

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

8 July 2024

Present: Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President), Jasmine Banks (Education Officer, Students' Union), David Bird, Linda Conlon, Leo David (President, Students' Union), Jan Deckers, Jo Geary, Alex Lamb, Bill MacLeod, Claire Morgan, Dianne Nelmes, Marta Phillips, Pat Ritchie (Vice-Chair of Council), Angela Russell, Mags Scott, Nitin Shukla, Professor Brian Walker (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Angela Woodburn.

In attendance: Professor Nigel Harkness (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, HaSS) for Item 84, Estelle Blanks (Director of Business and Innovation) for Item 86, Clair Elliott (Director of NUIT) and Jason Smith (Cyber Programme Director) for Item 87, Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office).

MINUTES

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

79. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Received the draft minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 June 2024.

[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 10 June 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

80. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Noted that:

1. University Health and Safety Committee had met on 20 June and the following actions on the University Health and Safety Strategic Plan had been approved:
 - Review of the Chemical Safety Management Standard
 - Review of the Work at Height Management Standard
 - Review of the Pregnancy Management Standard
 - Review of the First Aid Management Standard
2. This meant that all ten actions within the first year, 2023-2024, of the five-year strategic plan had been completed. Progress with audits and training was as expected.
3. Committee members had been asked again to do what they could in respect to increasing the accident and near miss reports; this would be discussed in each of the Faculty and Professional Services committees.
4. The HSE had visited Estates and Facilities Grounds storage facilities on 10 May with the focus being on Plant Protection Products (Pesticides). Following the inspection, the University had received an enforcement letter from the HSE (Chemical Division) Officer. Estates and Facilities had completed any actions within the letter, including the removal of a secured pesticide product, and we have provided confirmation of this to the HSE.

5. Members of the committee had mentioned the protest encampment in their reports and updates, with particular attention being given to the behaviour of individuals at the encampment and its impact on colleague wellbeing.

81. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Noted that:

1. The Chair reported on the outcomes of this year's election for new academic and professional services members of Council drawn from the staff of the University. Dr Anjam Khan (Senior Lecturer in Biosciences) and Emma Reay (Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions) had been elected.
2. As this would be their final meeting, the Chair thanked retiring members David Bird, Jan Deckers, Jo Geary, Dianne Nelmes, and Angela Woodburn for their engagement and contribution whilst members of Council and in activities outside Council.
3. The Chair reported that the University had won the Public Sector Finance Team of the Year in the North East Accountancy Awards. Council extended its congratulations.

82. 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. Chair of Council

On behalf of the University, the Vice-Chancellor thanked the outgoing Chair of Council for his outstanding service in the role of Chair since 2017.

2. Protest Encampment

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update. A twin-track approach to dispersing the encampment and longer-term student engagement was being pursued. The University was working to bring forward legal action and had engaged the Students' Union to appoint an external mediator to find a negotiable way forward.

University Open Days, staged over the weekend of 28 and 29 June had passed without significant disruption. Graduation ceremonies were now underway, and any encampment activity that might lead to disruption was being monitored.

Senate had discussed the impact of the encampment and associated disruption on students and colleagues at its meeting on 26 June 2024. A range of views had been expressed, including concerns from colleagues about a breakdown in trust with the security team. A similar discussion had taken place at a recent meeting of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

Council was supportive of the University's approach and would be kept informed of further developments.

3. Fine Art

The University was celebrating the centenary of its internationally renowned Fine Art

degree – the very first BA (Hons) Fine Art in England. The course welcomed its first undergraduates in 1923 and four years later, Ethel Urquhart became the first person in the country to graduate with a Fine Art degree. To mark this milestone in the history of Art Education, the Fine Art department was celebrating Fine Art 100, a four-year celebration of the creation and awarding of the very first BA (Hons) of Fine Art in England.

4. Research Excellence Framework

The University had been invited to submit to all the Units of Assessment in the People, Culture and Environment (PCE) pilot exercise. The University's return would omit Social Work and Social Policy, but would include:

- Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
- Biological Sciences
- Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
- Computer Science and Informatics
- Business and Management Studies
- History
- Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

Work would be conducted on the 'mock' return to the pilot exercises from November 2024 for submission towards the end of February 2025.

5. Turing

The University had been informed that its Turing Scheme funding award for the 2024-25 academic year was expected to be £1.63m: the highest amount of funding under this scheme that the University has ever received. Turing was the government's student exchange scheme, established in 2021 as a replacement for the UK's participation in the European Union's Erasmus programme. The outcome was subject to any changes made by the Secretary of State following the General Election.

A query was raised regarding the experience of students who had received requests from the University to return funding intended to support them whilst on overseas student exchange visits. The Executive Director of External Relations would investigate.

6. Colleague Success

Professor John Simpson (Medical School, Respiratory Medicine) had been elected to the Academy of Medical Sciences prestigious Fellowship for his significant contributions to advancing biomedical and health sciences.

7. New Government Cabinet Appointments

The Vice-Chancellor and President reported on the appointment to cabinet by the Prime Minister of former government chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, as Minister of State for Science, Research, and Innovation, and of former home secretary Jacqui Smith as Minister of State for Skills.

83. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and Registrar provided 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. Since the previous meeting of Council, five strategic risks had been updated by their risk owner and reviewed by Executive Board. There had been no change to the risk ratings. Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee would review SR6 (Failure to improve health, social wellbeing, economic & cultural richness in the places in which we operate locally, nationally & globally) in detail at its meeting on 18 July.
2. It was unlikely that student number targets for 2024 entry would be achieved due to in-cycle market changes. A strategy on how to approach recruitment through clearing to mitigate this risk would be agreed by Executive Board.
3. As the protest encampment was unlikely to end in the short term, the governance structure had been reviewed and would now move to a “Gold, Silver, Bronze” structure. The strategic oversight would be led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. A detailed operational risk and a proposed strategic approach to managing the encampment had been developed to help support decision-making.
4. Demolition work had started at the Castle Leazes site. Discussion had taken place regarding the management of ongoing risks and maintaining stakeholder relationships. A decision regarding the future of Old Henderson Hall was still required. An options appraisal would be undertaken.
5. This year’s National Student Survey results would be released imminently. The University hoped that this would improve the risk position for education and the wider student experience.

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

STRATEGY AND KPIs

84. FACULTY REPORT (Humanities and Social Sciences)

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

Noted that:

1. In terms of size and shape, the Faculty was continuing to evolve its student cohort mix, and was hoping for growth in recruitment of international students to Master’s programmes. Research income had grown by 11% in 2023-24.
2. Recent achievements included the award of five-year reaccreditation for Business School programmes by EQUIS, major research grants in policy-related areas, and Faculty-wide Athena Swan Silver status.
3. The Faculty was aiming to be more strategic in the design of partnership work, and more student and demand-led in relation to the development of its education portfolio, highlighting the employment opportunities offered by its programmes, and bringing industry expertise into the classroom.
4. Topics identified for growth through the NU Shape process, and where new provision was being formulated following market research, included Business, Culture and Creative Industries, and Social Sciences.
5. As well as taking advantage of the opportunities for academic units within the faculty to work more collectively, the Faculty was exploring the potential for cross-university internal

partnerships, in areas such as digital creativity with computing, and public policy with health sciences.

85. STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced a report.

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

Noted that:

1. Council received a summary of the progress being made against the Vision and Strategy referenced against the high-level KPIs that are used to measure our progress. In this update, the RAG rating for Research Intensity had changed from yellow to green and the rating for South East Asia Sustainability from amber to yellow.
2. The planned review of KPIs had been delayed from spring 2024 to Autumn 2024. This delay would allow the review to factor in the outcomes of the new Education Strategy, the refresh to the Global Strategy and the introduction of unit-level Strategic Delivery Plans (NUShape). The review would focus on the ensuring KPIs were structured to successfully measure and track progress towards strategic aims and how they were used within the University's governance structures. It was expected that the outcomes of the review would be in place for the Council report due in December 2024.
3. Council noted that Student Experience was rated red for performance and amber for risk, and queried whether more radical interventions to change student experience performance could have been made. The University was aligning its internal student surveys with the questions in the National Student Survey to improve the quality of intelligence available about performance on this measure.

86. BUSINESS AND INNOVATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The Director of Business and Innovation, on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, introduced a paper.

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

Noted that:

1. Council received the University's updated Business and Innovation Strategic Plan for 2025 – 2030, which took account of changes in the wider business ecosystem and sought to situate place-based innovation more centrally in the University's operations. Its development had been informed by an extensive review (June to November 2023), conducted with colleagues across the University as well as external critical friends and representatives of partner organisations, and a review of other universities' business and innovation strategies and activities.
2. While the University was successful in many aspects of business and innovation, it could benefit from other opportunities by being more external-facing and engaging with partners in a more agile way. It was suggested that the University should develop a clear narrative on how partners could engage with it. Clarity on the intended financial outcomes and equality objectives for the plan should also be provided.

Resolved that Council approve the revised Business and Innovation Strategic Plan.

REPORTS

87. **CYBERSECURITY**

The Chief Financial Officer introduced a discussion.

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

Noted that:

1. Council received an update on the progress of the work undertaken as part of the University-wide Cyber Security Programme.
2. There had been a programme reset in spring 2023, since when significant progress had been made in several workstreams within the Cyber Security Programme, and cyber security governance continued to be effective.
3. Notable progress had been made with the roll-out of the Cyber Security Accountability Framework across the three pilot schools identified by Executive Board in December 2023. A Network Transformation project had completed its procurement process and had transitioned into the design phase. Work was also progressing, with an external consultancy in place, on the building of an IT asset register system and accompanying processes, that addresses one of the major findings of the Internal Audit report from last year.
4. Major focus and effort had been placed on end-user device discovery and the expansion of the NUIT managed IT estate.
5. A key element of cyber security risk was centred around user behaviour. To further reduce the risk of cyber breaches, a new package of information security training had been procured. Further, more targeted modules would be deployed in the future, and these would play a part in reducing the likelihood of an incident because of user actions.
6. Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee had been kept abreast of developments in relation to the University's cybersecurity posture on a regular basis and had taken the view that good progress was being made.
7. Council asked to be provided with a summary assessment of the recoverability of core systems and the priority of which needed to be recovered first and any estimated cost of recovery, as well as a summary analysis of critical business processes provided/reliant on a third-party provider and how the University gained assurance over their cyber credentials. Further information about the regulatory framework for cybersecurity in Singapore and Malaysia was also requested. An update will be provided to Council in December 2024.

88. **FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

The Registrar introduced a paper.

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

Noted that:

1. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act had received royal assent in May 2023. The new legislation introduced a new statutory requirement for universities to "promote the importance of" both freedom of speech within the law, and academic freedom for academic colleagues.
2. Council received an updated University code of practice for freedom of speech. The code had been revised pending the outcome of an Office for Students consultation. Once finalised, the code, which would apply to both the University and the Newcastle University Students' Union, would be promoted to colleagues and students.

3. It was understood that the new UK government might use commencement regulations to review and defer implementation of the Act. Should this be the case the University would continue to use the existing version of its code of practice for freedom of speech.

Resolved that Council approve the updated code of practice for freedom of speech subject to implementation of the Act. Further amendments may be required in the new academic year once Office for Students guidance had been received.

89. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Honorary Treasurer and Executive Director of Finance introduced a report from Finance Committee.

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

Noted that:

1. At its recent meeting the Committee had received and reviewed the University's Financial Report for the nine months ending 30 April 2024. Council noted the full-year outlook, and that tuition fee income was below budget. Expectations remained for a strong research income performance with good supporting award and application indicators. Staff costs were consistent with the Q2 forecast and included adjustments for USS employers pension contributions, NHS pay rises and a change in outlook for staff turnover rates. It was anticipated that a £4.8m accrual would be included in year-end results as an exceptional cost item relating to the outcome of the recent Voluntary Severance Scheme.
2. The Committee had received an update on the Newcastle Helix site and the development plans for the remainder of the site. Council noted the progress being made with respect to the development of residential and other undeveloped plots.
3. Finance Committee also received an update on the latest position of the encampment on campus and noted one area the protestors had raised relating to the University's investment portfolio and specifically investments in weapons and arms manufacturing. The University's Ethical Investment Policy excludes investment in weapons and arms manufacturing. The fund manager tender process is aligned to this policy and the University has assurance from respective fund managers as to continued compliance with University policy.

90. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Chair of Council introduced a report.

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

Noted that:

1. An external recruitment campaign, conducted by Peridot on behalf of the University, had sought applications from individuals with skills and experience in Legal, Public Relations, and/or Information Technology, to address some of the skills requirements among the Council membership arising from the retirements. A longlist of 16 candidates had been considered by a sub-group of Nominations Committee, from which two stand-out candidates for the lay vacancies had been identified based on relevant skills and experience: Will Garton (Director General, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) and Lisa Hunter (Head of Strategic Communications, MHP Group).
2. In addition, Nominations Committee had agreed to recommend to Council the appointment of Colin Riordan (Chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and former Vice-

Chancellor of Cardiff and Essex universities). The appointment of Colin Riordan would add valuable senior experience of higher education to Council's skills profile.

3. A further search exercise to identify two new lay members was currently underway.
4. The Committee had also made recommendations regarding membership of University committees by Council-appointed members.

Resolved that Council approve the following appointments/re-appointments* from 1 August 2024 until 31 July 2027:

Council	Will Garton Lisa Hunter Colin Riordan
Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee	Dean White* Tom Wooldridge
Health and Safety Committee	Professor Gavin Hudson Derek Bell
Museum and Gallery Board	Nitin Shukla
Research Ethics Committee	Emeritus Professor Paul Flecknell

91. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Senior Independent Governor provided an update.

Noted that:

1. The Committee, which was chaired by the Senior Independent Governor, had met on two occasions this academic year. In considering the remuneration of the Vice-Chancellor and President and Executive Board, the Committee had reflected on benchmarking data from across the higher education sector and beyond. The Committee had also discussed the University's pay gap reporting in some detail.

RESERVED BUSINESS

92. SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a paper.

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

Noted that:

1. The appointment of Professor Nigel Harkness as Deputy Vice-Chancellor from 1 October 2024 would create a vacancy for a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences. The importance of this role would make a prolonged vacancy challenging. Therefore, internal expressions of interest to fill the role on an interim basis would begin in early September 2024.
2. At the meeting of Senate on 28 February 2024 a case for a Dean of Culture and Inclusion had been considered by members. The feedback from Senators asked that further consideration be given to elevating the Dean role to one of Pro-Vice-Chancellor in

recognition of the importance of the portfolio of work. After further consideration and a review of the portfolio of work, Executive Board had agreed to propose the creation of the role of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Culture and Inclusion. Senate had endorsed this proposal at its meeting on 26 June 2024.

3. Professor Anya Hurlbert had held the role of University Dean of Advancement since 2016 and during her time had provided academic strategic leadership for advancement activities. Through her position as Dean of Advancement, Anya had been a driving force behind the launch and success of the Campaign for Newcastle University. The re-appointment of Professor Hurlbert as Dean of Advancement for a further period had been endorsed by Senate at its meeting on 26 June 2024.

Resolved that Council approve:

- ***The appointment of an Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences***
- ***The establishment of the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Culture and Inclusion***
- ***The re-appointment of Professor Anya Hurlbert as Dean of Advancement until 31 December 2027.***

ROUTINE BUSINESS

93. APPOINTMENT OF AN EXTERNAL AUDITOR

Received a paper from the Chief Financial Officer.

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

Resolved that Council approve the appointment of Deloitte as external auditors for the statutory audit year ended 31 July 2025.

94. ANNUAL PROMOTIONS REPORT

Received the annual report from University and Faculty promotions committees.

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

Resolved that Council approve the revised constitution.

95. SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF SENATE, 26 JUNE 2024

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