NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COURT

8 APRIL 2022

Present: Mrs Heidi-Mottram, Vice-Chair of Council (in the Chair), The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Caroline Austin, Mr Andrew Davison, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Mr Colin Fitzpatrick, Mr Mark I’Anson, Professor René Koglbauer, Professor William Maloney, Mr Richard Maudslay, Ms Abigail Pogson, Professor Jane Robinson, Ms Sanjee Ratnatunga, Mrs Angela Russell, Professor Julie Sanders, Sir Nigel Sherlock, Professor Mark Shucksmith, Ms Sarah Stewart, Dr Ruth Valentine, and Mr Paul Woolston.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Mr Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Nic Palmerini (Director of the National Innovation Centre for Ageing, Professor Paul Watson (Director of the National Innovation Centre for Data) and Mrs Yvonne Lee (Executive Assistant).

MINUTES

The Chair welcomed Dr Colin Campbell to his first meeting of Court as Registrar and Mr Nick Collins to his first meeting as Executive Director of Finance.

The Chair recorded thanks to the following members of Court, whose term of office comes to an end on 31 July 2022 after nine years’ service: Mr Andrew Davison, Mr Colin Fitzpatrick, Mr Peter Johnson, Mr Hector MacDonald, Mr Michael Stephenson and Mr Rob Williamson. All have been great supporters of the University and the University will continue to remain in contact and benefit from their advice and support.

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting attended by Professor Mark Shucksmith (Academic Board appointed member) after serving for 9 years and thanked him for his contribution during this period.

The Chair noted that, while unable to attend this meeting, thanks were recorded to Abbie Hutchinson for her service as President of the Students’ Union 2021-22.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document A)

2. REPORTS FROM COURT STEERING COMMITTEE

Considered the following reports from Court Steering Committee:

(a) A report on the membership of Court Steering Committee.

(b) A report on the membership of Court.

(c) A report on Honorary Fellowships.

(d) A report on the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation.
(e) A report on Donor Recognition

(Circulated with the Agenda as Documents B-F)

Resolved that:

Membership of Court Steering Committee

i. Vikas Kumar be appointed to serve on Court Steering Committee and Nominations Committee from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2024, when his current term of office on Court is due to end.

ii. Sarah Stewart be appointed Chair of Court Steering Committee and as a member of Honorary Degrees Committee from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023, when her current term of office on Court is due to end.

Membership of Court

i. The Rt Rev Christine Hardman be re-appointed to serve on Court for one further year from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023, subject to her willingness to continue to serve.

ii. Ms Helen McArdle be re-appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2022 until 31 July 2025, subject to her willingness to continue to serve.

iii. The following be appointed to serve on Court from 1 August 2022 until 31 July 2025, subject to their willingness to serve:

Emerita Professor Katherine Bushby, former Professor of Neuromuscular Genetics in the John Walton Muscular Dystrophy Research Centre
Jonathan Glass, retiring lay member of Council
Sarah Glendinning, Regional Director of the CBI
Jacqui Hodgson, former BBC reporter and freelance film maker
Catherine McKinnell, Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne North
Guy Opperman, Conservative MP for the Hexham constituency
Professor Ian Postlethwaite following his retirement from the University as Head of the School of Engineering at the end of May 2022
Tony Wadsworth, ex Chair and CEO of EMI Records
Rory Wilson, Chief Executive of Northumberland Estates

iv. The following members be thanked for their long and valued service to Court:

Mr Andrew Davison
Mr Colin Fitzpatrick
Mr Peter Johnson
Mr Hector MacDonald
Mr Michael Stephenson
Ms Hannah Underwood
Mr Rob Williamson

Honorary Fellowships

An Honorary Fellowship be conferred on Mr Keith Davidson, retiring University Piper, at the Awards Ceremony and Dinner on 12 July 2022.

Election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation

The procedure proposed be approved.
Donor Recognition

The proposal to create a new recognition circle ‘The Lindisfarne Circle’ be approved.

3. THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL INNOVATION CENTRES FOR AGEING AND DATA

Received a presentation from Professor Nic Palmerini, Director of the National Innovation Centre for Ageing and Professor Paul Watson, Director of the National Innovation Centre for Data.

Noted National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NICA) presentation:

1. The mission of NICA is to add intelligence to ageing and longevity.

2. NICA has developed a community of innovation active citizens known as VOICE. The VOICE community in the UK numbers 7-8,000 and provides an opportunity to gather intelligence to empower brands, policy makers, designers to co-design solutions based on people needs and wants.

3. Through VOICE NICA is engaging not only with the ageing population, but also with other key stakeholders such as family members.

4. The VOICE community is to be expanded globally: to Canada in Summer of 2022 and to Australia and Italy around the end of the year.

5. Through mapping behavioural data NICA works to better understand people’s life contexts and lifestyles and help develop more effective solutions to address issues in daily life. NU students are actively working in this space.

6. Life is multidisciplinary so NICA is engaging with the University’s faculties and schools to develop a multidisciplinary applied research platform of core innovations for Ageing Intelligence.

7. The City is being used as a testbed as we seek to understand how the University can contribute to required innovations with business partners.

8. One of NICA’s partners is Jaguar Land Rover and we are assisting in development of vehicles that can better serve an ageing population.

9. NICA has received £5.6m funding over a five-year period from the North of Tyne combined authority to develop new technologies to assist the ageing population with the challenges of their daily lives.

10. Additional funding of £3m over a three-year period has been secured from UKRI and sees NICA working with the Department for International Trade to explore the opportunities of China’s rapidly ageing society.

11. NICA is working with Newcastle City Council to focus on Newcastle as a City of Longevity with innovations to benefit the City population and tourists.

12. NICA is reaching a public audience through recent coverage on mainstream media of how robots can assist the ageing population.
13. NICA is working with The World Bank to develop a global network of core partners to put Newcastle on the global map.

Noted NICA discussion:

1. While NICA does not have the capacity to provide training courses, its role is to inform and empower others to carry out this work. NICA is working with start-up companies in this regard and the programme with the North of Tyne combined authority also has an educational function.

2. In response to the challenges of greater energy costs NICA is working with architects and the design communities to take into account the ageing population’s requirements for future homes, together with a project with Northumbria University considering retrofitting options for existing homes.

3. The development of a residential site on the University’s Campus for Ageing and Vitality (CAV) provides another opportunity for NICA to put its innovations into practice.

4. To take into account the different challenges faced globally by the ageing population, NICA is working with the relevant research groups across the University and globally to explore how to target different demographic groups with appropriate innovations.

5. Another key role for NICA is to counter the prejudices prevalent in society regarding the ageing population.

6. In terms of influencing policy, NICA is working with various areas of Government, contributing to national think tanks and, through our work with The World Bank, influencing global policy development in this space.

Noted National Innovation Centre for Data (NICD) presentation:

1. NICD was set up with £30m funding from the Government and Newcastle University and articulates the University’s commitment to making an impact on the economy/society through the expertise of its academic staff.

2. The University is an Alan Turing Institute partner, with work that resulted in the REF 2014 citing the University as world-leading in scalable data science, and with a contribution to the University’s receipt of over £100m in the past 10 years for research into data science and its application.

3. The University facilitates research-driven teaching to produce future leaders in data science, particularly through MSc programmes and Centres for Doctoral Training.

4. In a world drowning in data NICD seeks to use Mathematics and Computing Science methods to extract value from data and apply the results to transform organisations.

5. NICD is different to a data consultancy – our role is to strengthen the UK economy by transferring data skills to organisations of all sizes, from small companies to large public sector organisations like the NHS.

6. NICD has worked on 60 projects over the last 3 years allowing its partner organisations to become part of the NICD eco-system connected to a large number of other organisations facing similar data skills challenges.

7. NICD has a major collaboration with the Government Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), which resulted in our success in a competition to host the DSTL North Lab.
8. NICD events have been attended (mainly virtually but now moving back to in person) by 7,000 representatives of public and private sector organisations.

9. The Catalyst Building houses both National Innovation Centres and has good workshop and breakout spaces, together with pods to host representatives from companies who work in the building for a period. The excellent facilities on offer led the BBC to ask the University to host one of the Reith Lectures in 2021.

10. Following the success of the basic NICD model, future plans include assisting research projects to have greater impact, helping to improve the student experience, following the success of a data innovation bootcamp for Science and Engineering students, which will be extended to the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Medical Sciences, and to continue to work with regional businesses and scale up to work with national and global organisations.

Noted NICD discussion:

1. NICD is largely driven by the pipeline of talent graduating from Newcastle’s PhD and MSc programmes; it is expected that after spending a few years in NICD they will move into employment with major organisations.

2. The team of PhDs seem to enjoy their role in skills transfer and mentoring to staff in external organisations.

3. The University’s campus in Singapore provides an opportunity for collaboration with Singaporean organisations and companies, but the different local government models might mean that we are restricted to providing online courses.

4. The growing issue of data ethics is seen as important by NICD and any requests for assistance are always considered in the context of the ethical implications of our involvement. Data ethics is also taught to students with a focus on ensuring data skills/techniques ensure ethical use of data.

5. The NICD model takes into account the balance between private interests and the public good in working with Government, together with private and public sector organisations.

Resolved:

That Professors Palmerini and Watson be thanked for a most informative presentation.

4. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

Received a report from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document G)

Noted report:

1. That the University’s response to the crisis in Ukraine is led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and had initially been directed at those staff and students affected, with wellbeing and financial support available as required. The University’s Development Trust has agreed funding of up to £1M to boost our Sanctuary Scholarships offering and our links to the Council for at Risk Academics (CARA) scheme for displaced academics. Work is now ongoing in terms of what the sector as a whole can do in this space.
2. Following a successful presence at COP26 last autumn, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost is leading the University’s planning for COP27 and has also been involved in the development of the DfE Sustainability Strategy.

3. The University has never used Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) for staff or students and has signed up to a pledge never to use them in the future.

4. The Government consultation on Higher Education funding has implications for universities in terms of a freeze in tuition fees and potentially a relative drop in funding for Arts and Humanities subjects.

5. The University has now held successful graduation ceremonies for the graduates of 2020 and 2021.

6. For the fourth year in a row the Newcastle University Students’ Union won Student Union of the Year at the Educate North Awards on 7 April 2022.

7. In addition, the Newcastle University Students’ Union North East Solidarity and Teaching (N.E.S.T.) project, which supports refugees, won the Community Engagement Award at the Educate North Awards.

8. Despite Cancer Research UK budgetary constraints, Newcastle is to be one of seven national centres receiving a share of £100m over five years from 1 April 2022. CRUK awards Centre status to locations that perform the highest quality cancer research, with Newcastle’s Centre focussing on research into childhood cancers.

9. The University has announced the launch of a £5.6m joint investment bringing together the North of Tyne Combined Authority covering Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland with the National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NICA) which will see cutting-edge research being translated into new jobs, skills and tech start-ups in the area.

10. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Newcastle Clinical Research Facility has received over £5.47m to continue its research into a range of health conditions. The facility, which is a partnership between Newcastle Hospitals and the University, is one of 28 in the country to receive funding which will support research into new treatments and early phase clinical trials which test treatments for the first time.

11. Newcastle University has been awarded a Gold Engage Watermark in recognition of our outstanding commitment to public engagement from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. This is a huge achievement as we are one of only three Russell Group universities to have achieved Gold.

12. The University has been successful with a bid to Research England for £5.5m to fund Insights North East, a partnership with Northumbria University, Newcastle City Council, North of Tyne Combined Authority and the Newcastle Hospital Trust, which will support the further evolution of a policy and evidence hub to support place-based policy-making.

13. The long list of staff successes in the report have been achieved despite the challenges of the pandemic and, following an announcement on 6 April, it was noted that Professor Nicola Curtin, Professor of Experimental Therapeutics in the Newcastle University Centre for Cancer, will be awarded The Heatley Medal and Prize in 2023.

14. Following the extension of the Chancellor’s position for a further 2 years, an Inauguration Ceremony is now planned on-campus for 12 July, building on the excellent virtual support the Chancellor has given since her initial appointment.
15. The Vice-Chancellor drew members’ attention to the new Hub Structure within the Professional Services (report item 7.2 refers), which had been put in place following the retirement of Mr Richard Dale and Dr John Hogan.

Noted discussion:

The NSS Survey 2022 closes on 30 April and the student experience of the 3rd year cohort completing the survey, had been affected by industrial action and the challenges of the pandemic. The University is working on a re-focus, led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) to ensure that every decision taken going forward is considered in the context of the student experience.

5. PAST COURT PRESENTATIONS: UPDATES FOR MEMBERS

Received for information a document updating Court on the presentation received in May 2020 on the University’s response to the Pandemic.

(Circulated with the Agenda as Document H)

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted that the University is hosting a Poetry Festival from 5-7 May at Northern Stage and the University campus. Along with the Chancellor, Imtiaz Dharker, further participants include the Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage and Scotland’s Makar, Kathleen Jamie. Further information can be found at https://www.newcastlepoetryfestival.co.uk.

7. MEETINGS 2022-23

Reported that:

(a) Invitations will shortly be issued for the Chancellor’s Inauguration and Honorary Fellowships Ceremony which will take place on 12 July 2022.

(b) The next meeting of Court will take place at 10:30 on 11 October 2022.

(c) The Honorary Fellowships Ceremony for 2022-23 will be held on Thursday, 4 May 2023.

(d) The second meeting of Court during the 2022-23 academic session will be held on 5 May 2023.