

# NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

## SENATE

30 April 2025

- Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor David Burn, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Ruth Valentine, Professor Chris Whitehead (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Chris Baldwin, Professor Daniel Coca, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Stuart Edwards, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor David Kennedy, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Professor Ruth Morrow, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Murray Pollock, Professor Candy Rowe, Dr Shweta Sharma, Dr Robert Shaw, Hisham Salamathullah (Wellbeing and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Grega Smrkolj, 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:** Jasmine Banks, Leo David, Nick Collins, Dr Darren Kelsey, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Judith Rankin, Dr Jemima Repo and Muriel Snowdon.

## MINUTES

### 67. WELCOME

The Chair thanked Linming Sun and Hisham Salamathullah for their contributions to Senate as this was the final ordinary meeting they would be attending.

### 68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 69. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 19 February 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) Minute 60 had been amended to clarify that the Motion before Senate had been accepted as submitted, and that relevant actions related to the implementation of Resolutions 1 and 2.
- b) Professor Rhiannon Mason's term as Senate's representative on the Museum and Gallery Board would end on 31 July 2025.

***Senate resolved to agree that Professor Rhiannon Mason's term as Senate's representative on Museum and Gallery Board would be extended until 31 July 2026.***

## 70. 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) Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

The Office for Students (OfS) had fined the University of Sussex after an investigation found the university's governing documents failed to uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom, as well as failings in the university's management and governance processes. Newcastle University's governance documents submitted to the OfS at the point of initial registration included the statutes, the scheme of delegation and the code of practice for free speech. As seen from the Sussex case, policy statements that interfere with governance documents would be considered a breach of condition E1. Hence the University had reviewed colleague and student policies, which was completed as part of the process to revise the Code of Practice, and would be undertaken again following the new regulatory judgement.

b) Joint Institute for Clean Hydrogen

Work had progressed following the Prime Minister's announcement in December 2024 on the development of a Joint Institute for Clean Hydrogen (JICH). This was a collaborative initiative led by Newcastle University with Northumbria, Durham, Teesside, Cranfield Universities, and a consortium of Saudi universities and research organisations led by KFUPM in Saudi Arabia. The institute would integrate hydrogen research and innovation with a focus on commercialisation pathways, promising significant economic and environmental benefits. At this stage, Senate was invited to endorse the establishment of the JICH noting that final approval will be sought from Council. This would be contingent upon a business case and the completion of an updated due diligence evaluation and an equality impact assessment.

***Resolved that Senate endorse the potential establishment of the institute.***

c) Graduate Start-ups

New analysis had highlighted the critical role that university graduates play in driving growth in the North East of England, including by starting their own businesses. Across the region, more than 1,100 new companies were created by staff and graduates of the North East's five universities between 2014 and 2023, providing more than 4,000 jobs in 2022-23. This was derived from University UK's (UUK) analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. In addition, analysis of government figures recently released by UUK revealed that graduates make up 46% of the workforce in the region and account for a significant proportion of the workforce in key growth sectors that were highlighted in the government's industrial strategy.

d) Transnational Education

Nationally, the Higher Education sector was facing challenges because of declining numbers of international students choosing the UK as a study destination. While this had financial implications, it was also an opportunity for Newcastle to develop as a global university, in particular in reference to Transnational Education (TNE) which was 'the delivery of degrees in a country or territory other than that where the awarding provider is based' (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education). The University's

Global strategy included a focus on four priority regions: ASEAN, China, India, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In particular, the University was exploring opportunities created by the Chinese government's encouragement for foreign universities to establish Joint Education Institutes with Chinese partner universities, and the Indian government's decision in 2023 to enable foreign universities to establish international branch campuses in India.

e) International Women's Day

Newcastle University colleagues took part in a special celebration to mark International Women's Day, attended by Professor Jane Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Place. University colleagues listed below were nominated by city residents and joined more than 100 exceptional women from diverse sectors including business, academia and community services at the event organized by Newcastle City Council on Friday 7 March.

- Professor Judith Rankin, Newcastle University's Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Professor of Maternal and Child Health
- Dr Elaine Lopez, Lecturer in Applied Linguistics, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences
- Maryam Mosleh, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant, School of Computing
- Dr Vicky Fawcett, Research Associate in Astrophysics, School of Mathematics, Statistics and Physics
- Zoe Hingston, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Eleanor Farrington, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor, Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering
- Beth Gould, PGR, School of Mathematics, Statistics and Physics
- Yujia Xu, PGR, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
- Hamde Nazar, Professor of Pharmacy Education and Primary Care Research, School of Pharmacy
- Dr Ruth Houghton, Senior Lecturer in Law, Newcastle Law School

f) Colleague and Student Success

Professor Tom Andrew (Academic Plastic Surgeon and CRUK funded PhD student) had been recognized with the Hunterian Professorship for 2025 by the Royal College of Surgeons for his pioneering work on surgical care using AI. The Hunterian Professorship was considered to be one of the proudest traditional honours of the Royal College of Surgeons bestowed to surgeons of eminence who have richly contributed to the field of surgery by original research or innovations.

Professor Cathrine Degnen (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had been elected to become a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences for her substantial contributions to social science for public benefit.

Houda Haidar (PhD student in the school of Mathematics, Statistics and Physics), had been awarded observing time on the James Webb Space Telescope to study how dust behaves near supermassive black holes.

Professor Ian Metcalf (School of Engineering) was awarded the Sharma Medal by the Institution of Chemical Engineers in recognition of numerous groundbreaking scientific and engineering research advances, especially in the fields of membrane engineering and catalysis, and for the underpinning understanding of the structure, chemistry and thermodynamics of materials.

Dr Greg Mutch had been awarded this year's Warner Medal from the Institution of Chemical Engineers for showing exceptional promise in the field of sustainable chemical process technology and for efforts in making chemical engineering more accessible to a wider scientific community.

Professor Judith Rankin (Population Health Sciences Institute) had been awarded as a Senior Investigator with the National Institute for Health and Care Research for her significant impact on health and care.

Professor Christopher Stewart (Translational and Clinical Research Institute) had been named the Life Sciences Laureate at the 2025 Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists in the UK for ground-breaking research on microbiome-based therapies for pre-natal infant mortality.

g) Behaviour Matters

Newcastle University, in collaboration with Newcastle University Students' Union, had launched a new video aimed at raising awareness about the actions that constitute sexual violence. Inspired by a similar campaign at the University of Leeds, this video would seek to educate the student community about the importance of consent and the impact of sexual violence. The video explored real-life scenarios to help students recognise unwanted behaviours and understand their impact.

h) Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The University recently announced the appointment of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Jo Fox. Professor Fox would join Newcastle University from the University of London, where she was Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Public Engagement and Dean, School of Advanced Study. She would take up her new role on 1 June 2025.

i) Dean of Strategic Projects, Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering

Professor Nick Parker had been appointed as Dean of Strategic Projects, Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, from 1 June 2025 for a three-year term.

j) Head of School, School of Arts and Cultures

Professor Kirsten Gibson had been appointed as Head of School of Arts and Cultures from 1 September 2025 for a five-year term.

k) Dean of Digital Education

In accordance with Senate Standing Order 10, the Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the re-appointment of an existing University Dean and the period of the re-appointment. Professor David Kennedy's tenure as Dean of Digital Education was due to end on 31 August 2025. Since being appointed Dean of Digital Education in October 2022, David had provided strategic leadership on a multifaceted and quickly evolving agenda. The Vice-Chancellor proposed the extension of Professor Kennedy's tenure until 1 September 2030 to allow the University to advance plans in developing and implementing the new Education strategy, where online learning will play a significant and integral part.

***Resolved that Senate approve an extension of Professor David Kennedy's term as Dean of Digital Education for five years until 1 September 2030, subject to approval from Council.***

l) Motion to Senate

In accordance with Standing Order 4.3, the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, reported that a motion had been submitted by members of Academic Board on 17 April, and also that a revised version had been submitted by members of Senate. Based on independent advice, the Chair reported that the motion and requested resolutions exceed the powers of Senate and contradicted our statutes and governing

documents. The lead author of the motion would be provided with feedback and would be invited to meet with the Registrar to discuss any further queries.

**71. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 31 MARCH 2025**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 31 March 2025.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

**72. EDUCATION STRATEGY UPDATE**

Received a presentation from Professor Ruth Valentine.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) Four objectives had been developed to support the three aims of the Education Strategy, and Objective 1: Leading Edge Curriculum and Objective 3: Student Launchpad were progressing to the implementation stage. The Strategy Programme Board had made a considered decision to pause the implementation of Objective 2: Educator Accelerator and Objective 4: Newcastle Beyond, in order to focus on the implementation of Objectives 1 and 3.
- b) The Leading Edge Curriculum objective was underpinned by three projects: models of delivery and programme structures, learning, teaching and assessment and implementation preparation. A sector wide discovery exercise had confirmed that key partner institutions were in similar stages of reviewing their curriculum frameworks with key outcomes and conclusions still to be realised.
- c) Models of delivery and programme elements included implementing a standardised credit structure of 20 credits to enhance student flexibility and choice and streamline administrative and operational efficiency.
- d) Education for life skills and attributes had been developed to have genuine meaning and real-life application for University students, and the attributes were based on the University's aspirational values of excellence, creativity and impact.
- e) Early engagement had commenced in April and would continue through June with the expectation that the finalised framework would be submitted to Executive Board in September and would then be submitted to Senate in November 2025.
- f) Objective 3: Student Launchpad was focused on transforming the model of student academic support, with the discovery phase commencing in September 2024 and the delivery phase planned for September 2026.
- g) Education governance was being considered alongside the implementation and evaluation stages of the strategy delivery plan. It was agreed that efficiencies should be employed when they enhanced student experience and that a delicate balance was required to maintain these key elements.
- h) The universal curriculum principles document would provide guidance and could be applied across different programmes and modules, where different pedagogical approaches and class sizes may need to be taken into consideration.
- i) Phased delivery plans would include the deployment of colleagues from the Learning and Teaching Development Service who were positioned to provide agile and productive support in managing change locally.

### 73. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR FREE SPEECH

Received a paper from the Registrar.

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

Noted that:

- a) *The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act* received royal assent on 11 May 2023 and had introduced a new statutory requirement to “promote the importance of” both freedom of speech within the law, and academic freedom for academic colleagues. The implementation of the act had been paused in August 2024 following a change in government.
- b) In January, following challenge by the Free Speech Union the government reaffirmed their commitment to free speech. The Education Secretary confirmed that key provisions of the act would be brought into force but with some changes and the University had therefore updated the Code of Practice with minor amendments to reflect the proposed changes.
- c) It had been agreed that Newcastle University Students’ Union (NUSU) and the University would still have a joint code of practice which would also incorporate the external speaker policy. Once approved the new Code of Practice would be promoted to colleagues and students at the start of the new academic year.
- d) In addition to the Code of Practice, a number of existing University policies would also require updates to reflect the new act. These policies would make it clear that in case of any conflict, the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech would take precedence.

### 74. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 13 March 2025  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 27 January 2025  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Research and Innovation Committee: 21 January 2025  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) University Education Committee had considered the need for a priority focus on transnational education and the importance of a joined-up approach across all Newcastle University campuses. The University strategic risk relating to student experience had also been discussed in depth to ensure relevant influencing factors and mitigations were considered. It had been noted the University would be recording the current industrial action as a reportable event with the Office for Students, and Additional Regulations for Emergency Situations would be implemented.
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee had reflected on refreshed principles which included a focus on embedding social justice and sustainability in all engagement and place activities and ensuring external partnerships across the University were mutually beneficial. The Committee had also noted member involvement in discussions relating to the concept of the 4th Generation University (‘4GU’) and noted that relevant aims had been linked to the University’s Education Strategy.

- c) University Research and Innovation Committee has discussed the use of AI in research and had also the importance of recording citations in reference to rankings and reputation. At a more recent meeting (for which the minutes had not yet been finalised or circulated) the Committee had discussed the refreshed PGR strategy and delivery plan, which would be submitted to Senate in the next academic year.

**75. WHITE SPACE**

Noted that:

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

**76. 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 J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus or Professor Emerita be conferred on:***  
***Professor Caroline Austin with effect from 1 August 2025***  
***Professor Steve Bull with effect from 1 November 2025***  
***Professor Andy Houlton with effect from 1 July 2025***  
***Professor David Lydall with effect from 1 July 2025***  
***Professor Neil Perkins with effect from 1 September 2025***  
***Professor Adrian Rees with effect from 1 July 2025***  
***Professor Thomas von Zglinicki with effect from 1 October 2025***  
***Professor Rachel Woodward with effect from 1 June 2025***

**77. SENATE ELECTIONS**

Received an update on Senate elections.

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

**78. SENATE MEETING DATES**

Received the meeting dates for 2025-26.

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

**79. TERM AND SEMESTER DATES**

Received the term and semester dates for 2025-26.

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

**80. 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 N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]