NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

19 January 2022

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost), Professor David Burn, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Brian Walker, and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Dr Bruce Baker, Professor Chris Baldwin, Professor Nils Braakmann, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Darren Evans, Briana Gordhan (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Jenny Johnstone, Dr Anjam Khan, Dr Gareth Longstaff, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Eleanor McCarthy (Postgraduate Officer, Students’ Union), Kate McGill, Ms Claire Morgan, Livia Scott (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Ted Schrecker, Dr David Stewart, Dr Eimer Tuite, Professor Stefano Utili.

In attendance: Professor Ruth Morrow and Professor Richard Clay (Co-Heads of School X) attended for Minute 36, Sally Ingram (Director of Student Health and Wellbeing) and Bec Shaw (Project Manager, Student Health and Wellbeing) attended for Minute 37, Simon Gerry (Chief Executive, Students’ Union) attended for Minute 41, Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs), Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of People Services), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).

Apologies: Professor Ashley Adamson, Professor Richard Davies, Abbie Hutchinson.

MINUTES

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

33. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 17 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document A. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted:

1. Discussed the ratio of appointed to elected members of Senate and the net consequences for the Senate membership of recent Statute changes aimed at strengthening the lines of communication between Senate and Council.

2. Under the Statutes, from August 2023 there would be two vacancies on Council for members elected directly from and by Senate. Those elected onto Council would have the duration of their appointment on Senate extended for the duration of their term as a member of Council.
3. (The following was further qualified after the meeting.) For 2023/24, the two Senate elected members of Council would either be entering their second or third year of Senate or have finished their three year term. If entering the second or third year, this would not increase the number of elected Senate members until year two or three. If they were already in their final year of membership on Senate it would increase the membership of Senate for a full three years. There would always be some years over a three year span from 2023 when the membership of Senate increased by 1 or 2 members and potentially up to two years when it did not increase at all.

4. Discussed the potential for direct election of Heads of School onto Senate. This would need to be subject to a change to the University Statutes. There would be a governance review during 2022 which was likely to consider the issue and Senators would have the opportunity to provide input.

34. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor and President’s report. Highlights of this report are discussed below.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document B. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Reported:

1. COVID-19

Members of Senate had continued to receive the regular updates provided by Executive Board. The Vice-Chancellor and President provided a further update on the government’s latest announcement of its intention to remove Plan B restrictions from the following week. The wearing of face masks on campus would no longer be mandatory, but it would be expected. Working from home guidance would be removed.

2. New Year’s Honours

The following individuals associated with the University had been recognised in the New Year’s Honours list:

CBE Professor Phil Blythe (Professor of Intelligent Transport Systems, Fellow of Royal Academy of Engineering, Vice President IET and former Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for Transport (2015-2021)). For services to Science and Engineering in Transport and Government.

MBE Bridget Stratford (North East Solidarity and Teaching Project Coordinator). For services to Refugees and Asylum Seekers, particularly during Covid-19.

3. Universities Superannuation Scheme

The Vice-Chancellor and President reported that the consultation on proposed benefit changes had now closed. A total of 118 responses to the consultation had been received from University colleagues, representing a 3% response rate. All responses would be considered by the Joint Negotiating Committee prior to any suggestions being made to the USS Trustee.

The ballots for industrial action in relation to the disputes around USS pensions and pay had been passed by members of the Newcastle University branch of the University and College Union on Friday 14 January. Senate noted the potential for industrial action and action short of a strike to impact adversely on the student experience.
4. **Times Higher Awards**

The University had won Outstanding Estates Team and Outstanding Technician of the Year at the Times Higher Education Awards 2021. The Estates team had been recognised for its collaborative approach across the region, the successful completion of our award-winning Catalyst building, through to the innovative approach to team working during the pandemic. The Outstanding Technician award had been won by Dr Andrew Filby, recognising his strategic role in bringing together technologists and methodologists from all job families in the Faculty of Medical Sciences toward a true "team science", collaborative attitude to conducting cutting-edge research.

5. **Engage Watermark**

The University had been awarded a Gold Engage Watermark in recognition of our outstanding commitment to public engagement from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. This was a huge achievement, which would not have been possible without the commitment of colleagues from across the University, our student body and our wide ranging partners. The award was the result of a rigorous assessment process where the University had been able to demonstrate a high level of institutional commitment and a robust plan for further improvements.

6. **People and Planet**

The University had achieved a First Class award in the People and Planet University League, ranking 21st out of 154 UK universities. This year, the University had scored highly in Policy and Strategy (100%), Environmental Management Systems (100%), Managing Carbon (80%) and Ethical Investment (78%). With an overall score of 67.2%, this was the University’s highest total to date, although the league position was down from 12th in 2019 to 21st this year. The University was also ranked joint sixth for Ethical Investment and joint 11th for Carbon Management.

7. **Athena SWAN**

The School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences had recently received confirmation of its Athena SWAN Bronze award, which meant that nine schools within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences now held Bronze accreditation. The Faculty of Medical Sciences held a Silver award covering nine academic units, and four schools within the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering held Bronze awards.

8. **Creativity**

In a recent ranking compiled by Design Bundles and based on Complete University Guide data, the University had been ranked 7th in the country for its work with creative groups.

9. **EduTrust**

Newcastle University International Singapore had been awarded EduTrust status in Singapore, allowing it to recruit international postgraduate students for the next four years.

10. **Congregations**
The University had staged two very successful weeks of graduation ceremonies in November and December 2021 for the University’s 2020 graduates and in London for 2020 and 2021 graduate from Newcastle University London. Feedback from graduates and their guests was very encouraging. Ceremonies for 2020 and 2021 NUMed graduates would be held on Saturday 29 January.

11. BAME Postgraduate Research Students

UKRI had announced its awards for programmes to support BAME students in postgraduate research. The University was a partner in a Durham-led consortium worth ~£800k.

12. Colleague Success

Dr Tom Hellyer (Senior Clinical Fellow, Translational and Clinical Research Institute), had won a £1.9M award from Health Technology Assessment for a 2200 patient, 50 ICU trial of short duration antibiotics in sepsis.

Dr Ian McDonald (School of Arts and Cultures) had won the Audience Award at the North East International Film Festival, for the documentary film The First Year.

Dr Ingrid Medby (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had received the prestigious Royal Geographical Society(with the Institute of British Geographers) Area Prize 2021 for the best article by a new researcher published in Area, the journal of the RSG-IBG.

Professor Nick Reynolds (Institute of Cellular Medicine) had been awarded £2.971M by NIHR (AIM Research Collaboration Awards) for Using artificial intelligence (AI) to characterize the dynamic interrelationships between MULTiple Long-term conditions and PoLYpharmacy and across diverse UK populations and inform health care pathways (AI-MULTIPLY).

Professor Jennifer Richards (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) had been awarded £448,672 over 36 months for “Bee-ing Human: an interactive bee book for the 21st century”

Professor Jane Robinson (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place) had been commissioned as a Deputy-Lieutenant for Tyne and Wear by the Lord Lieutenant, Susan Winfield OBE.

Dr Laura Routley (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had been awarded £357,746 over 36 months by the Leverhulme Trust for “Afterlives of colonial incarceration: African prisons, architecture and politics”.

Dr Christopher Stewart (Wellcome Trust Sir Henry Dale Research Fellow) had been awarded the prestigious 2022 Fleming Prize for outstanding work in their field.

Professor Alex Thiele (Biosciences Institute) had been awarded a four-year grant from the BBSRC worth £1.2m.

Professor Waldemar Vollmer (Biosciences Institute) had been awarded a three-year BBSRC responsive mode grant worth £586k.

13. Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
At its meeting held on 14 December 2021, Executive Board had approved the extension of the term of appointment for Professor Judith Rankin as Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion up until 31 July 2024.

14. **Shape of the Academic Year**

Following Senate’s discussion of a proposal at its last meeting, which was aimed at resolving issues arising from the revised structure of the academic year for 2021-22 that were impacting on the student educational experience, Executive Board had considered the trajectory of the proposals at its meeting on 14 December 2021. Executive Board had agreed that, as the equality impact analysis work was not yet complete, further consideration of the proposals would be deferred until all work and consultation had been completed, accepting that it would not be possible to make any change for 2022/23. It was suggested that the timing of resit assessments could feature in this reconsideration.

15. **MadeAtUni Campaign**

Thursday 13 January had seen the launch of Creative Sparks, the latest phase of the MadeAtUni public impact campaign which celebrated the contribution of universities to the UK’s creative excellence. A full list of ‘Creative Sparks’ nominated by UUK members could be found on the campaign website; this featured the University’s award-winning poets Sinéad Morrissey, Jacob Polley, Tara Bergin, and Sean O’Brien.

16. **Universities UK – Framework for Programme Reviews in England**

UUK had published a Framework for Programme Reviews aimed at addressing concerns about low-value courses; build public and government confidence in the quality and value of courses; and show its commitment to being consistent and transparent in this area. The framework set out principles and measures which universities were invited to embed in programme and course reviews, and asked institutions to publish statements on their websites by early 2023 covering approaches taken in annual monitoring, and an assessment of where action should be taken on low value courses. The government had tasked the Office for Students with running a consultation on how to define a low-value programme, with proposals that could result in the regulator refusing to sanction student loans for any programmes defined as such. An announcement about the consultation was expected imminently, and Senate would have an opportunity to consider the University’s intended response.

17. **Non-Disclosure Agreements**

The University was considering whether to sign a pledge, backed by government and campaigners, to end the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) within universities to silence complainants in sexual harassment cases. The University had a wider strategy to tackle and prevent sexual harassment and abuse. The Changing the Culture Working Group, jointly chaired by the Academic Registrar and President of the Students’ Union, aimed to eliminate all forms of sexual violence, hate-related incidents, and discrimination in the University community.

35. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 13 DECEMBER 2021**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 13 December 2021.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

36. **SCHOOL X**
Received a presentation from the Co-Heads of School X.

Noted that:

1. Senate received an engaging and informative presentation about the vision and emerging strategic objectives for School X.

2. The School had identified as its mission the opportunity to:
   - develop, test and share innovative, challenge-based, collaborative models of education, research, and impact, contributing to futureproofing the University.
   - inclusively convene people from across disciplines, faculties, job families, career stages, generations and sectors.
   - carry out interdisciplinary research, education, and engagement enriching one another, focused on tackling social and environmental injustices.

3. The School sought to create a vibrant community where students were partners in the school’s development whether they are studying within one of its founding units or engaging in a collaborative model of education. Students would be supported to understand themselves as researchers, to take part in interdisciplinary projects, to value peer learning, and to be inquisitive, critical, creative and global in their outlook.

4. Considered the need for the School to have a sustainable financial model, for more clarity to be provided as to how the School would engage with NUCoREs, and how the School would formulate its offer to be attractive to taught postgraduate and international audiences.

37. SUICIDE SAFER STRATEGY

Received a paper from the Executive Director of Academic Affairs.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate received the final draft of the University’s Suicide Safer Strategy, which had been developed in response to a request from the government that all universities have such a strategy in place. Senate expressed its appreciation for the work that had gone into producing the strategy.

2. Noted the University’s arrangements for the provision of suicide prevention and mental health awareness training for colleagues. Clearer signposting of the training available was requested. This would be followed up as part of the action plan for delivery of the strategy.

3. Reflected on current waiting lists for students wishing to access mental health counselling.

4. Students’ Union representatives recorded their appreciation for the University’s approach to mental health awareness-raising.

Resolved that Senate approve the Suicide Safer Strategy and continuation to the action planning stage.

38. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE
Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate considered a persuasive case for the establishment of a new Newcastle University Centre of Research Excellence (NUCoREs) in Water. The NUCoRE would bring together very substantial existing critical mass and research excellence on Water from across the University. It was intended that the centre would launch on World Water Day in March 2022, which would enable the University to offer a coherent narrative of this area of collective research excellence.

2. The proposed NUCoRE offered a genuine commitment to partnership working and educational opportunities beyond what was captured in the proposal documentation. It would build an enduring water scholarship culture inspiring art and creativity and stimulating fundamental academic enquiry for its own sake. The centre would also have an impact on the very real challenges represented by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Senate was pleased to note the gender balance of the proposing team.

Resolved that Senate approve the establishment of a NUCoRE in Water.

39. DEGREE OUTCOMES

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate received the University’s Degree Outcomes Statement which had been updated with information from 2019-20 and 2020-21 degree outcomes.

2. The key area to note from the 2019-20 and 2020-21 data was an increase in the proportion of Firsts and 2:1 degrees awarded. This was a sector wide trajectory and Newcastle remained below figures seen both in the wider sector and within the Russell Group.


4. It was suggested that it would be helpful for Senate to consider more granular analysis of the University’s degree outcomes, to enable the Committee to better understand attainment gaps, differences across subjects, and the value-added measure.

Resolved that Senate endorse the submission of the statement to Council for final approval prior to publication.

40. ASSURANCE OF ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Received a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:
1. Senate received a report summarising the operation of the University’s framework for the management of academic quality and standards with respect to meeting the requirements of the Office for Students regulatory conditions.

2. With regard to Safety Net measures approved by Senate and deployed by the University in response to Covid-19, University Education Committee had considered the outcomes of the institutional analysis of semester 1 module marks against semester 1 mark profiles for previous years, in respect of key characteristics. The overall findings were there that was no evidence from the data reviewed that any disadvantage had occurred.

3. All external examiners’ reports for the 2020-21 academic year received to date had confirmed that academic standards of the programmes reviewed by external examiners met national threshold standards and were comparable with standards at other universities.

4. National Student Survey results had demonstrated that undergraduate students felt there were strengths and weaknesses in the effectiveness of current arrangements for the Student Voice. The University continued to prioritise this area, and had taken a number of steps to enhance further its approach, articulated through the establishment of a University-wide Student Voice Schedule and work to ensure that student voice was embedded in governance and strategic decision-making.

5. It was suggested that attention be given at academic unit level to the issue of assessment bunching. Senate also agreed that there was now an opportunity to engage the student voice in assessment planning and design, learning from the experience of remote provision during the pandemic.

Resolved that Senate endorse the report for submission to Council for final approval.

41. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received a presentation from the Chief Executive and the President of the Newcastle University Students’ Union.

Noted that:

1. Senate was grateful to receive an informative update on Students’ Union activities over the past year. Of particular note was students’ recognition of the collaborative work with the University to help minimise the impacts of the pandemic.

42. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

1. A member of Senate had submitted a number of suggested items as potential discussion topics at future meetings. These were under consideration by the Vice-Chancellor.

2. The Vice-Chancellor invited members of Senate to submit suggestions for future agenda items.

43. REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Senate noted the information provided in the report from the meeting of Honorary Degrees Committee held on 16 December 2021.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
44. **MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE**

Received a report from the meeting of:

a) University Education Committee: 11 November 2021
b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 29 November 2021
c) University Research and Innovation Committee: 2 November and 21 December 2021

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents J-L. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

45. **REPORTED BUSINESS**

Received a report of action taken in accordance with agreed procedures, approved where necessary by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate and/or the Chair of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairs.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]