

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

24 June 2026

- Present:** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Quentin Anstee, Professor Jo Fox, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Stuart Edwards, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Ian Head, Professor David Kennedy, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Murray Pollock, Dr Shweta Sharma, Dr Robert Shaw, Muriel Snowdon, Dr Helen St Clair Thompson, Professor Emma Stevenson, Professor Athanassios Vergados, Professor John Wildman, Dr Laura Woodhouse, Dr Katharine Wright and Dr Emily Yarrow.
- In attendance:** Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Chief Financial Officer), 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 (ASEAN) for Item 2.3 only.
- Apologies:** Dr Matej Blazek, Professor Nils Braakmann, Professor Daniel Coca, Professor Chris Day, Professor Cathrine Degnen, Dr Thorsten Heidersdorf, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Li Li, Dr Jemima Repo, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe, Dr Grega Smrkolj, Professor Simon Tate and Gina Tindale.

MINUTES

59. WELCOME

The Chair thanked the following colleagues for their valuable contributions to Senate as this was their final meeting.

Claire Morgan
Professor Rhiannon Mason
Dr Robert Shaw
Professor John Wildman
Dr Laura Woodhouse
Dr Emily Yarrow

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 29 April 2026 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:

a) James Wright CBE

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of former Vice-Chancellor the University, James Wright CBE, on 30 May 2026. James had served as Vice-Chancellor from 1992 to 2000, a period marked by significant growth and development for the University. His legacy at Newcastle University was one of thoughtful leadership, intellectual excellence and genuine care for people.

b) University Rankings

Newcastle University had been ranked 149th in the world in the QS World University Rankings 2027. This was a drop from 137th last year, however the University remains in the global top 150. A working group led by Professor Li Li had been tasked with taking forward actions to enhance global reputation, which was a key component of the ranking.

The University had come 1st in the UK in Uni Compare 2027 in the category of Student Life for the second year running, and was ranked 9th in the UK overall. This ranking evaluated UK universities based on student reviews, course quality, facilities, and career prospects.

The University had been ranked 17th in the UK and 3rd in the Russell Group in the 2027 Unifresher ranking. This was a student-focused, data-led ranking combining official data and student survey priorities.

The University had been ranked 85th in the world in the 2026 THE Sustainability Impact Rating, our highest ranking since 2023 and a return to the Top 100.

Finally, the University had been ranked 35th in the Complete University Guide 2027 based on data for the previous academic year including NSS scores from 2024-25.

c) Next Generation Newcastle

Executive Board had recently taken the opportunity to review the Next Generation Newcastle Programme Scope to ensure that projects were aligned with the University's strategic objectives and Key Performance Indicators. The programme had subsequently 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 with proposals for new Academic Advising framework and process recently approved by Senate.

d) 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 breached free speech regulations in a case involving a former professor. The ruling specifically dealt with the way OfS ran the investigative process and issued the record-breaking fine. The OfS had advised they would not appeal the ruling.

The OfS recently published a student insight report presenting what is known, from engagement with students, about what students think about freedom of speech and their experience of it, and of obstacles to it, during their higher education.

e) Office for Students – Survey Analysis

On 8 May, the Office for Students (OfS) 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 vary 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.

f) New Condition of Registration

The Office for Students (OfS) was consulting on a new approach to consumer and student protection that would help ensure students get the value for money and higher education experience promised to them by their institutions. The proposals included a new ongoing condition of registration (C6) that would require every registered university or college to treat its students fairly in relation to its higher education provision and the services that support it. The consultation would close on 9 July 2026, and the OfS was expecting to publish its final decisions in autumn 2026.

g) Newcastle Innovations

The University had launched the Newcastle Innovations initiative to make it faster and easier for businesses, investors and partners to collaborate with the University and turn ideas into growth. Newcastle Innovations provides 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.

h) BEACON

Newcastle University will lead a major new Medical Research Council (MRC) programme designed to strengthen clinical academic careers and research leadership across the North of England. The programme - Building translational research Excellence Amongst Clinicians of the North (BEACON) - has been awarded £1.4 million through the MRC's Regional Account for Clinical Researchers pilot scheme and will formally begin on 1 July. Hosted by Newcastle University and delivered by Newcastle Health Research Partnership Academy, BEACON would provide flexible funding, career development support and regional collaboration opportunities for clinicians pursuing research careers within the MRC remit.

i) Government Investment in Defence Education

The Government had announced major investments in skills and training to boost the future of the UK's defence industry. This included £4.3M for the University that would support the creation of 372 full-time student places over the next three years in disciplines including Civil and Structural Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Electronic and Computer Engineering, Naval architecture and Marine Engineering, and Aerospace Engineering.

j) Office for Students – Teaching Excellence Framework

The Office for Students (OfS) had announced it would be introducing a new quality assessment system to provide students with a clear view of the quality of teaching and learning delivered by every registered university and college. The OfS would use the revised Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to highlight the efforts of institutions striving for excellence above its minimum quality requirements, as well as identifying where improvements need to be made.

k) The Coimbra Group

The University had officially joined the Coimbra Group in June 2025, becoming one of the 42 esteemed institutions in Europe's oldest university network founded in 1985. Along with Professor Li Li, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global, the Vice-Chancellor had been pleased to represent the University at the recent Coimbra Group 2026 Annual Conference and General Assembly which took place from 16 through 19 June at the University of Granada, Spain.

l) North East Spinout Inspire Fund

Universities for North East England and North East Mayor Kim McGuinness had launched the £22.5m Inspire fund to commercialise academic research and innovation in the region. The fund would focus on transforming cutting-edge research into high-growth new businesses based in North East England.

m) Interim Head of School

The Vice-Chancellor had been 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 for a one-year term.

Dr Phillip Lord had been appointed as the interim Head of School of Computing from 9 March 2026 until 30 June 2027.

n) Senate Representative

There was a vacancy for a Senate representative on University Education Committee and members of Senate had been invited to submit expressions of interest to the University Governance Office ahead of the meeting of Senate on 24 June. Voting by show of hands confirmed the majority of Senators in attendance endorsed the appointment of Dr Joanna Elson.

Senate resolved to approve the appointment of Dr Joanna Elson as the Senate representative on University Education Committee.

o) Student Minds Charter

The Vice-Chancellor had been pleased to report that the University was successful in its application to receive the Student Minds Mental Health Charter award, which would be valid for a period of three years. There were currently 23 universities in the UK who held the award. It was noted this news was still under embargo for further dissemination, and wider announcements would be made in due course.

63. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 1 JUNE 2026

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 1 June 2026.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) Council had approved a proposal to establish two Joint Education Institutes in China, with Central China Normal University in Wuhan and Southeast University in Nanjing.

64. REFRESHED RESEARCH STRATEGY

Received a presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

Noted that:

- a) External drivers had impacted the research landscape since 2018, when the current strategy had been launched, including the financial challenges within the Higher Education sector, the increased pressure on universities' social purpose, and significant shifts in government priorities which had resulted in shifting funding priorities and focus.
- b) The strategy reset would address the internal and external drivers and would affirm the public benefit that research generates, while also serving as an integral part of the Next Generation Newcastle strategy.
- c) Funders and partners were increasingly requesting research specialisation and the University needed to articulate those signature strengths where the institution was best positioned to meet regional and global challenges.
- d) Training and development for new ways of working included upskilling colleagues to face today's challenges, relying on a single platform to allow colleagues to construct and navigate their own development path, and building on University academies and The Research Space to provide a joined-up offer from post-graduate research student to Professor, and across job families.
- e) University working groups were considering the financial sustainability of research and were examining the appropriateness and affordability of funding schemes, the diversification of sources of funding and potential collaborations on research infrastructure.
- f) Discussed the difference and overlap between signature strengths and Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence, and the resourcing requirements relating to both. NUCoREs were subject to a robust evaluation process as part of the application phase and after five years in existence each NUCoRE was reviewed to

confirm if it should continue. Opportunities remained for increased auditing and review of NUCoREs' outputs and impact.

- g) Within the strategy refresh, it would be key to consider communications to the public to underscore the ambition and value of research contributions, innovations and discoveries.

65. **NUCoREs PROGRESS UPDATE**

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

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

Noted that:

- a) A short summary of a selection of developments and achievements of the Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs) portfolio in 2025-26 had been provided.
- b) Discussed that future reports to URIC could use a consistent template to capture more information regarding future plans for individual NUCoREs and previous targets achieved, and how and where NUCoREs were contributing to the institution or externally. The templates could then be incorporated into the annual summary report presented to Senate.

66. **NEW MODALITIES**

Received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Noted that:

- a) The Future Students project supported the development of new modes of education delivery which would diversify and grow the student body, contribute to financial sustainability, and enhance the University's global profile. Two current areas of focus were presented: online learning and transnational education.
- b) Online learning provided learners with the flexibility to fit their learning around other commitments at home or work and the cost was relatively low compared to the overall cost of tuition and living expenses associated with equivalent campus-delivered programmes.
- c) There was a risk in relying on and competing for a smaller population of learners engaging with traditional in-person education, and the University needed to ensure a foothold in more diverse modes of education in line with market movements.
- d) The University was seeking to procure a full-service partner to support online portfolio growth with a medium to longer-term aim of transitioning to managing more of the activities relating to our online portfolio in-house.
- e) The strategic case for forming Joint Education Institutes (JEIs) in China included addressing the decline in Chinese postgraduate taught student numbers at the University and in the UK, establishing partner recruitment channels with pathways to the University, and raising the University's in-country profile and global reputation.
- f) The proposed suite of programmes was outlined and the enrolment forecasts for the two partner institutions (South East University and Central China Normal University)

were detailed. The strategic oversight of the JEIs would be undertaken by the Joint Management Committee co-chaired by the Presidents of both universities.

- g) The programmes were recommended by the partners based on market drivers.. The partnership programmes and online programmes were not part of the Leading Edge Curriculum (LEC) framework, but were aligned with the LEC ethos of inclusive education and leading edge encounters.
- h) Assessment security would be considered as part of the design of the online programmes. Pastoral care for students studying at the JEIs would be the responsibility of the partner institution but oversight would also sit with the University. Council, Finance Committee and the Financial Monitoring and Budget Scrutiny Group had reviewed the business cases and accompanying financial analysis, and were satisfied the JEIs would present surplus generating activities for the University.

67. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received reports from the meetings of:

- a) University Education Committee: 12 March 2026
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Research and Innovation Committee: 17 March 2026
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Global Committee: 1 January 2026
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) The March meeting of the University Education Committee had been focused on the strategic risks relating to students and education.
- b) At recent meetings of University Research and Innovation Committee the group had discussed the post-graduate strategic development plan, external consultants on grants, and preparations for grant audits.
- c) University Global Committee had discussed the development of Joint Education Institutes in China and also considered the role of the Global Committee going forward in the context of developing a new global strategy.

68. OVERSIGHT OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Received a paper from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

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

Noted that:

- a) The revised institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provided an overview of institutional performance and were deliberately high level to aid Council and Executive Board in assessing progress towards achieving strategic objectives.
- b) The next steps included finalising understanding of the current drivers of performance and working with Senate sub-committees to develop lead indicators by autumn 2026.

It was projected that the use and application of relevant KPIs would be embedded in Senate sub-committees throughout the autumn and winter of 2026.

- c) A series of dashboards for identified groups were currently under development and would include data and metrics relevant to the specific audience, brought into a single space. The dashboards would contain summary data that linked to the more detailed data sets available in the Strategic Insights Portal. A Senate dashboard would be developed in collaboration with members of Senate.
- d) The National student Survey was currently the primary source of data regarding student experience though the University also gathered data around assessments, module feedback and the student journey available through PowerBI.

69. STUDENT CASEWORK REPORT

Received the annual report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

- a) The report provided an overview of formal student casework, including Academic Appeals, Complaints, Academic Misconduct, Disciplinary, PEC submissions, Support to Study and Fitness to Practise Cases from the 2024/25 academic year.
- b) The 2024/25 academic year continued to present challenges in respect of the management of student casework, with sustained periods of Industrial Action leading to a 39% increase in student complaints during the 2024/25 academic year compared to 2023/24.
- c) The use of AI to generalise and formalise appeals had increased alongside an increase in the involvement of solicitors in casework proceedings. Casework overall had become more complex over time and the University was seeking external legal advice where required.

70. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

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

71. 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 K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus or Emerita be conferred on:

Professor Janice Ellis effective from 1 August 2026

Professor Susan-Mary Grant effective from 1 September 2026

Professor Deborah Henderson effective from 1 October 2026

Professor David Manning effective from 1 August 2026

Professor David McCollum-Oldroyd effective from 1 August 2026

72. ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – HONORARY DEGREES (STATUTE 29(4))

Reported that, in accordance with Statute 29(4), Senate may grant honorary degrees.
Received a report from the meeting of Honorary Degrees Committee.

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

Resolved that Senate approve the award of an honorary degree to the individual recommended by the Committee.

73. SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Received a report from the Executive Director of People Services.

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

Noted that:

- a) The proposal presented options for the future leadership structure of both the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Research Culture (RC) portfolios and proposed reverting to the previous model of two separate and dedicated Deanships.
- b) The proposal reflected changes in the external environment, the increasing complexity of the EDI landscape, and the evolving institutional demands placed upon both the EDI and RC portfolios.
- c) The approval process for the establishment of a selection panel had been undertaken with a shortened timeline due to time constraints, and the normal process would be employed during the 2026-27 academic year and going forward.

Resolved that, subject to final approval from Council, Senate approve:

The establishment of a selection panel for the Recruitment of a Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (0.5FTE) for a three-year term.

The re-establishment of the Dean of Research Culture (0.5 FTE) for a three-year term and the reappointment of Professor Candy Rowe to that role.

74. SENATE APPOINTED CHAIRS AND MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

Received a report from the Registrar.

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

Resolved that Senate approve the recommendations in the report.

75. SENATE APPOINTED MEMBER ON COUNCIL

Received a report from the Registrar.

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

76. ANNUAL REPORT FROM MUSEUM AND GALLERY BOARD

Received the annual report.

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

77. 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 Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]