NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

4 May 2022

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor David Burn, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Brian Walker and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Ashley Adamson, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Dr Bruce Baker, Professor Nils Braakmann, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Briana Gordhan (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Professor Andy Husband, Abbie Hutchinson (President, Students' Union), Jenny Johnstone, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Eleanor McCarthy (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Kate McGill, Ms Claire Morgan, (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Ted Schrecker, Dr David Stewart, Professor Annie Tindley, Dr Eimer Tuite.

In attendance: Professor Alison Shaw (Professor of Practice – Inclusive Learning) and Charlotte Boulton (Inclusive Newcastle Knowledge Centre) for Item 66, Professor Wyn Morgan (Lead Consultant, Halpin Partnership), Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Adrienne McFarland (Chief Operating Officer) and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).

Apologies: Dr Shoba Amarnath, Professor Chris Baldwin, Professor Darren Evans, Dr Anjam Khan, Dr Gareth Longstaff, Professor Nick Parker, Professor Julie Sanders, Livia Scott, Professor Stefano Utili.

M I N U T E S

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

62. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 23 February 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

63. 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 reported that Covid case numbers within the University community continued to fall.
2. **Strategy Implementation**

The Vice-Chancellor and President reported on feedback that had been received from Senators in response to the strategy implementation update that had been the subject of discussion at the joint meeting of Council and Senate on 21 March.

3. **Industrial Action**

Since the last meeting of Senate, members of the University and College Union (UCU) had participated in a further period of strike action for pensions and for pay, pay equality, casualization and workload from Monday 21 March until Friday 25 March. The University had been notified week commencing 11 April that the UCU ballots for industrial action in relation to the disputes around USS pensions and pay had been passed by members on Friday 8 April, giving the union a mandate for action until 7 October 2022. The University’s aim remained to mitigate the impact on the student education experience and on those colleagues who were not taking part in industrial action.

4. **Ukraine**

The Vice-Chancellor and President provided an update on actions taken by the University to try to identify and support those colleagues and students with links to Ukraine and Russia. A further detailed report, prepared by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, was circulated to members after the meeting.

5. **Campus for Ageing and Vitality**

Following approval from Council at its meeting on 21 March 2022, the University had signed an agreement with Genr8 Kajima Regeneration Ltd to form a new Joint Venture to transform the former Newcastle General Hospital site into a centre for research and innovation in ageing and living well. The Joint Venture would initially work to develop the detailed masterplan, funding plan and delivery programme for the Campus for Ageing and Vitality (CAV) site, for future approval by the University. Senate would be provided with information about the masterplan at a future meeting.

6. **Colleague and Student Success**

Professor Nicola Curtin had received the Heatley Medal and Prize and Dr Amy Vincent had been given the Early Career Research award from the Biochemical Society.

Professor Pauline Dixon (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences) had been elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Professor Justin Durham (Head of School of Dental Sciences) had been appointed as new Chief Scientific Advisor by the British Dental Association.

Dr Emma Whipday had been named as one of this year’s New Thinkers. Dr Whipday was one of only 10 early career researchers from institutions across the UK selected from the prestigious competition, organised by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the BBC.

The documentary *Ordinary Life* had won best Regional Student Award: Factual Film at the Royal Television Society (RTS) North East and Borders Awards. The film, made by Katharine Beavers, Luke Suddes, Harrison So and Dalene Low, as their dissertation in the final year of their Film Practices degree, had now been entered into the same category for the national RTS awards in London later this year.
7. **School of Medical Education**

At its meeting on 5 April 2022, Executive Board had endorsed a request from the Faculty of Medical Sciences for the School of Medical Education to be renamed the School of Medicine.

*Resolved that Senate approve the renaming of the School of Medical Education to the School of Medicine.*

8. **Times Higher Impact Rankings**

The University had been ranked first in the UK – and 8th in the world - out of more than 1,400 universities globally for performance against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

9. **Death of Former Vice-Chancellor**

On 27 April, the University had learned with great sadness about the recent death of Sir Laurence Martin, Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1978 to 1990. Sir Laurence steered the University through a phase of rapid growth during a period of significant reform in the higher education sector. His leadership demanded an extraordinary level of commitment, diplomacy and personal sacrifice. He would be remembered for his kindness, his generosity of spirit and his innate sense of fairness.

10. **Research Excellence Framework**

Senate noted that the results of the Research Excellence Framework 2021 were due to be published the following week. Discussed the future direction of the next research assessment exercise.

11. **Travel and Expenses Policy**

A number of Senators had asked about issues with the University’s Travel and Expenses Policy and with its travel management company, Selective. Resourcing issues within Selective and resurgent demand for travel were giving rise to delays in booking travel. Similar issues were being seen across the travel sector as a whole and were not limited to Selective. To mitigate impact on colleague travel plans the University had put temporary arrangements in place to allow exceptions to the Travel and Expenses Policy.

64. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 21 MARCH 2022**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 21 March 2022.

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

65. **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN**

Received a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources and the Postgraduate Officer, Newcastle University Students’ Union.

Noted that:

1. The Strategic Delivery Plan had been introduced to guide developments in postgraduate research provision for the University to ensure that it continued to provide a
contemporary offer to prospective and current students, align PGR activities with research strategy, and leverage the substantial investment that was made in PGR to deliver strategic objectives.

2. A set of priority actions had been identified that aligned with the University Vision and Strategy. Implementation would be led from the Doctoral College, thereby bringing to reality one of the transformative initiatives from the Education for Life strategy which until now had been a ‘shell’ structure.

3. The plan had been endorsed by student representatives who felt that it put the student voice at the centre, and spoke to the student experience well, in particular issues relating to postgraduate research employment conditions, supervisor training, and disparity of experience.

4. Whilst broadly supportive of the plan, Senators raised a number of points, noting that the increasing diversity of the research postgraduate body was an important consideration, as was the need to provide shared common spaces to help foster research culture and provide the environment in which spontaneous exchanges could occur. Regular reviews of the doctoral college were suggested, to support assessment of where value was being added. Access to suitable IT equipment and software was rightly acknowledged as an issue, although its scale needed to be quantified. In terms of implementation, an action plan with specific, measurable targets was proposed.

5. Specific challenges relating to MRes provision and simplifying the University’s structures for research centres would be considered in due course.

Resolved that Senate approve the PGR Strategic Delivery Plan.

66. INCLUSIVE NEWCASTLE

Received a presentation from Professor Alison Shaw (Professor of Practice – Inclusive Learning) and Charlotte Boulton (Inclusive Newcastle Knowledge Centre).

Noted that:

1. Senate received an update on the University’s approach to updating its Access and Participation Plan, as required by the Office for Students. Senate would receive the revised documentation at its next meeting.

2. Senate received a thoughtful presentation on ongoing research and evaluation at the University into students’ perceptions of belonging, a multi-faceted issue that often appeared in analyses of the student experience but was under-researched within the UK.

3. Although belonging was a contested term, there were links with the importance of social connections, a sense of inner value and feelings of ‘fitting in’.

4. The research at Newcastle had identified that belonging was rooted in a student’s discipline. Although students could not be made to belong, the University could provide the facilities and opportunities to help them feel a sense of belonging.

5. Peer mentoring, and opportunities available via participation in sports clubs and other student societies for example, were highly valued by students. Pedagogical as well as ‘pastoral’ interventions, such as structured group-work, academic tutoring, and project work, had also been found to be of benefit.
6. Key findings from the research undertaken emphasised the importance of students’ engagement with staff and other students, the role of professional services in developing student’s confidence and early institutional outreach interventions to support students from the beginning of their higher education journey.

7. The depth and quality of existing structures to support the student experience were integral to academic and social belonging, and the University could look for opportunities to make adaptations to elements of its existing provision to better facilitate students’ sense of belonging.

67. COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences introduced a White Space discussion.

Noted that:

1. A member of Senate had requested a White Space discussion about what the University was doing to actively promote community/culture as Government restrictions around Covid were easing and more staff and students were returning to University and on a more frequent basis, and to combat feelings of isolation particularly among international students.

2. A number of examples of initiatives taking place within faculties were highlighted, including the improvement of social spaces, quarterly symposiums, social events and buddying arrangements for new starters, and Colleague Wellbeing network activities. A Colleague Volunteering policy would be introduced shortly.

3. A package of support was place to supporting arrival, induction, and vacation activities for international students, but it was accepted that much more could be done. A Chameleon development programme project team was currently focusing on how the University could better support integration for international students.

4. Senate discussed ways in which colleagues could be encouraged to return to and spend more time on campus with a focus on adding value. Research seminars and discipline lunches were cited as examples of activities that might help with this. It was suggested that a gentle approach, whereby it was made comfortable for colleagues to return, would be most appropriate.

5. Arrangements for supporting hybrid meetings would be appreciated, however there were mixed views on the effectiveness of some hybrid meetings. Reasonable adjustments for colleagues with accessibility requirements should be embedded thoroughly.

68. MOTION SUBMITTED ON THE UNIVERSITIES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME

Received a motion proposed by Professor Alex Hughes.

[Received a motion proposed by Professor Alex Hughes.]

Noted:

1. Senate was asked to consider recommending to Council that:
   - that Council be asked to consider the severity of the USS pension cuts as new information continues to become available, and to rescind the decision of the Finance Committee rejecting UCU’s proposals.
to ask the Chair of Council to write as soon as possible thereafter to UUK advising them of the change of position of Newcastle University and calling on them to request from USS a new valuation using moderately prudent assumptions and without delay.

2. Senate was asked to note that:

- the severe impact of the recent cuts to USS pensions, as passed following the independent Chair’s casting vote at the USS Joint Negotiating Committee meeting of the 22 February 2022;
- that the cuts to USS pensions will hinder recruitment and retention of excellent teaching and research staff and have a negative impact on both undergraduate and postgraduate student training and education;
- that the cuts to USS pensions will severely hamper the University's ability to deliver its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in Higher Education.

Resolved that, following a vote, Senate agreed to carry the motion.

69. 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.

70. REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Considered a report from the Honorary Degrees Committee.

Resolved that the nominations made by the Honorary Degree Committee for the award of honorary degrees in December 2022 and July 2023 be approved.

71. 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.

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:

Professor Martin Embley with effect from 1 November 2022
Professor Ian McKeith with effect from 1 July 2022

72. RE-APPOINTMENT OF A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

Reported that, in accordance with Senate Standing Order 10, the Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the re-appointment of an existing Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the period of the re-appointment.
Noted that:

1. Professor Brian Walker’s tenure as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources was due to conclude on 31 August 2022. Since being appointed to the role, Professor Walker had overseen the introduction of the University’s Research Strategy, leading on a range of transformative initiatives including the establishment of Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence and the expansion of our Teaching and Research academic headcount via the Newcastle University Academic Track and NU Futures programmes. Professor Walker had led the University’s approach to mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on research colleagues and activity, and has been pivotal in co-ordinating and strengthening the University’s external partnerships and engagement with industry, including through the University’s National Innovation Centres. He had also led and coordinated the University’s submission to REF 2021.

2. The University wished to build on Professor Walker’s exceptional performance in the role and propose the extension of his tenure as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources for a 5 year period until 31 August 2027.

Resolved that Senate endorsed the extension of Professor Walker’s appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources until 31 July 2027, subject to final approval by Council.

73. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

a) University Education Committee: 9 March 2022
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

74. PUBLIC LECTURES COMMITTEE

Received the annual report from Public Lectures Committee.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

75. ELECTION TO SENATE

Received details of this year’s Senate Election.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

76. 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.]