

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY**SENATE****23 September 2020**

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Brian Walker and Professor Phillip Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Ashley Adamson, Nadia Ahmed (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Miss Lucy Backhurst, Dr Bruce Baker, Charlotte Boulton (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Professor Nils Braakmann, Dorothy Chirwa (President, Students' Union), Sian Dickie (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Dr Carmen Hubbard, Jenny Johnstone, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Ms Claire Morgan, Dr Julie Morris, Professor Ted Schrecker, Professor Daniel Siemens, Dr Joanne Smith-Finley, Professor Konstantinos Stellos, Dr David Stewart, Professor David Thwaites, Professor Stefano Utili, Professor Aad van Moorsel.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs), Dr Mark Ferrar (Chief Information Officer), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Louella Houldcroft (Acting Head of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of People Services), Professor Jane Robinson (Dean of Engagement and Place), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).

Apologies: Professor David Burn.

MINUTES**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 23 September 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

3. 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

The Vice-Chancellor and President provided Senate with an update on the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The University was acting in response to a rapidly changing environment, with new regional restrictions having been announced last week and new government guidance issued in recent days. The Department for Education had

required each university to produce a local outbreak plan which would iterate in line with changing public health guidelines. The first version of the University's plan had been developed in partnership with Newcastle City Council and the Director of Public Health, and had received a positive response from the Minister for Higher Education.

The Vice-Chancellor set out the University's approach to maintaining its commitment to a balance of online delivery and Present-in-Person teaching in a Covid-secure environment on campus. Academic Units would be required to explain the implications for students at school and programme level.

At the present time the University did not have a Covid-19 testing facility on the Newcastle city centre campus. Until recently the infection rate had not been deemed high enough to justify the presence of such a unit, however, the University was working with the military and Deloitte to identify a suitable site on campus: this being the only route to obtaining a national testing facility. Discussions were also underway with the NHS concerning the establishment of a testing facility which would be available for staff and students only.

The University was committed to being transparent and acting with responsibility towards the local community and would shortly begin weekly reporting on the combined number of Covid-19 cases among colleagues and students.

2. Cyber Incident

The Chief Information Officer provided Senate with an update on the major cyber incident. A phase of working with external support had been completed, and the University had now commenced the restoration of systems and services. Some business practices would need to be adapted to improve security measures for the future.

3. Universities Superannuation Scheme

The Trustee of USS had launched a consultation with Universities UK on key aspects of the scheme's 2020 valuation. This covered the proposed methodology and assumptions to be used in setting the scheme's technical provisions and would determine the contributions required to fund member benefits. Based on the proposals put forward for the consultation and the extent to which employers were able to support the scheme, there would be a fund deficit at 31 March 2020 ranging from between £9.8bn to £19.9bn. The potential contribution rates would increase very significantly from 30.7% (9.6% members and 21.1% employers) to a combined member/employer figure of between 40.8% and 67.9% of payroll. These were hugely challenging figures. There would be a further consultation on future service costs and deficit recovery contributions in due course.

4. National Student Survey 2020

An initial summary of the outcomes of this year's National Student Survey had been considered by Executive Board and University Education Committee. Overall Satisfaction stood at 82.12%, down from 85.39% in 2019 and 87.52% in 2017. This placed the University 67th in terms of full-service universities, down from 34th in 2019, and 12th in the Russell Group, down from 8th last year. Overall scores had also fallen for questions relating to assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, and learning community.

Additional analysis of the data was taking place in relation to the impact of industrial action on the survey as some of the students completing the survey would have experienced three periods of action during their studies. The impact of industrial action, as well as Covid-19, was not restricted to Newcastle and therefore further analysis at

subject level was required to identify those areas where more assistance was needed to make improvements to the student experience. Many subject areas would be disappointed with the results given efforts which had gone into making improvements. Going forward it would be important to involve the student body in NSS action planning so there was a recognition of the benefits arising from initiatives. A detailed report would be submitted to the November meeting of Senate following consideration by University Education Committee.

5. University Values

At its meeting on 11 August 2020, Executive Board had endorsed the expansion of the value relating to social justice to include social and environmental justice. This decision resulted from reflection by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Environment and Sustainability committees on progress being made by the University in living the values represented in the vision through the Magna Charta project, and a consensus to make visible our commitment to stewardship of the planet and its resources as a core value of the institution. Council would be asked to approve this change at its meeting on 19 October 2020.

6. Statutes

The University had received confirmation that the Privy Council had approved changes to the Statutes of the University on 21 July 2020. The changes had been considered and approved at meetings of the statutory bodies of the University, including Senate, throughout 2019 and 2020.

7. Social Media Policy

Following a request from elected members of Senate a meeting had been arranged with People Services representatives to discuss concerns with the University's new social media guidelines in relation to academic freedom. The guidelines had been developed by the University's People Policy Forum (PPF) which included representation by colleagues in academia, professional services and all three trade unions. The guidelines had been extensively debated, drafted and communicated by the Forum to all colleagues in June of this year.

8. Staff Successes

Senate recorded congratulations to Professor Jennifer Richards (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) on winning the European Society for the Study of English award for her most recent monograph, to Dr Emma Whipday (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) on winning the Shakespeare's Globe Book Award 2020, and to Dr Chris Lamb (Translational and Clinical Research), who has been awarded a \$1.8m grant by the Helmsley Charitable Trust..

9. Senate representatives on Senate sub-committees and other University committees

Noted that Dr Shoba Amarnath had been appointed as the Faculty of Medical Sciences representative on Honorary Degrees Committee.

Members of Senate were invited to nominate themselves for vacancies on Senate sub-committees and other University committees. A ballot would be held to determine appointments if there was more than one nomination for each position.

4. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 13 JULY 2020**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 13 July 2020.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

5. **STUDENT EXPERIENCE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK**

Received a presentation 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 a presentation providing a project overview of the Student Experience Resilience Framework, which aimed to deliver a positive student experience and create a sense of belonging, community and value for money when much activity would be online.
2. The results of a student experience survey had been important in shaping planning across the student lifecycle for 2020-21. A wide range of online and on-campus activities were being implemented, covering Induction and Transition, Student Support, Engagement and Belonging, Accommodation and Hospitality, Study Skills, and Student Representation.
3. A new version of the Student Homepage had been launched. This was a key element of the challenge of communicating the 2020-21 student experience to students alongside other forms of internal communication and academic, personal and peer support. A new online offer of resources to support induction and transition had also been developed.

6. **STUDENT RECRUITMENT – UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS**

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

Noted that:

1. Senate received an update on the current student number position of the undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment cycle for the University for 2020 entry.
2. For undergraduate recruitment, this year's A-level results were finally determined by Centre-Assessed Grades (CAGs). The announcement followed the initial publication of results (using an algorithm to determine grades) and came after the first round of Confirmation and Clearing 2020. This turnaround meant that the University was required to undertake Confirmation and Clearing twice during August. All applicants whose CAGs outcomes resulted in further students meeting the terms and conditions of our offer, had been offered a place at Newcastle for their chosen year of entry.
3. Uncertainty around the ability to travel, a delay with the provision and results of English Language tests, as well as quarantine restrictions, all continued to be barriers to all prospective international students committing to Newcastle University for 2020 entry.
4. 2020 would mark the first year of the University's five year Access and Participation Plan. Following a proactive approach throughout the admissions cycle, including a University-wide approach to contextual admissions and moving the PARTNERS Summer School fully online, current undergraduate numbers indicated that the University would exceed its Access and Participation access targets for 2020 entry. The content of the PARTNERS summer school, together with recent investment in student

support, was aimed at preparing underrepresented students for a university experience and helping them with transition.

7. LESSONS LEARNED FROM LOCKDOWN

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

Noted that:

1. Senate received a report, prepared by Executive Board, reflecting on the high-level lessons learned from the period of entering into, coping through, and emerging partially from lockdown. The report was intended as a prompt for discussions across the organisation and with Council, and as an aid for future strategic and operational decision-making.
2. There would be at least one further interim 'lessons learned' report as the University moved into the second phase of living with Covid-19 in the new academic year.
3. In terms of the introduction of more digital working practices, it was important to note that remote learning could work well for those used to working online, but there would be a need to analyse the benefits/problems next year, especially in light of the experiences of first year students.
4. The pivot online for meetings and conferences had had both environmental and financial efficiency gains. The Environment and Sustainability Committee would shortly be considering a roadmap for reducing the University's carbon footprint that addressed the impact of overseas and domestic travel and the estate.
5. Clarification of some of the terms used in the report would help ensure a wider appreciation of the many issues raised.
6. Senate welcomed the focus in the document on Early Career Researchers for whom remote working had a disproportionate effect when these staff had not yet formed or joined networks in which meaningful conversations could take place. All of the University's choices regarding funding for research had been made with Early Career Researchers in mind, however, and the University was continuing to work on how it could provide support.
7. The lockdown and enforced closure of buildings leading to the shutdown of important technical equipment would have adverse impacts for research in some cases.

8. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

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

9. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR EDUCATION AND PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR ENGAGEMENT AND PLACE

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

Noted that:

1. In accordance with Standing Order X, the Vice-Chancellor had recommended to Senate and Council the establishment of a post of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place.
2. Further in accordance with Standing Order X, a joint selection committee would be established to consider the appointment to the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place post, as well as that of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, comprising the Vice-Chancellor (in the chair), three members appointed by Council, and three members appointed by Senate. The three members appointed by Senate would be: Dorothy Chirwa (President, Newcastle University Students' Union), Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon, and Dr Julie Morris.

Resolved that Senate approve the establishment of the post of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place, the arrangements for the appointment of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place, and the appointment to the joint selection committee of the three members of Senate named above.

10. ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR 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 Emerita be conferred on:

Professor Jan Illing, with effect from 1 November 2020
Professor Sally Marshall, with effect from 1 January 2021

11. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee held on 18 May, 3 June, 15 June, 29 June, 16 July and 29 July 2020
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee held on 11 June 2020
- c) University Global Committee held on 23 July 2020
- d) University Research and Innovation Committee held on 30 March, 1 June and 27 July 20

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

12. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Received the revised Delegation of Authority Regulations.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

13. MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

Received the 2020-21 membership of Senate.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

14. SENATE'S DELEGATION OF POWERS

Received Senate's Delegation of Powers.

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

15. STANDING ORDERS OF SENATE

Received the Standing Orders of Senate.

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

16. CATHERINE COOKSON FOUNDATION

Received the annual report of the Catherine Cookson Foundation.

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