NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

23 February 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 Jane Robinson, and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Bruce Baker, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Briana Gordhan (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Abbie Hutchinson (President, Students’ Union), Jenny Johnstone, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Eleanor McCarthy (Postgraduate Officer, Students’ Union), Ms Claire Morgan, Livia Scott (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Professor Ted Schrecker, Dr David Stewart, Dr Eimer Tuite.

In attendance: 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 (Chief Operating Officer) and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).

Apologies: Professor Ashley Adamson, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Professor Chris Baldwin, Professor Nils Braakmann, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Darren Evans, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Andy Husband, Dr Anjam Khan, Dr Gareth Longstaff, Kate McGill, Professor Nick Parker, Professor Annie Tindley, Professor Stefano Utili, and Professor Brian Walker.

MINUTES

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

47. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 19 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

48. 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 about the cessation of restrictions, and a discussion took place about the continued availability and provision of lateral flow tests.

2. Industrial Action
Senate discussed the latest developments with respect to the industrial action called by the University and College Union in relation to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and pay and conditions. Senate noted the potential for a prolonged impact on the student experience if the dispute could not be resolved.

Senate received representations by some members about the conduct of the consultation with the sector about proposed pension benefit changes. Senate noted views expressed about the potential impact of reduced defined pension benefits on the ability of the University to recruit colleagues, with negative outcomes for the student experience. All members agreed on the importance for robust governance of the USS.

Some members expressed wellbeing concerns as a consequence of the position adopted by University management with regard to stating its legal right as an employer to deduct pay for partial performance.

3. Levelling Up

The government had published its Levelling Up White Paper on 2 February 2022. Universities UK’s Economic and Social Recovery Task Force, of which the Vice-Chancellor was chair, would play a central role in developing the Higher Education response. Executive Board held a preliminary discussion at its meeting on 15 February and would discuss how the University would engage with this agenda at its away-day in March. An analysis of opportunities and threats would be provided to Senate at a forthcoming meeting.

4. NDAs

The University had signed 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 was committed to not using Non-Disclosure Agreements to prevent survivors speaking out in cases of sexual harassment, violence abuse or other forms of harassment or bullying. The move was part of the University’s 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.

5. Office for Students Consultations

The Office for Students (OfS) had released a suite of consultation documents on the regulatory approach for student outcomes and teaching excellence. The consultation focused on the regulation of student outcomes and recommended numerical thresholds against which providers’ performance would be addressed. At the same time the OfS was consulting on the revised Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which would run during 2022 with results announced in early 2023. The TEF would be based on numerical data as well as written submissions from the University and the Students’ Union. The University’s draft consultation response had been submitted for Senate’s consideration at this meeting.

6. Impact Acceleration

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and Medical Research Council had awarded the University three years of the new style of Impact Acceleration Accounts (previously Confidence in Concept at MRC).
7. **Quality-Related Research**

The University had received supplemental QR allocations from Research England in 2021/22 for Enhancing Research Culture and PGR Recovery and had committed to ongoing budgeting to support initiatives in these areas over the next three years.

8. **Horizon Europe**

In the absence of Horizon Europe affiliation being confirmed by the European Union parliament yet, the UK government had guaranteed to underwrite EU grants but the lack of a process of confirming funds and accepting awards was causing some delays. Meanwhile, colleagues continued to be encouraged to apply to European Commission sources of funding including the European Research Council.

9. **Ethical Careers Policy**

Student campaigning group, People and Planet have launched the Fossil Free Careers Campaign which calls upon University Careers Services to end relationships with oil, gas and mining companies and adopt a publicly available Ethical Careers Policy. Environment and Sustainability Committee had considered information on the aims of the campaign as well as current practice within the Careers Service regarding relationship management with a wide range of graduate recruiters.

The discussion at the Committee had highlighted the complexities around considering this campaign in isolation, recognising the various relationships that the University has with industry, the desire to ensure that students are given freedom of choice but also contextualised information in order to make those choices around their future career and the role that graduates can play in supporting the transition to the net zero future. Specific concerns were raised about the apparent lack of exclusion on engagement with other industries such as tobacco and gambling within current Careers Service practice.

Senate noted the action proposed by the Committee, which included a review of the Careers Service Duty of Care document, the development of a University position statement on the Fossil Free Careers Campaign, agreement of a list of sectors, including Fossil Fuel, tobacco and others, from which sponsorship of Careers Service events would not be accepted, and the continuation of the Careers Service join up with current discovery work related to ethical investment.

10. **White Space items**

A request had been received from a member of Senate for a White Space discussion on the subject of Nominations for Prizes and Awards. Having decided, as Chair of Senate, to discuss the request at Executive Board, it had been agreed that, rather than take this as an item at Senate, the best approach would be for the member of Senate to make a contribution to the ongoing work on strategic narrative and reputation being led by Executive Director of External Relations.

A separate request had been received for a White Space discussion about what the University was doing to actively promote community/culture as Government restrictions around COVID-19 were easing and more staff and students were returning to University and on a more frequent basis. This was currently being considered by members of Executive Board.

11. **Colleague Success**
Senate noted that Professor Jarka Glassey (School of Engineering) had been awarded the IChemE Morton Medal for 2021 for demonstrating excellence in chemical engineering education, and the IChemE Trustees Medal for 2021 awarded for exceptional service to an IChemE Project, and also that Laura Greaves (Biosciences Institute) had been awarded the 2022 British Society of Cell Biology Women in Cell Biology Medal.

12. Review of Post-18 Education and Funding (Augar Review)

Noted the headline outcomes of the government’s response to the Augar Review, which were due to be published on 24 February 2022. This included a freeze on tuition fees for a further two years, changes to student finance repayments from 2023, and consultations on Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) and the possible introduction of Student Number Controls through Minimum Entry Requirements.

49. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 31 JANUARY 2022

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 31 January 2022.

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

50. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and the Head of Sustainability.

Noted that:

1. Senate received a presentation on the University’s Climate Action Plan and broader activities in support of Social and Environmental Justice.

2. Noted the outcomes of the University’s participation in the COP26 summit which, while providing a platform for sector-wide visibility for the University’s action at institutional level, had also underlined the need to make more significant progress, particularly in relation to the embedding of green skills in every area of education.

3. Noted aspects of the University’s Net Zero campaign and discussed the ability of colleagues and students to influence Scope 3 carbon emissions which were outwith the University’s direct control. It would not be possible to reach Real Zero by 2030, therefore carbon offsetting measures would therefore be required.

4. Considered the need for the University to develop a clearly visible and understood narrative about what it wished to have achieved in relation to this agenda in three years’ time. This would include its commitments as expressed in the Climate Action Plan, UN Sustainable Development Goals, educational and research opportunities, and building on current strengths of NUCoREs and Global Challenge Research Fund hubs.

5. Reflected on how there was a social obligation to students to nurture interest in addressing the climate crisis. This was a key motivation in students’ decisions about where to study. Discussed current activities by research postgraduate students PGR opportunities. There is appetite from non-STEM students to get involved. NUSU could help to facilitate.

6. Discussed sharing information about the University’s activities on this front in student and colleague recruitment, as well as working with the NHS and the potential for the
University’s approach to procurement in order to contribute to reducing Scope 3 carbon emissions.

9. A positive discussion took place on how all members of the University community and its external stakeholders could engage in delivering tangible outcomes in support of the institution’s commitment to social and environmental justice. This covered opportunities to contribute to the green skills agenda, the staging of a second Climate Conversation event, and the Students’ Union’s forthcoming Climate Conscious Careers campaign.

51. STUDENT EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Received a presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

Noted that:

1. Senate received an update on the refreshed key priorities within the Education Strategy, and on the progress of initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience.

2. The key priorities were:
   - putting the student education experience at the centre of University planning (strategic decision-making, an inclusive and supportive community, improved education infrastructure);
   - sustainable research-based education (positive and supportive culture for teaching and research, active portfolio review, and innovative and authentic curriculum and assessment design);
   - building digital capabilities (technology that enriches the student experience, a digital student roadmap, and data-informed decision-making).

3. Members discussed the progress made on actions that were identified in response to NSS results at the meeting of Senate in September 2021. In particular members noted the importance of local ownership of communications and initiatives aimed at enhancing the student education experience.

52. GUIDANCE ON PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT FOR USE IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, on behalf of Executive Board.

Noted that:

1. Senate considered an updated version of the Emergency Guidance to be used when there was disruption to programme delivery, examinations and assessment.

2. Noted that there was a perception held by some colleagues that there was significant variation in nomenclature for the role of Head of Academic Unit. This matter would be addressed as part of the forthcoming external governance review.

Resolved that Senate approve the declaration of an Emergency Situation and the use of the revised Guidance on Programme Delivery and Assessment for Use in the Event of an Emergency Situation.

53. ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT CASEWORK
Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate noted the particularly high volume of Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) requests, especially in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Members reflected on the impact of changes to the PEC policy in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and considered that it would be interesting to see how last year’s figures would eventually compare with the volume of PEC requests submitted in 2021/22. Some amendments to the online system for PEC submission were proposed.

2. Some concern was expressed about the potential normalisation of adjustments to assessment deadlines and the consequences for academic colleagues’ workload of an increased volume of PEC requests. It was, however, important for students to feel comfortable about disclosing wellbeing difficulties. The Students’ Union reported that there had been a growth in students’ confidence in this respect, and negative stigma associated with submitting PECs had decreased.

3. It was suggested that the current volume of PEC requests being submitted may in part be a reflection on the design and timing of assessment, and submission requirements.

4. Senate noted the University’s sustained investment in student wellbeing and the intention to bring forward recruitment of a further 11 new professional student wellbeing colleagues in time for the next academic year.

Resolved that Senate endorse the submission of the report to Council.

54. TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

Received a report 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 noted the proposed response and discussed the requirement for a student submission. It was suggested that the Office for Students should provide further guidance as to why it was important that students submit their views on the quality of their experience and outcomes.

Resolved that Senate endorse the institutional response to the TEF consultation.

55. CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY ANNUAL STATEMENT

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

Resolved that Senate endorse the University’s Annual Statement of Research Integrity 2020/21.

56. 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.

57. ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND TITLE OF REGISTRAR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))

Reported that, in accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may accord the title of Professor Emeritus on professors retiring from the University.

Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor and President following consultation with the relevant Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, for the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus. [Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:

Professor Suzanne Moffatt
Professor Roy Taylor

Reported that, in accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may accord University distinctions on colleagues retiring from the University.

Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor and President for the conferment of the title of Registrar Emeritus.

Resolved that the title of Registrar Emeritus be conferred on Dr John Hogan.

58. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

a) University Education Committee: 15 December 2021 and 26 January 2022
b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 31 January 2022

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

59. UNIVERSITY CLOSURE DATES 2022-23

Noted that the University would be closed on the following days over the 2022-23 festive period:

Monday 26 December – Boxing Day Bank Holiday
Tuesday 27 December – In Lieu of Christmas Day Bank Holiday
Wednesday 28 December – Closure Day 1
Thursday 29 December – Closure Day 2
Friday 30 December – Closure Day 3
Monday 2 January – In Lieu of New Year’s Day Bank Holiday
Tuesday 3 January – Closure Day 4

60. 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 L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]