIC BOARD**

Reported that:

The term of appointment of the following members of Court appointed by Academic Board will terminate on 31 July 2023:

Professor Caroline Austin (2023)  
Professor René Koglbauer (2023)  
Professor William Maloney (2023)\*  
Professor Ruth Valentine (2023)

\*Professor Maloney had served three terms and was therefore not eligible for re-appointment.

Reported that:

Members of Academic Board were invited to submit nominations in writing by not later than Friday, 2 June 2023 to Dr Colin Campbell, Registrar, (Email: [Colin.Campbell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Colin.Campbell@ncl.ac.uk)) together with confirmation that the nominee is willing to be nominated. Nominees should be members of Academic Board.

**3. REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT**

Received an update from the Vice-Chancellor and President on key developments over the past year and future priorities for our University community.

The session was recorded and is available from:  
<https://newcastle.sharepoint.com/hub/executive/Pages/Academic-Board.aspx>

1. The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of the University's Vision and Strategy and also provided examples of implementation throughout the University such as becoming a University of Sanctuary, gaining a Gold Engage Watermark for the quality of public engagement, receiving a Bronze award for the work done around the Race Equality Charter and the creation of a wellbeing team for colleagues.

2. Positive achievements included reaching the University's highest ever position in the QS world ranking together with excellent results in global sustainability rankings. The University had increased research power in REF2021 and was shortlisted for THE University of the Year.
3. The Vice-Chancellor reported that challenges remained in areas relating to the National Student Survey scores and domestic rankings, and the University was also budgeting for a significant deficit this year as growth in costs had surpassed growth in income.
4. The increase in utility costs, falling unit of teaching resource and industrial relations were highlighted as issues affecting the Higher Education sector, with levelling up and increased Research and Development funding noted as positive factors in the current environment.
5. The Vice-Chancellor reported on a number of refreshed strategic priorities, with focus placed on University Culture, including devolving agency, enabling values-led behaviours and the freeing-up of colleagues' time wherever possible.
6. The Vice-Chancellor identified a list of key-questions to be considered as the University community decides on the next stage of strategy implementation while living up to our values throughout the 2020s. Questions included how to diversify income and be resilient to (geo)political instability and how to configure our infrastructure and achieve Net Zero.
7. Professor Nigel Harkness, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, HaSS, spoke about the Farrell Centre which was due to open in April 2023 as a vital new platform for widening the debate around the roles that architecture and planning play in the contemporary world. Supported by a generous donation, the Centre will provide a vibrant programme of exhibitions and talks and will also be the new home for Sir Terry Farrell's personal archive.
8. Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, SAgE, spoke about the Stephenson Building which will open in phases during 2023/24 as a beacon for world-leading education, research and collaboration which will also drive transformative research across multiple disciplines and boost the economy and social wellbeing of Newcastle.

#### 4. UNIVERSITY STATUTES

Academic Board considered proposed updates to the University Statutes.

1. The Registrar explained the reason for the proposed changes which resulted from a recent independent governance review informed by the new Higher Education Code of Governance.
2. Most of the recommendations made from this review did not require a change to statutes. The University had, however, received a recommendation to consider an increase in the number of *ex officio* members of Senate to reflect the very specific role they have in helping the University to achieve its strategic academic aims.
3. It was proposed that the appointment process be formalised for University Deans who are responsible for helping the University to achieve its strategic academic aims. At present, there are seven University Deans and the proposed change would allow Senate and Council to define and appoint these roles.
4. It was also proposed that University Deans become *ex officio* members of Senate and that the appointment of co-opted members allows for one member from each faculty of the University. The number of *ex-officio* members should not exceed the number of appointed members who should be in the majority for a meeting of Senate to be quorate.

Reported that:

Members of Academic Board were invited to submit comments on the proposed statutes changes by not later than Wednesday, 1 March 2023 to Dr Colin Campbell, Registrar, (Email: [Colin.Campbell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Colin.Campbell@ncl.ac.uk)).

## 5. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Academic Board received a motion in relation to Student Support Plan (SSP) processes.

1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education introduced the motion before the Board and acknowledged the immense amount of effort and care that colleagues put into supporting students with SSPs, and also welcomed the prompt to test validation of the processes in practice.
2. The Director of the Student Health and Wellbeing Service reported that colleagues from Occupational Health, Student Services, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the University Disability Interest Group would meet to discuss the evidence supporting the recommendations in the motion to determine the size and scope of the concerns.
3. Resolutions may include increased training and pilot programmes, and these resolutions would be more fully identified and then progressed after the initial meeting and scoping exercise.

## 6. QUESTIONS

The following questions were taken from members of Academic Board during the meeting.

1. How should colleagues finance and book affordable long-term accommodation in light of certain restrictions in the University Travel and Expenses Policy? It was noted that a Travel Working Group had been convened with representation from Professional Services, the Faculties and Senate, and had agreed to continue with the existing policy as it ensured a focus on health and safety and maintained insurance requirements. Exceptions to the policy would be considered along with supporting evidence such as comprehensive risk assessments.
2. The diagram and description of University priorities had highlighted a clear focus on research culture, but should 'education culture' be included as part of the Education for Life strategy? It was noted that recent funding had allowed for a focus on research culture, but the resulting action plan could be applied across education activities, and education culture remained a topic for discussion and consideration at Executive Board level and across the wider University.
3. With global reach and international partnerships a key focus of the University, could core meetings such as Academic Board be scheduled at times that would allow colleagues in Malaysia and Singapore to attend? It was noted this query and issue had been raised by a number of colleagues and the University was working to ensure that updated meeting times were considered across the University Business Diary. The next meeting of Academic Board was provisionally scheduled for the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024, 9:00 – 10:00am.
4. In reference to plans for the 2020s and the 'decade ahead' for the University, it seems that answers are already identified for many of the questions posed; what are the barriers to those answers being implemented? It was noted that there are plans in progress for many

of the identified questions but raising them in this setting invited the University community to have a voice in working towards decisive implementation. Members of Academic Board were encouraged to contact Professor Brian Walker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, with specific feedback on vision and values delivery through the 2020s.

## 7. HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS OF THE UNIVERSITY

Court invited nominations in writing for the award of next year's Honorary Fellowships of the University. Any member of Academic Board may make a nomination. Where several members make a joint nomination, one should be shown as the nominator and the others as supporters. The grounds on which the nomination are made should be clearly stated.

Principles for the award of Honorary Fellowships and Nomination Forms could be found at:  
[http://www.ncl.ac.uk/congregations/ceremonies/honorary/nom\\_honfell/php](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/congregations/ceremonies/honorary/nom_honfell/php)

Proposals should be sent to Dr Colin Campbell, Registrar, King's Gate, in an envelope marked 'Confidential – Honorary Fellowships' or via email ([colin.campbell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:colin.campbell@ncl.ac.uk)) by Friday, 28 July 2023.