

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

5 May 2021

- Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost), Professor David Burn, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Brian Walker and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Stuart Edwards (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor), Ms Nadia Ahmed (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Miss Lucy Backhurst, Dr Bruce Baker, Ms Charlotte Boulton (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Ms Dorothy Chirwa (President, Students' Union), Ms 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, Dr David Stewart, Professor David Thwaites, Professor Stefano Utili.
- In attendance:** Professor John Kirby (Dean of Postgraduate Research, Faculty of Medical Sciences) and Dr Richard Harrison (Deputy Director of Academic Services) for Item 2.1, Matt Dunlop (Head of Sustainability) and Ms Hannah Owens (Sustainability Manager) for Item 2.3, Ms Benthe Tanghe (Athletic Officer, Students' Union), Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Louella Houldcroft (Director of Communications), Mrs Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of People Services), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager).
- Apologies:** Professor Ashley Adamson, Professor Nils Braakmann and Professor Konstantinos Stellos.

MINUTES

59. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Professor Tom Ward to his first meeting of Senate since assuming his appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 24 February 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

62. 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 continued to receive the regular updates provided by Executive Board. At the meeting the Vice-Chancellor reported that the University and sector was awaiting further Government guidance about the return of students to campus. A substantially increased footfall was not expected. Discussions with colleagues about transition to on-campus working were underway.

A member of Senate had requested further information about the University's approach to Lateral Flow testing arrangements. Demonstrating testing take-up in significant numbers would be critical to winning government confidence in the return of students to campus. There was currently a reasonable uptake of Lateral Flow tests and overall costs were small, assuming refunds were at the levels provisionally indicated by the Government. The University would shortly move into a new phase of home testing which would see a significant reduction in the numbers using the central test facility.

2. Prince Philip

Senate noted with sorrow the death of Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 9 April 2021. Prince Philip officially opened the Stephenson Building in 1951, after which he was awarded an Honorary Degree (in the name of Durham University at that time).

3. Lord Judd

Honorary Member of Court, Frank Judd, who had died aged 86 on 18 April 2021, was a tremendous supporter of the University, having first joined Court in 2004. Lord Judd had a distinguished parliamentary career, including periods as Minister for Overseas Development and Minister of State of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He was particularly active in the House of Lords and was highly respected for his periods as Director of Voluntary Service Overseas and Director of Oxfam. He had a passionate commitment to international social justice and Widening Participation. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the University in 2018.

4. Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

The University had performed well in the latest THE Impact Rankings, the results of which were published on 21 April 2021. The rankings revealed how universities the world over were tackling some of humanity's most pressing problems through their research, stewardship, outreach and teaching. The University was ranked 15th in the world overall, third in the UK and fifth in Europe. Senate was pleased to note the University's very positive performance for individual Sustainable Development Goals, including a ranking of second in the world for responsible consumption and production; and joint 11th in the world for Sustainable Cities and Communities.

5. QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021

The latest QS World University Rankings by Subject had been published on 3 March 2021. The University had continued to improve its position in 4 out of 5 broad subject areas: Engineering and Technology, Life Sciences and Medicine, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences and Management. Life Sciences and Medicine remained Newcastle's highest ranking subject area, increasing its position to 88th, with Natural Sciences the most improved subject area. Arts and Humanities had experienced a decrease in its ranking position from 138th to 159th.

6. Freedom of Speech

On 22 April the Russell Group had published a statement of principles setting out how its universities protected freedom of speech, facilitated academic debate and supported diverse research and would continue to do so. The statement also set out how Russell Group universities worked to facilitate and enable the free and open discussion of challenging or controversial ideas, including in their work with student unions. The statement came after a series of proposals were published by the Government to strengthen free speech and academic freedom, with new legislation expected in the Queen's Speech. It reinforced the clear commitment of Russell Group universities to the letter and spirit of the robust legal framework already in place to guarantee free speech and academic freedom within the UK.

7. Sexual Misconduct and Harassment

On 19 April the Office for Students had called for urgent action to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct in universities and colleges, asking higher education providers to review their policies, systems and procedures before the next academic year. The call came as the regulator published a statement of expectations, outlining the practical steps that universities and colleges should be taking to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct – including harassment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The University had undertaken a significant revision of student policies last year, the work on which was informed by an Office for Students consultation on harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education. A report on the University's updated policies would be submitted to Senate and Council before the end of the academic year.

8. Universities Superannuation Scheme

Universities UK had recently launched a consultation with employers on covenant support measures, a potential compromise settlement for the March 2020 valuation, and lower cost options for colleagues opting not to join USS. A series of briefing events and meetings with campus unions to seek input from colleagues had taken place and the University was required to submit a response by 24 May.

9. University of Law

At its meeting on 16 March 2021, Executive Board approved a proposal for a partnership between the University and the University of Law. The University of Law was a well-regarded specialist provider of professional legal skills courses. The partnership would take the form of an advanced service level agreement for Newcastle University to host specialist postgraduate legal practice preparatory courses and a Graduate Diploma for non-law graduates. The programmes would result in University of Law awards and complement the University's integrated skills approach to the LL.B. and research-led taught postgraduate teaching.

10. Postgraduate Research Students

The University had been in discussions with Students' Union sabbatical officers and other student representatives to discuss concerns about the employment status of postgraduate research students. A task and finish group would be established following completion of a phase of People Services work to provide necessary data. A report would be produced for Executive Board by February 2022.

11. Turing Scheme

Executive Board had recently considered further details of the government's replacement scheme for Erasmus+, noting progress towards understanding the dimensions of the scheme and approaches received from universities in the European Union interested in exchange programmes. The University's application to the Turing Scheme included 1060 students seeking international opportunities in a total of 73 countries with 24 types of mobility.

12. Knowledge Exchange Framework

At its meetings on 23 March and 27 April 2021, Executive Board had considered the results of the University's participation in the pilot year of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The aim of the KEF is to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funding and was obligatory for all institutions in receipt of Higher Education Innovation Funds (HEIF). The KEF is designed to provide details on a wide range of activities across seven 'perspectives' of knowledge exchange. Each University is then ranked both against its 'cluster' and against the sector as a whole. The metrics are calculated on a three-year rolling basis. The University was ranked in the top half of the sector for 5 of 7 perspectives: public and community engagement, research partnerships, working with business, IP and commercialization, and working with the public and third sector (the exceptions being local growth and regeneration; and skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship). Research England would be undertaking a review of KEF, results of which would be published in Autumn 2021. There were likely to be changes to the metrics before the KEF would ultimately be used to directly drive HEIF allocations.

13. Driving the Electric Revolution

The University was leading the Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centres national programme where companies would benefit from a £28.5m investment in cutting-edge equipment to help them achieve the UK's net zero ambitions. The new equipment, which would be operational later this year, would enable a competitive electrification supply chain to be built across a variety of sectors, including industrial, transport and energy, building on existing capability and filling gaps in the UK's current capability.

14. Battery Research

The University would be involved in a £22.6m Faraday Institution battery research project aiming to deliver commercial impact. The Institution would fund focused research projects in recycling and reuse and battery safety (both involving researchers from Newcastle University), as well as extending battery life, battery modelling and solid-state batteries.

15. Research Culture report

The Russell Group had published a report examining the current UK academic research culture and aimed at improving long-term contract security and inclusive and respectful environments. The report noted the creation of the University's Dean of Research Culture and Strategy as an example of institutions ensuring explicit senior leadership responsibility for research culture and environment.

16. Colleague Successes

Professor Jane Endicott and Professor Martin Noble (Translational and Clinical Research Institute) had been awarded a Medical Research Council programme grant of £1.9m.

Jude Heed and Dr Adam Rathbone (School of Pharmacy) and Dr Andrea Myers and Dr Dominic Johnson (School of Medical Education) had been awarded Senior Fellowships with the Higher Education Academy.

Professor Ruth Plummer (Translational and Clinical Research) had won the European Targeted Anticancer Therapies award, which was given to distinguished cancer drug development experts.

Professor Volker Straub (Translational and Clinical Research) had been awarded NIHR Senior Investigator status for four years.

Professor Jennifer Richards (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) had received a London Renaissance Seminar Contribution Award, which recognised excellent research in the field, and also collegiality, creativity, openness to ideas beyond the mainstream, and mentorship.

The British Academy had launched a report on the societal impact of Covid-19, informed by work undertaken by the Humanities Research Institute at Newcastle, led by Professor Jennifer Richards and Professor James Law (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences).

Dr Ben Bridgens (School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape) had been awarded £330k by the Leverhulme Trust for 'Respire: Passive, Responsive, Variable Porosity Building Skins', a project building on the successful E3 bid by the Hub for Biotechnology and the Built Environment.

Mr Chris Price, Dr Lisa Shaw, Professor Phil White and Dr Graham McClelland in the Newcastle University Stroke Research Group had been awarded a £2m NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research, leading a collaboration with Oxford University, Exeter University, Northumbria University, five regional neuroscience centres and four ambulance services.

A Doctoral Hub proposed by Dr Rhys Thomas (Translational and Clinical Research Institute) and Professor Andy Trevelyan (School of Biomedical, Nutritional and Sport Sciences) would be funded by Epilepsy Research UK. Their application for funding had been complimented for the quality of the science, the synergy of the application, the investment in younger research leaders and our vision of focusing on analytical and computational science.

Dr Benjamin Houston (School of History, Classics and Archaeology) and Professor Shirley Jordan (School of Modern Languages) had been awarded one-year Leverhulme Research Fellowships.

Dr Fionnghuala Sweeney (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) had been awarded a British Academy/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship.

Professor Steve Clifford (Professor of Molecular Paediatric Oncology), Professor Heather Cordell (Professor of Statistical Genetics), Professor Tracy Palmer (Professor of Microbiology), and Professor Joris Veltman (Dean of Biosciences Institute) had been elected as Fellows of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Professor Ashley Adamson (Professor of Public Health Nutrition) had been successful with renewing the membership of Fuse (The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health) in the NIHR School for Public Health Research until 2027.

Professor Matthias Trost had been recognised for excellence in biosciences, winning

the Industry and Academic Collaboration Award in the annual Biochemical Society Awards.

17. Race Equality Charter

At its meeting on 13 April 2021, Executive Board had approved and endorsed the University's Race Equality Charter Action Plan. A dissemination strategy was in place to share the action plan with other overlapping fora and stakeholders, including Senate and Council, as well as other colleague networks. In keeping with the University's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Social and Environmental Justice, Executive Board approved the adoption of a Race Equality Pledge as its contribution to the Newcastle University Students' Union Decolonising NCL campaign. In agreeing the pledge which complements the University's Race Equality Charter work, Executive Board had been both challenged and inspired by the thinking underpinning the Decolonising NCL campaign.

18. Library

Following its biennial Customer Service Excellence Review, the University Library had retained its seven Compliance Plus awards and received a further two. The reviewers commended the 'corporate commitment to putting students and academic customers at the heart of everything' and 'the empowerment of staff to participate in delivering excellence services during Covid-19'.

19. Professor of Social Justice

Reverend Professor Keith Magee (School of History, Classics and Archaeology) had been appointed as the University's first Professor of Practice of Social Justice.

20. Durham University

The University of Durham had appointed Professor Karen O'Brien (currently Head of Humanities Division at the University of Oxford) as its next Vice-Chancellor and Warden, effective from 1 August 2021.

63. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 22 MARCH 2021

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 22 March 2021.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

64. ACADEMIC PLANNING 2021/22

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate received an update on the approach to the implementation of the academic planning assumptions agreed by the committee in January 2021. In light of the further developments in the Covid-19 situation since that time, the update provided an opportunity to clarify specific review dates and the factors, or triggers, for future decisions. This would allow the University to better communicate to students and colleagues about changes to arrangements were the public health situation to deteriorate.

2. There would be two key decision-making points in mid-June, in line with the final phase of the Government's plan for removing Covid-19 restrictions, and the end of July, to ensure that clear information could be provided to offer-holders. In addition, it may be necessary to respond promptly in line with any public health restrictions introduced. This would be done in line with the University's Outbreak Response Plan.
3. A member of Senate asked if the University had considered the introduction of vaccine passports. It was understood that some universities with a small number of buildings had piloted vaccine passport arrangements, although the higher education sector as a whole was not enthusiastic about the idea at present.

65. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FUNDING

Received a presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources on behalf of Executive Board.

Noted that:

1. Senate received a presentation on the implication for the University of the financial cuts to Official Development Assistance announced by the Government.
2. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) had committed £245m of funding to Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) projects in 2021/22 but had received a government budget capping spending at £125m. The shortfall was being passed on to active projects. The University stood to lose £5.8m research income across academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. Newcastle had the highest exposure to reduced funding in 2021/22 amongst all UK universities because of the size of its two interdisciplinary GCRF hubs.
3. The University had been asked by UKRI to indicate if funded projects would be terminated or if they could continue with re-profiling of budgets. The reputational risk and moral hazard of withdrawing from such partnerships, which were of significant value to the institution's work on UN Sustainable Development Goals, was very high. As a result, Executive Board had agreed a package of measures to mitigate the consequences of the reduction in funding. This included taking steps to ensure that no staff at partner institutions would be made unemployed as a result of the cut in funding.
4. Noted the extent and importance of the University's current international research collaborations. The University's top 5 collaborators were all based within the European Union. The University had been historically successful in obtaining Horizon Europe funding. Since 2016, however, there had been a decline in participation and UK institutions being asked to lead on projects funded by Horizon Europe. This had been influenced by a prolonged period of uncertainty regarding the Government's commitment to providing research funding at the level of the UK's former subscription as a full member of Horizon Europe of c.£1billion per annum.
5. As an Associate Member of Horizon Europe post-Brexit, the UK's subscription would be adjusted periodically based on how much funding had been secured. There was therefore a risk that the UK could be locked out of some funding calls, such as those relating to the security of EU countries, for example.

65. CLIMATE ACTION

Received a paper from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.

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

Noted that:

1. Senate received a presentation on the University's Climate Action Plan in response to a request from a member of Senate. The University had declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019, setting a target for net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2040. Since this date, colleagues and students across the University had contributed to the development of a Climate Action Plan describing a path towards net-zero.
2. The approval of a 2040 plan was reported to Senate in November 2020 but on considering approval of the Plan, Council had questioned the ambition of the target taking account of the time that had passed since the declaration in 2019, the calls within the sector and from students for more urgent reduction pathway, as well as the plans laid out by other anchor institutions in the City that set a more accelerated trajectory. Following careful discussion and re-examination of various options by both Council and Executive Board, it had been decided that the University's target should be brought forward to 2030.
3. Decarbonisation required both transformational cultural change and significant investment in the estate. The pace and scale of emissions reductions required was exceptionally challenging to deliver. All members of the University community had a part to play in making the institution's approach to net zero distinctive, and students and colleagues would need to be empowered to 'be the change'. This could be a positive recruitment driver for future students and colleagues who regarded this as a values-led university at the cutting edge of new 'green' research and education.
4. Executive Board and Council had discussed the making of investments at a sensible time to meet the agreed aims and informed by the developing understanding of Science Based Targets. Academic decisions in making those choices would be needed.
5. Discussed the potential framing of the University's work in this area as 'climate justice', considering the experiences of colleagues at overseas campuses and those of global partners.
6. Considered the views of members of Senate about academic travel. Travel-based carbon emissions could be brought more explicitly into the University's targets and milestones for the action plan over the coming months. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global was involved in a Universities UK group scoping approaches and sharing data about travel within the sector. Innovative ways of reducing the carbon footprint of travel would be needed, and sustainability goals may, in the fullness of time, outweigh academic autonomy over deciding which conferences to travel to.

66. **WHITE SPACE**

Noted that:

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

67. **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 F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:

Professor Andrew Mellor, with effect from 1 May 2021

Professor Diane Richardson, with effect from 1 October 2021

68. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 11 February and 10 March 2021
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 22 February 2021
[Circulated with the agenda as Documents G-H. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

69. 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 J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]