

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

19 November 2025

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Quentin Anstee, Professor Jo Fox, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Matej Blazek, Professor Nils Braakmann, Professor Daniel Coca, Professor Stuart Edwards, Dr Joanna Elson, James Geary (Students' Union Opportunities Officer), Professor Ian Head, Dr Thorsten Heidersdorf, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor David Kennedy, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Rhianon Mason, Claire Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Murray Pollock, Dr Jemima Repo, Professor Jo Robinson, Dr Robert Shaw, Dr Grega Smrkolj, Muriel Snowdon, Dr Helen St Clair Thompson, Professor Emma Stevenson, Gina Tindale (Students' Union Academic Officer), Professor Athanassios Vergados, Dr Laura Woodhouse, and Dr Katharine Wright.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Jen Middleton (Director of Communications), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager).

Apologies: Professor Cathrine Degnen, Professor Nigel Harkness, Ilsa Hartley, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Candy Rowe, Professor Simon Tate, Professor Chris Whitehead, Professor John Wildman, and Dr Emily Yarrow.

MINUTES

15. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Dr Helen St Clair Thompson (Dean of Students) to their first meeting of Senate.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 17 September 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

18. 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) Post-16 White Paper

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the long-awaited Post-16 White Paper that was

published on 20 October 2025. In a statement to the House of Commons, the Secretary of State had laid out a challenge to universities to drive up access, drive out low quality provision and improve collaboration, while pushing forward on leading innovation and research. In key funding announcements for higher education, the Secretary of State had confirmed that the maximum tuition fee cap would increase in line with forecast inflation in academic years 2026/27 and 2027/28, and maintenance loans would increase in line with forecast inflation every academic year. After this legislation would be introduced that could link fee caps to quality.

Other announcements of importance to universities include: a vision for the Higher Education sector characterised by greater collaboration with Further Education and other local partners; restriction on student growth at institutions where teaching is deemed to be of low quality; a reform of Access and Participation Plan and greater powers to the Office for Students.

b) Knowledge Exchange Framework

Published on 23 September 2025, the Knowledge Exchange Framework 5 results had shown a strong performance with the University's overall score rising to 30 out of a possible 35, from 29 last year. The University performed strongly in regeneration and development, supported by the work of its National Innovation Centres and multi-partner initiatives. Engagement with business remained another key strength, underpinned by strong partnerships between Newcastle University and companies of all sizes.

c) Times Higher Education World Rankings

The University had moved up in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and was now positioned 144th globally. This latest ranking, which placed Newcastle in the UK's top 20, represented an improvement of 13 places from last year's guide. The University had achieved strong results in several of the indicators that Times Higher Education uses to compile the ranking, including research quality and international outlook.

d) Stephenson Building

The redeveloped Stephenson Building had been awarded Project of the Year, the top prize at the prestigious annual Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards ceremony.

e) AI Growth Zone

Universities across the region and industry leaders were committed to fast-track planning, investment and site development for the North East's AI Growth Zone. Thousands of jobs were set to be unlocked as a coalition including British AI firm NScale, local universities and leading skills providers were collaborating to develop forward planning and new opportunities with AI at the centre.

f) AI and Global Policymaking

University experts would help deliver a £10.6m AI-driven project to transform global policymaking. The Mobilising Evidence Through AI and User-informed Synthesis (METIUS) project was funded by UK Research and Innovation through ESRC and the Natural Environment Research Council.

g) Transnational Education

At its meeting in July 2025, Council had agreed that the University should explore the establishment of one or more Joint Education Institutes (JEIs) in China. Since then, the University had received approval from the Ministry of Education in China to look to establish two Joint Education Institutes simultaneously. A project manager based in the UK and a development manager based in China had been recruited alongside a

Head of TNE (East Asia) and other key colleagues would be leading various workstreams including academic programming, student experience and financial management. Submission of proposals to the Ministry of Education were scheduled for summer 2026, with the first cohorts of students anticipated to arrive in September 2027.

The Vice-Chancellor reported on his recent trip to China which had in part helped to provide more clarity on the reasons for the recent decrease in student recruitment to study in the UK. It was noted that students who studied for a master's degree abroad were now disadvantaged when returning to China, as they had not been able to form the local industry connections that students who remained in China had formed over the course of their degree programme. Also, a previous model where students from China would study in the UK and then remain for another few years of work experience before returning to China, was now less attractive and less feasible for those Chinese students due to the recent changes to UK visa rules and requirements.

h) NCL in Action

NCL in Action was an annual series of events, debates and short courses seeking to bring together a global community of students, alumni, colleagues and partners. This year's theme, 'Rifts and Shifts: Our changing world' would be delivered in partnership with Lloyds Bank and key topics included geopolitics, climate change, technology and AI and the economy. This year's series has been launched with events in Newcastle, London, New York, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and further information was available at: [NCL in Action | NCL in Action | Newcastle University](#)

i) Student Recruitment

At undergraduate (UG) level, the University had recruited just over 6,000 new home students and 720 new international full-degree entrants for 2025/26. This was ahead of budget plans by circa 200 home and circa 70 international students. Growth from China, Middle East and North America contributed to the overall growth of UG numbers. Plans were in place for expanded and enhanced scholarship offers for 2026/27 entry, which were intended to help to sustain UG growth.

At postgraduate taught (PGT) level, the University had recruited circa 1,650 new international PGT students for 2025/26. This represented a decline of 25 to 30 per cent on the previous year and was at the lower end of the University's budget plan. Home PGT recruitment of circa 1,050 was in line with budget plans.

j) Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that Professor Li Li had been appointed as the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global and would take up her post on 1 January 2026. Professor Li was currently the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement in the Faculty of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at the University of Exeter and was responsible for the Faculty's global strategy and engagement.

k) Office for Students' Condition of Registration: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

The Office for Students (OfS) had introduced a new ongoing condition of registration, which came into effect on 1 August 2025. Condition E6 placed a duty on all Higher Education providers to take reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct. Executive Board had reviewed the University's compliance against Condition E6 and had re-stated its commitment to compliance and alignment with sector best-practice. New mandatory training on the prevention of sexual misconduct had been added to the University Essentials provision and was designed to help colleagues understand what was meant by sexual misconduct and how to report any concerns.

I) New Chair of Convocation

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that Shah Yaseen Ali had been appointed as Chair of Convocation following an election which had closed on 31 October 2025. The term of appointment was for a period of three years in the first instance.

19. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 13 OCTOBER 2025

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 13 October 2025.

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

20. NEXT GENERATION NEWCASTLE

Received an update from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

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

Noted that:

- a) Next Generation Newcastle was the transformation programme which would deliver the University's vision and strategic objectives. The projects which made up the programme were organised in two pillars which focused on the near and longer term: 'One University' and 'NU200'.
- b) One University was the aspect of the transformation programme that responded to immediate imperatives, including the need to deliver financial improvements with a focus on efficiency, performance improvement and income generation across all University units. Workstreams were already underway and included Professional Services transformation linked to new systems implementation, and Estates optimisation in partnership with architectural design practice BDP.
- c) The aim was to achieve circa £15 million of net financial improvements through a mixture of cost control and income growth. In terms of tuition fee income, this would include diversifying our student recruitment into new markets.
- d) NU200 was a pillar of Next Generation Newcastle that looked towards the bicentenary of the University's founding in 2034. Newcastle University would be fit for the future by focusing on delivery of the vision and strategic goals, which would include implementing the Leading-Edge Curriculum, mobilising around areas of education and research opportunity, and aligning academic excellence with societal impact through collaboration with external partners in our regional ecosystems to address global challenges.
- e) Key workstreams included Education for Life 2030+, Transnational Education, NUOnline, and further developing the University's approach to strategic partnership management.
- f) An academic shape workstream would focus on academic portfolio development and reviewing academic structures to facilitate more effective ways of working, align disciplines to respond to future opportunities, and ensure financial sustainability.
- g) The strategic leadership for the development and delivery of Next Generation Newcastle would be through the Vice-Chancellor, supported by University Executive Board on key workstreams.

- h) The Vice-Chancellor would chair the Next Generation Newcastle Portfolio Board which would determine workstream leads and oversee alignment of this work to existing governance arrangements, including Academic Strategy Oversight Group, Senate sub-committees, Council sub-committees, and Faculty Executive Boards. A schedule of formal reporting to Senate and Council would also be implemented.
- i) It was noted that Universities could become more resilient to changes in government by working to ensure that media outlets and the wider public understood 'what universities were good for' and by reiterating how universities directly serve the greater good through the impact of education and research on local and global society, politics and industry.
- j) The five universities in the North East were working together to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale where possible.

21. STUDENT SURVEYS

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

- a) Following an independent review, the Office for Students (OfS) had committed to review its approach to quality management and had signalled to the sector its intention to bring the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) together with its oversight of compliance with the other B Conditions of Registration into a single integrated quality system. This new approach had been published for consultation on 18 September 2025 and a summary outcome was expected in Autumn 2026, with the planned new cycle of TEF starting in 2027-28.
- b) Key aspects of the proposal included an even greater emphasis on the need for consistency in order for a provider to achieve Silver or Gold status, and the overall outcome would be determined automatically by the lowest of the two outcomes rather than judged by a panel.
- c) The most significant change in the proposal was that TEF outcomes would be linked to specific consequences for those providers that do not achieve Silver or Gold status, and those providers would also be subject to more frequent assessments.
- d) The Post-16 education and skills White Paper had announced the intention to bring in an annual inflationary uplift in home undergraduate tuition fees, while also clarifying that this uplift would be 'conditional on the OfS quality regime' – connecting with the 'fee limits' provision in the TEF consultation.
- e) The National Student Survey scores had indicated that, overall, the University's performance was declining (or not improving) relative to the sector benchmark across key NSS themes that feed into the TEF: Teaching on my course, Learning Opportunities, Assessment and Feedback and Student Voice. The University's performance in other areas relating to the student experience were stronger, trending just below or above benchmark.
- f) It was noted that questions remained regarding the specific reasons underpinning the University's low NSS scores, and it was discussed that the removal of module evaluations may have contributed along with low response rates to surveys across the University in general. Though ongoing work was required in ensuring student assessment feedback was provided in a timely fashion it was also important to ensure

that students were able to utilise and apply feedback in a meaningful way, as a key element of the process.

22. LEADING EDGE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

- a) The original idea for the Leading Edge Curriculum (LEC) had started in the process to develop the University's last submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework. Whilst many of examples existed of excellent and innovative practice, it had been challenging to demonstrate that all students had the same key elements built into their education – a set of principles and values that were present for every student across every subject and stage.
- b) The Leading Edge Curriculum Framework had been developed with the intention of capturing those areas of best practice that already make up the educational offer at the University, and formalise those practices to become a policy of expectations for every programme, to ensure that every student would have access to the same core educational experience.
- c) Preparation for the implementation of the LEC was underway. Every taught programme would undergo a supported re-design process to ensure alignment. The pilot of the redesign methodology would commence in Spring 2026. The intention was to undertake re-design of all modular undergraduate degrees in 2026-27 and all postgraduate taught degrees in 2027-28.
- d) Capstone modules were included within the set of core policy requirements for every programme and were defined as an in-depth learning experience in every programme. Senate would have an opportunity to further discuss capstone modules among other proposed requirements when the next phase of the LEC implementation plan which would be considered at the 14 January 2026 meeting of Senate.
- e) A task and finish group were currently undertaking a modelling exercise as part of the LEC pilot project in the Business School and resource implications would be considered as part of that exercise, with outcomes and more precise information to be provided once the pilot concluded.

Resolved that Senate approve the principles of the Leading Edge Curriculum Framework as proposed.

23. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received a presentation from the NUSU President and Chief Executive Officer.

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

Noted that:

- a) In the annual survey undertaken by Newcastle University Students' Union (NUSU), 98 per cent of students had rated the Students' Union as satisfactory or above with the excellent rating rising from 28 to 35 per cent. Engagement levels across all areas had continued to increase with notable success continuing in the Give It A Go programme, as well as within various clubs, societies and volunteering opportunities.

- b) Voting in the Student Elections had surpassed target, with a new format which had attracted more candidates and ensured the process was more streamlined for both candidates and voters.
- c) NUSU had achieved SOS-UK accreditation, demonstrating leadership in harm prevention from alcohol and drug use.
- d) The sports teams had continued to enjoy much success and had again achieved a top ten finish in British Universities and Colleges Sport leagues, as well as securing a fourth Varsity win against Northumbria University.
- e) Increasing costs due to inflation and external factors, coupled with declining income in some areas, had resulted in the need for NUSU leadership to reanalyse their financial position to reduce outgoings. A period of review and restructure had followed and though there were some expected challenges, it was noted that the vast majority of targets set had still been met and the engagement levels with students had remained very high throughout.

24. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

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

25. REVOCATION OF A DEGREE (STATUTE 30)

Reported that, In accordance with Statute 30, Senate may revoke any title, degree or other distinction conferred by the University and all privileges connected therewith if it appears to the Senate that the degree or other distinction has been obtained by or as a result of academic misconduct on the part of the holder or for some other substantial reason as determined by the Senate.

Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

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

Noted that:

- a) In line with the University's Procedure for Revocation of a Degree or other Distinction conferred by the University ('the Revocations Procedure'), a Revocations Committee had convened on 24 October 2025 to consider reports of academic misconduct brought to the University in relation to previous four postgraduate taught students from the School of Engineering.
- b) The recommendation of the Revocations Committee was that all four students should have their degrees revoked. The Revocations Procedure provided that: Where the Committee decides that there is a case for revoking the degree or other distinction, it shall make a recommendation to Senate, that the degree or other distinction be revoked, providing a report and reasons for its decision. Such a recommendation must be supported by at least three members of the Committee.
- c) Senate may not approve a recommendation for revocation unless: (a) not fewer than two thirds of the members of Senate present and voting vote in favour of it; and (b) the numbers voting in favour of its revocation is not less than one half of the total number of Senate members.

d) During the meeting of Senate, each of the four proposals was considered in turn and then each was voted on individually by show of hands to represent agreement with the proposal to revoke the degree. It was confirmed that more than 23 votes were counted for each of the four votes, representing more than two thirds of those present.

Resolved that Senate approve the recommendation that four students should have their degrees revoked.

26. 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 N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on:
Professor Catriona MacDonald effective from 1 January 2026***

27. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR RE-APPOINTMENTS

Reported that, Senate Standing Order 10(6) states that '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.'

Considered a proposal from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents O1 and O2. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Senate approve:

The re-appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering for a term of five years until 31 July 2030.

The re-appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Place with an amended title of Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Business, Partnerships and Place for a term of five years until 31 December 2030.

The updated Terms of Reference for the University Engagement and Place Committee which would now become the Business, Partnerships and Place Committee.

a) It was agreed that the Vice Chancellor would consider and confirm a review process to inform future reappointments.

28. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received reports from the meetings of:

a) University Education Committee: 2 July and 10 September 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

b) University Global Committee: 15 May 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

c) University Engagement and Place Committee: 8 September 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

d) University Research and Innovation Committee: 16 September 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

29. NORTHUMBRIAN UNIVERSITIES MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Received the committee's annual report.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

30. 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.

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