

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

16 November 2022

- Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Richard Davies, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Professor Chris Baldwin, Madeline Baugh (President, Students' Union), Dr Marie Devlin, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Darren Evans, Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Aleena Ikram (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Jenny Johnstone, Dr Darren Kelsey, Danica Limawan (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Dr Gareth Longstaff, Mack Marshall (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Rhiannon Mason, Kate McGill, Claire Morgan, Professor Graham Morgan, Professor Annie Tindley.
- In attendance:** Eleanor McCarthy (Graduate Policy and Governance Assistant) observer and presenter on Item 30, Lucy Backhurst (Academic Registrar) and Professor Candy Rowe (Dean of Research Culture and Strategy) Item 30, Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services), Louella Houldcroft (Director of Communications) and Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office).
- Apologies:** Professor Bruce Baker, Professor David Burn, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Justin Cole, Nick Collins, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Andy Husband, Dr Anjam Khan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Alison Shaw, Dr Eimer Tuite, Professor Brian Walker

MINUTES

24. WELCOME

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 21 September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

26. 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:

1. Domestic Rankings

In results published on 24 September, the University had fallen 8 places in the Guardian University Guide 2023, down to joint 63rd from 55th last year. The change in the institutional position was largely driven by performance in the NSS Teaching and NSS Overall Satisfaction metrics, as well as the Value Added metric. The small improvement in student staff ratio (14.9 to 14.7) had improved Newcastle's ranking for this measure from 45th to 30th. In terms of subject groupings, the University ranked 3rd for Fine Art (out of 63 providers) and in the top 10 for Dentistry (7th), Anatomy & Physiology (6th), Biomedical Science (8th) and Animal Science & Agriculture (6th).

2. Newcastle University Business School

Newcastle University Business School had been officially re-accredited by the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), one of the highest standards of achievement in business education. The Business School had held EQUIS accreditation since 2010. Re-accreditation for five years recognised that the school had exceeded expectations in numerous areas and acknowledged the excellent achievements and outstanding commitment to continuous improvements.

3. Industrial action

It had been announced on 24 October 2022 that University and College Union members had voted to take strike action following two ballots on pay and working conditions, and changes to pension arrangements. The union's higher education committee met on 3 November 2022, and had confirmed three days strike action for Thursday 24, Friday 25 and Wednesday 30 November. Continuous action short of a strike would commence on Wednesday 23 November.

4. Student support

A member of Senate had recently asked the following question: "I am interested to hear about any work in our University which is happening to help our students either transition to university for the first time or return to this year's on-campus experience."

Professor Alison Shaw (Professor of Practice – Inclusive Learning) had provided a summary response as set out in Document B. Members of Senate were also invited to attend an Inclusive Newcastle webinar on 24 November with Students' Union colleagues to discuss how to ensure students have a strong sense of belonging.

5. Institute of Electrification and Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing

The University was to lead a consortium of regional higher and further education providers in the creation of Power Electronics, Machines and Drives content to enrich T-level, Higher Technical Qualifications as well as Advanced and Degree Apprenticeship programmes. The Institute of Electrification and Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing was funded by the Driving the Electric Revolution Challenge, delivered by Innovate UK for UK Research and Innovation.

6. National Student Survey

The Office for Students had announced changes to the National Student Survey for 2023. New questions were being introduced to gauge students' views on university mental wellbeing services and on freedom of expression. The standalone question on overall student satisfaction would be removed.

7. Museum and Gallery Board

A vacancy had arisen for a Senate-appointed member of the Museum and Gallery Board.

Senate approved the appointment of Professor Rhiannon Mason as a member of University Museum and Gallery Board

8. Colleague Success

Professor Preti Taneja (Professor of World Literature and Creative Writing) had won the Gordon Burn Prize for Aftermath, her work of narrative non-fiction.

Professor Preti Taneja and Dr Joseph Hone (NUAcT Fellow) had been awarded Philip Leverhulme Prizes in the Languages and Literature category. The awards were given to researchers at an early stage of their career, whose work had international impact and whose future research career was exceptionally promising.

9. Travel and Expenses Policy

At its meeting on 18 October 2022, Executive Board had approved changes to the subsistence and allowance rates included within the Travel and Expenses Policy. The changes were a result of feedback provided by users of the policy and would ensure there was a more streamlined principles-based allowances section, which should empower colleagues to apply the principles appropriately to their situation. Supporting processes were currently being updated to accommodate the changes and communications of the changes would be made shortly.

10. Race Equality Charter

The University had been successful in obtaining a Bronze Race Equality Charter (REC) award from Advance HE. The award acknowledged the many months of hard-work, particularly from members of the REC self-evaluation team that had contributed to a successful application.

11. Dean of Research

Professor Alexandra Hughes (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had been appointed Acting Dean of Research in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

27. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 10 OCTOBER 2022

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 10 October 2022.

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

28. STUDENT EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

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

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

Noted that:

1. In response to the National Student Survey 2021 outcomes, Senate and Council had been presented with an overview of priorities for the student experience underpinned by four principles, which were collective ownership, empowered colleagues and schools to take ownership of education, listening to and understanding the student perspective, and acknowledging that cultural change was needed.

2. Over the last year significant progress had been made, but there remained much to do to enhance the quality of the student experience. A number of University-level priority areas had been identified to parallel and complement specific targeted actions that all academic units had been asked to make tangible progress on.
3. The priority areas were grouped under three key themes: presence and availability of staff, infrastructure and investment in education, and recruitment, reward and retention for rounded excellence.
4. Members of Senate discussed student disengagement as a cause and symptom of dissatisfaction with their experience. Disengagement could result from poor or inconsistent experience of teaching, or the absence of understanding of the value of engaging post-pandemic, for example.
5. Methods of structuring and supporting engagement were considered, including the incorporation of informal opportunities into the curriculum. For example, one academic unit had built personal tutoring into formative assessment. Small group tutorials, particularly in the first year, could be helpful in building trust.
6. Reflected on engagement with personal tutoring, which played a pivotal role in supporting the mental wellbeing of students and the need to reinforce that opportunities for tutorial meetings were available at any time. Nature and tone of language used could be helpful, but insisting on attendance might not work in every context. It was suggested that not all colleagues possessed the aptitude for personal tutoring, and that more could be done to address underperformance. Colleagues should be encouraged to share good examples of personal tutoring, and to engage with training opportunities. Line managers should be supported to have difficult conversations where there was underperformance.
7. A student analytics system to support students and colleagues to improve access to information on education engagement would be fully implemented in 2023-24 following a soft launch working with pilot schools in Spring 2023.

Resolved that Senate endorse the action plan.

29. TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

Received an update from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

Noted that:

1. A written submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023 exercise was being prepared by University Education Committee. A draft would be provided to Senate for comment. A Students' Union written submission was also being developed.
2. Reflected on the potential implications of TEF judgements which were based on students' perspectives about their experience, including the University's ability to charge the higher rate of tuition fees. However, the University's student progress and outcome measures were positive, and these would have an important bearing on the overall judgement.

30. UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

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

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

Noted that:

1. The paper represented the outcomes of a robust consultation designed to agree the shape of the University calendar for 2023-24 and 2024-25, as endorsed by University Education Committee and University Research and Innovation Committee.
2. Key themes during the consultation had been equality, diversity and inclusion and consideration of unintended consequences for individuals. There had also been a desire expressed by academic units for greater flexibility on use of the calendar for activities like enrichment weeks.
3. There had been agreement on moving the Semester 2 resit period back by two weeks, by removing the revision buffer week and condensing congregations from three to two weeks. This would help to alleviate a current problem whereby many students who had failed their exams and could not progress had already made their arrangements for the new academic year and returned to Newcastle. At this stage, it was too late to start another course at Newcastle or move to another university. Also, few colleagues were around to support students with their options at this point.
4. Longer-term work on the future of education would also be undertaken, including a review of the University's approach to assessment, digital education and timetabling. Following this, the University Calendar could then be adapted to better support education and research agendas.
5. A full equality impact analysis had been prepared and this was greatly appreciated by Senate members.

Resolved that Senate approve the key recommendations in the paper.

31. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK

Received a report summarising the University's performance in the Knowledge Exchange Framework exercise.

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

Noted that:

1. The University performed above its cluster average for working with the public and third sector (and was placed in the top quintile for the sector as a whole for this measure). This was largely driven by the University's close link with the Newcastle upon Tyne NHS Hospitals Trust.
2. The University performed on a par with its cluster for research partnerships, intellectual property and commercialisation, and public and community engagement, and below the cluster average for CPD and graduate start-ups, local growth and regeneration, and working with business.

32. POSSIBLE DISRUPTION TO PROGRAMME DELIVERY, EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS ARISING FROM AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

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

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

Noted that:

1. The University and College Union members had voted to take industrial action following two ballots on pay and working conditions, and changes to pension arrangements. Three days of strike action would take place at the end of November 2022, with continuous action short of a strike effective from 23 November, and the possibility of a marking and assessment boycott early in 2023.
2. Revised Guidance had been produced to be used when there was disruption to Programme Delivery, Examinations and Assessment as a result of an Emergency Situation in accordance with General Regulation E43-45.

Resolved that Senate agreed to recommend that the proposed Industrial Action constituted an Emergency Situation.

33. EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

The Register presented the final report of the external review of governance.

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

Noted:

1. Council had received the final report at its last meeting. A sub-group of Nominations Committee would be convened to consider the recommendations in detail and make a proposal to Council regarding how to proceed.
2. The report had recommended that consideration be given to the constitution of the membership of Senate, with an increase in ex officio members to reflect the very specific role they have in helping the University achieve its strategic academic aims.
3. A number of different viewpoints were expressed in relation to the recommendation, including support for the current constitution and size of Senate on the one hand, and recognition that capturing academic input and perspectives was important for the effective setting and approval of policy on the other.
4. Subject to Council's discussion of the review's recommendations at its next meeting, the Registrar would bring forward a proposal regarding the membership of Senate..

34. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

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

35. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Received a report on the 2022 TEAs.

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

36. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 12 September, 2 November 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

- b) University Global Committee: 21 July 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Research and Innovation Committee: 7 June, 19 July and 6 September 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

37. 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.]