

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

19 February 2025

- Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor David Burn, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Ruth Valentine, Professor Chris Whitehead (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Chris Baldwin, Jasmine Banks (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Daniel Coca, Leo David (President, Students' Union), Professor Stuart Edwards, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Dr Darren Kelsey, Professor David Kennedy, Dr Ray Kent, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Murray Pollock, Professor Judith Rankin, Dr Jemima Repo, Dr Shweta Sharma, Dr Robert Shaw, Hisham Salamathullah (Wellbeing and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Grega Smrkolj, Muriel Snowdon, Professor Emma Stevenson, Linming Sun (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Professor Simon Tate, Professor John Wildman, Dr Laura Woodhouse, Dr Katharine Wright and Dr Emily Yarrow.
- In attendance:** Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Jen Middleton (Head of Communications), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager).
- Apologies:** Nick Collins, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Claire Lomax, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Ruth Morrow, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe.

MINUTES

54. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed new members to their first meeting of Senate:

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

56. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 15 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

Noted that:

- a) There remained a vacancy for a Senate appointed member on the Environment and Sustainability Committee. Interested individuals were invited to contact Professor Jane Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place for more information.

57. 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:

a) 4th Generation University

The University was now a member of a network to support innovative universities that deliver societal impact in their local areas. The network draws on a concept of 4th Generation Universities and was being coordinated by Elsevier. It included a small number of global universities where education and research had enabled societal benefit and had integrated global connectivity with local impact.

b) Institutionally Funded Research

Senators had requested a discussion on unfunded research and a response had been provided including guideline figures gathered from Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) data. It was noted that although levels of grant funding had been rising, so had the proportion of research that the University cross-subsidises. For 2023-24, about 30 per cent of research in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering was cross-subsidised; in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences it was over 60 per cent. These were higher levels than at comparator institutions, and University external funding per FTE was also below Russell Group median. It was crucial to find efficiencies in both teaching and research, while finding opportunities to be more strategic in research activities, providing freedom and opportunity to produce outstanding outputs and impacts. It was noted that appropriate goals needed to be set at appropriate levels, and selecting appropriate benchmarking was an existing aspect of developing strategic plans within each Faculty.

c) India Partnerships and Transnational Education

At the end of January 2025, the Vice-Chancellor had been invited to speak at the QS India Summit and attending the summit had provided a critical opportunity to meet with international vice-chancellors, businesses, government agencies, alumni and other potential partners, with a view to strengthening our partnerships in this key international market. Furthering those strategic aims, University leadership had recently invited expressions of interest to identify potential Indian partners who align with our academic values and strategic objectives. To date 16 submissions had been received and any potential partnerships would be subject to due diligence processes and a full business case. The decision to proceed or not would follow the usual governance processes via Senate and Council.

d) Leadership Culture and Inclusion

The terms of office for Dean of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and Dean of Research Culture and Strategy were due to end in July 2025. As a result of the current financial restrictions and recruitment freeze, it had not been possible to begin a recruitment process for a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture and Inclusion as previously agreed. As an interim measure and to ensure continuing support for key University agendas, it was proposed to advertise a Dean of Culture and Inclusion role for a period of 12 months. The role would be full-time where the previous two roles were part-time, so the hours and FTE would remain the same. The University would continue to signal its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters locally and globally by focusing on specific activities and impact.

e) Industrial Action

The University had received notice from the local branch of the University and College Union (UCU) of their intention to take 14 days of discontinuous strike action between 4 and 28 March 2025. There would also be continuous action short of strike commencing on 4 March.

In accordance with General Regulations E43-45, the University may use a set of Additional Regulations in conjunction with the standard University Regulations where there was a requirement to mitigate disruption to programme delivery, examinations and assessment, as identified by Senate. As far as possible, normal practice would be followed with the provisions of the Additional Regulations only being used where necessary. Their implementation and operation were directed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education via the Education Continuity Group. The Additional Regulations were last considered by Senate in September 2023.

An update from University Education Committee would be reported to the next meeting of Senate. It was not expected that any changes to the Additional Regulations would be required beyond typographical changes. Senate would be asked to approve any substantive changes at its next meeting if necessary.

Resolved that Senate approve the recommendation to delegate authority to University Education Committee to review and implement the Additional Regulations.

- f) Confederation of British Industry's North East Council
Professor Jane Robinson (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place) had been appointed Chair of the Confederation of British Industry's (CBI) North East Council. As well as overseeing the activities of the Confederation of British Industry in the North East and Tees Valley, Jane would join the CBI's most senior policy-mandating and cross-economy board – the CBI Chairs' Committee.

58. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 20 JANUARY 2025

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 20 January 2025.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

59. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Received a paper from Professor Matthew Grenby, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

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

Noted that:

- a) A proposed Newcastle University Centre of Research Excellence (NUCoRE) in Industrial Biotechnology (led by the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering), would join a portfolio of 18 NUCoREs, to enable the University to offer a coherent narrative of collective excellence in industrial biotechnology research.
- b) The NUCoRE would encompass research across all three faculties, including NU Singapore, constituting an interdisciplinary approach and would take a holistic approach of what constitutes Industrial Biology now, and what it was likely to become in the future.
- c) Discussed how the criteria of 'excellence' was met during the NUCoRE proposal and development process, and how that criteria may be demonstrated in outputs and impact over time. The importance of ensuring teaching-led, in addition to research-led, outputs was also highlighted.

Resolved that Senate approve the establishment of a NUCoRE Industrial Biotechnology.

60. **WHITE SPACE**

Received a motion from Professor Murray Pollock and Dr Robert Shaw on Senate's scrutiny of the academic character and mission of the university.

Members of Senate were invited to raise other academic matters for further investigation and consideration.

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

Noted that:

- a) The objective of the motion was to establish a clear framework in line with Statute 52(2) for Senate to monitor and assess significant changes to the academic character, and mission of the university, ensuring Senate's active role in reviewing and making any representation to Council in relation to redundancies.
- b) Resolution 1 of the motion requested that a framework should be provided by Executive Board to define the level of granularity at which Senate should be consulted, and outline procedures for addressing significant academic changes while respecting the operational needs of the University's governing bodies.
- c) Resolution 2 of the motion requested convening an extraordinary meeting of Senate to review and make recommendations to Council on any proposed redundancy schemes and associated mitigations before they occur, in line with Statute 52(2).
- d) A business case for compulsory redundancies, when and if that action was implemented, would include the necessary level of granular information to support a Senate discussion on the proposed redundancies, and could therefore inform Senate's recommendation to Council on the matter.
- e) Equality analysis had been undertaken at every stage of the Voluntary Severance Scheme including at the application, decision and outcome phases, and the completed analysis had been made available to colleagues as part of the standard process. A similar approach to equality analysis and transparency would be undertaken in the event of voluntary redundancy and compulsory redundancy.
- f) The Vice-Chancellor proposed that Senators serving on Senate sub-committees could regularly provide verbal updates to Senate on priority issues and topics for discussion taking place at sub-committee level. It was also proposed that the Faculty Strategic Plans could be presented at meetings of Senate annually in future to ensure further oversight and transparency.
- g) University governance structures were reviewed externally every three years, and Senate's functions and role had been highlighted for efficiency and good governance by the most recent external review.

Senate endorsed both Resolution 1 and Resolution 2 of the motion in Document E without amendment, and resolved to implement those resolutions by agreeing that:

Executive Board would provide a schedule of information and reports for effective oversight of education and research. A plan for additional reports at an appropriate level of granularity would also be provided.

An extraordinary meeting of Senate would be scheduled to receive any business plans for redundancies, at a time that information could be shared, as law and confidentiality allows. Senate would then make representations to Council on academic character and mission.

61. TRUSTED RESEARCH EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Received a paper from Professor Matthew Grenby, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

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

Noted that:

- a) The National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre had developed the Trusted Research Evaluation Framework (TREF) in consultation with experts across the academic sector and relevant parts of government
- b) The Framework served as a tool for academic institutions to assess the level of maturity of their Trusted Research processes and procedures.

62. ANNUAL STUDENT CASEWORK REPORT

Received a report from Professor Ruth Valentine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

- a) Received the annual report relating to Formal Student Procedure Casework including Appeals, Complaints, Assessment Irregularities, Disciplinary, Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) submissions, Support to Study, and Fitness to Practise cases from the 2023-24 academic year.
- b) There had been a significant and sustained increase in students pursuing their Complaints and Academic Appeals through all available levels of the procedure, including Level 3 request for review and subsequent complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
- c) The number of student complaints received during 2023-24 was significantly higher than in 2022-23. Many of these complaints related to the Marking and Assessment Boycott, which ended at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year, to the University's investments in companies linked to Israel and the defence sector, and the conduct of individual colleagues in relation to the student encampment.
- d) Senators discussed whether the rules for Boards of Examiners should be revised to highlight a need for a review of Semester 1 results to take place, and considerations raised by Senators would be fed back into the next meeting of the University Education Committee.
- e) Senate recorded its thanks to all colleagues involved in supporting student casework and procedures.

63. 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 Emeritus or Professor Emerita be conferred on:
Professor Said Boussakta with effect from 10 February 2025
Professor John S. Fitzgerald with effect from 1 May 2025
Professor Jarka Glassey with effect from 1 February 2025
Professor Rob Henderson with effect from 1 October 2025
Professor Maciej Koutny with effect from 1 March 2025
Professor Gui Yun Tan with effect from 1 March 2025

64. PUBLIC LECTURES COMMITTEE

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

65. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 22 January 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 23 September and 25 November 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Global Committee: 19 September 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- d) University Research and Innovation Committee: 10 December 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

66. 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 O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]