NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
1 June 2026

Present: Pat Ritchie (Chair of Council), Mags Scott (Deputy Chair of Council), Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President), Derek Bell (Lay Member), Professor Nigel Harkness (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Ilsa Hartley (President, Students' Union), Alex Lamb (Lay Member), Bill MacLeod (Lay Member), Dr Vicky Long (Elected Member of Council), Claire Morgan (Lay Member), Dr Meiko O'Halloran (Elected Senate Member), Marta Phillips (Lay Member), Emma Reay (Elected Professional Services Member), Colin Riordan (Lay Member), Angela Russell (Honorary Treasurer), Nitin Shukla (Lay Member) and Sir Nigel Wilson (Lay Member)

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Chief Financial Officer), Professor Li Li (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global) for Minute 61 only, Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Jen Middleton (Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services), Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager), and Dennis Wong (Regional Provost and Group CEO (E and SE Asia)) for Minute 61 only.

Apologies: Linda Conlon (Lay Member), Will Garton (Lay Member), Arun Harish (Lay Member), Professor Rhiannon Mason (Elected Senate Member) and Gina Tindale (Academic Officer, Students' Union).

M I N U T E S

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in advance of the meeting.

56. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Received the draft minutes of the meeting of Council held on 20 April 2026.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document A. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that, subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 20 April 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed.

The Chair thanked Ilsa Hartley for her excellent contributions to Council throughout her term as Students' Union President.

57. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an update from the Executive Director of People Services.

Noted that:

1. The University Health and Safety Committee would next meet on 12 June and topics for discussion included new Key Performance Indicators for Executive Board approval and ongoing security concerns regarding off-hours building access on campus. One RIDDOR reportable event had been noted.

58. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Noted that:

1. The Council lay member appointment process had been progressing well and three potential new lay members had been identified. Those candidates would be considered by Nominations Committee at their June meeting and recommendations for final approval would be submitted to Council in July.

2. The Chair invited expressions of interest in the Senior Independent Governor role and advised that interested candidates were encouraged to contact the Chair for further information.

59. **VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

Received the Vice-Chancellor and President's report. Highlights of this report are provided below.

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

Reported that:

1. Next Generation Newcastle

   Executive Board had continued to develop the Next Generation Newcastle (NGN) Programme Scope to ensure that projects were aligned with institutional strategic objectives and KPIs. The programme had been shaped into the following areas of focus: Academic Shape, Commercial, Future Students, Infrastructure, People and Performance, Research, PS Transformation, World Class Civic University. Running alongside Next Generation Newcastle, Education for Life and Leading-Edge Curriculum (LEC) were making excellent progress, including delivery of the LEC implementation pilot for several programmes, and proposals for a new Academic Advising framework and process had recently been endorsed by Senate for launch in 2026/27.

2. Office for Students – Freedom of Speech

   The University of Sussex had overturned a £585,000 fine from the Office for Students (OfS) after the high court rejected claims that the university had breached free speech regulations in a case involving a former professor. The ruling dealt specifically with the way OfS ran the investigative process and issued the record-breaking fine. The OfS had advised they would not appeal the high court decision.

3. Newcastle Innovations

   The University had launched Newcastle Innovations to make it faster and easier for businesses, investors and partners to collaborate with the University and turn ideas into growth. Newcastle Innovations provided a single, joined-up front door to the University's innovation, commercialisation and partnership activity, simplifying access to expertise, facilities, talent, funding pathways and commercial support. Newcastle Innovations would build on a strong track record as the University already had 42 active spin-out companies that had attracted more than £90 million of investment in the past two years, and had created more than 370 jobs.

4. Students' Union Education Awards

   The awards ceremony for the Students' Union annual 'The Education Awards' took place on Wednesday 20 May. Awards were made in the following categories: Teaching, Academic Support, Personal Support, EDI, Taught Supervision, and Research Supervision.

5. Newcastle University Awards

The annual Newcastle University Awards would take place on Thursday 4 June at the Frederick Douglass Centre. Organised jointly by Newcastle University and Newcastle University Students' Union, the annual celebration recognised the outstanding achievements of our students through their extra-curricular activities and the positive impact they make within the University community, as well as in the region, nationally and internationally.

6. North East Spinout Inspire Fund

The North East Spinout Inspire Fund would be launched on Thursday 11 June at Northumbria University in collaboration with Universities for North East England and the North East Combined Authority. The launch was planned as an opportunity to network with North East business and policy leaders and learn more about how the fund could benefit the region through transforming scientific discovery into high-growth new businesses.

7. Discover Festival 2026

The University's annual Discover Festival would take place on Saturday 13 June on the city-centre campus including interactive activities, demonstrations, workshops and live performances that would showcase some of the University's pioneering research, ground-breaking innovation and creative expertise. The festival would also provide an opportunity to showcase how University experts are tackling global challenges, from health and technology to climate change here in the North East and around the world.

8. University Museums Group

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that Malavika Anderson, Manager of Newcastle University's Great North Museum: Hancock, had been made co-chair of the University Museums Group (UMG). Malavika will bring her insight and leadership to the UMG alongside Luke Syson, of Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum, at a critical moment for the sector.

9. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

The Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) had been awarded the prestigious Arts Professional Award for Excellent Research or Policy Intervention. The award recognised research or policy work that has made a significant contribution to the arts and cultural sectors. Creative PEC received the honour for its 'State of the Nations' research series, which has fast become a leading source of longitudinal evidence on the UK's creative economy.

10. Interim Heads of School

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that:

Dr John Holton had been appointed as the interim Head of School of History, Archaeology and Classics from 1 August for a one-year term.

Dr Alina Schartner had been appointed as the interim Head of School of Education, Communication and Language from 1 August 2026 for a one-year term.

11. Castle Leazes Redevelopment

Construction of new student accommodation at Newcastle University's Castle Leazes had commenced and this first phase of development would see the first of two buildings being built which will open in time for the 2028-2029 academic year. The project was a joint venture between Newcastle University and Unite Students, the UK's largest, owner, manager and developer of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), and was the first of its kind in the UK.

12. Henderson Old Hall

The reinstatement of Henderson Old Hall was continuing and it had recently been confirmed that roof reinstallation could be commissioned as the insurers had confirmed this would be funded. Discussions would also proceed with the insurers on the basis of a global insurance settlement covering other major repair elements.

13. Job and Career Opportunities

Media outlets had recently reported on significant decreases in employment opportunities for young adults with one in six set to be out of work, education or training in five years unless action was taken. Though this trend was not yet visible in the University's graduate data, it was a matter for ongoing focus and active intervention where possible.

14. Office for Students – Survey Analysis

On 8 May, the Office for Students (OfS) had published supplementary analysis from last year's survey of final-year undergraduates across the country, focusing on how reported experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault/violence varied by study context and student characteristics. The sexual misconduct survey was the largest prevalence survey of its kind in the UK, and the initial findings were published in September 2025 following the introduction of new requirements for universities and colleges registered with the OfS to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct. Working closely with city partners, the University and NUSU would continue to use external and internal data analysis to inform actions to address this important issue.

60. RISK MANAGEMENT

Received an update on risks relating to the University's strategic objectives.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted:

1. There had been no changes to risk scores since the last meeting of Council. At its March meeting, Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee had reviewed the new risks relating to the Information Technology infrastructure and the University's physical estate. A deep dive review of Strategic Risk 10 (Poor colleague performance, culture, recruitment, retention, health, safety & wellbeing) would take place at the July meeting of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

2. Instructure, the supplier of the University's virtual learning environment Canvas, had been subjected to two cyber security incidents in May, impacting multiple institutions worldwide. The University had been notified that data was compromised and in line with formal requirements the Information Commissioner's Office had been notified. Instructure had come to an agreement with the cyber hackers and no further disruption was expected.

Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the risks facing the University were being managed appropriately.

61. **TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION - CHINA**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global introduced a discussion.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Following University Executive Board approval to progress two Joint Education Institutes (JEIs) with respective partners in November 2025, the China Transnational Education project team had established workstreams to support the development of a distinctive portfolio with each partner.

2. In March 2026, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global had led a delegation to visit the two universities (Central China Normal University in Wuhan and Southeast University in Nanjing). Outcomes included an enhanced financial position by increasing the student number quota and the expected tuition fee level, agreement on contract length, and agreement to repatriate revenue to the UK. Since then, the two universities had visited Newcastle (in March and April), led by their Vice-Presidents, to further the relationship by signing a progression agreement and to explore student internship opportunities.

3. The proposal to develop two JEIs in China was intended to support several strategic objectives including: attracting a new student demographic for which the University did not currently have access; enhancing the University's brand and market position; diversification of international student recruitment channels and sources of income; and enabling new research and industry collaborations.

4. Four key risks had been identified: geopolitical and market volatility; financial and legal compliance; academic quality; and freedom of speech and cyber security considerations. The proposal had been subjected to thorough due diligence and the risk areas would all be regularly reviewed and monitored. Learning from peer groups would also be integrated and the JEI agreements were also subject to guidelines and policies from within the Higher Education regulatory environment.

5. Finance Committee had developed and reviewed the financial model as presented in the proposal and it was noted this work had been very thorough and had included scenario analysis: the next reasonable step would be to test it in practice. Finance Committee had also considered the level of return and whether it was justifiable considering the additional risks of operating overseas and specifically in China. It would be critical to have robust contingency and exit plans and the Committee had also agreed that all three sections of the JEI agreement should be subjected to external legal review.

6. Levels of prudence had been built into the financial modelling, with the highest projected teaching costs included at the outset, and the modelling was also aligned with information available from other institutions with similar agreements. A central team would actively monitor cash flow to ensure ongoing oversight of financial implications.

7. It would be critical to protect the student experience in the UK during the transition phase during which University colleagues would be travelling to China to deliver in-person teaching. Mitigations included that all relevant modules were team-taught so multiple colleagues would remain in the UK while one colleague would travel to China for a temporary period of teaching. Also, the teaching schedules would be carefully mapped in

advance to ensure limited impact on UK students and these plans would be managed by a central team.

8. It would be crucial to continue learning from partner universities that had already set up JEIs. Key issues that had created difficulties included relying on teaching delivery teams that were too small, and entering into partnerships with universities that were not well-matched (i.e., research-oriented universities partnering with teaching-oriented universities) and lack of backing from University senior leadership. The University had considered these issues and no significant concerns were noted in reference to the University's JEI proposals.

9. It was likely that the presence of JEIs would positively impact the University's QS rankings, while also increasing the University's international student numbers. Potential linkages with NUMed Malaysia were also under consideration as Chinese students were increasingly interested in vertical travel (that is, travel within a single time zone) and the University's Malaysian campus therefore offered possible further synergies with the JEIs.

Resolved that Council approve the establishment of Joint Education Institutes with Central China Normal University in Wuhan and Southeast University in Nanjing.

62. **REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTE**

The Chief Financial Officer introduced a paper.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Finance Committee had received the first report from Queensdale Investment Consultancy, the University's new independent investment advisor. This role would include review of the endowment investment policy, asset allocation, and support in engagement with fund managers, particularly in anticipation of the merger with the Development Trust.

2. The Committee had discussed the benchmarking data on the University's financial performance in 2024-25 within the Russell Group. The University was positioned in 19th place by total income and the relative position of the University across a number of key financial metrics were also reviewed and discussed.

3. An update on the preparation of the 2026-27 Budget had been received, noting progress since the draft Budget was presented to Finance Committee at the end of March. Subsequent budget holder engagement and refinement of assumptions had improved the forecast outturn position, including greater clarity on cost reduction and income generation opportunities, increased confidence of the pay award assumption and updated assumptions relating to strategic funds project costs. These adjustments had returned the revised budget position broadly in line with the Medium-Term Financial Plan deficit.

4. An update on the actions being taken to improve financial sustainability and longer-term financial performance was received. The update provided initial detail on the Professional Services Transformation and Academic Shape projects which sit within Next Generation Newcastle programme.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

63. **RESEARCH MISCONDUCT POLICY**
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

64. **SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF SENATE, 29 APRIL 2026**

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

65. **REPORTED BUSINESS**

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