

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

18 January 2023

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Brian Walker (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jane Robinson and Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Shoba Amarnath, Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Professor Chris Baldwin, Madeline Baugh (President, Students' Union), Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Dr Marie Devlin, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Darren Evans, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Professor Andy Husband, Jenny Johnstone, Dr Darren Kelsey, Dr Anjam Khan, Danica Limawan (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Dr Gareth Longstaff, Mack Marshall (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Rhiannon Mason, Claire Morgan, Professor Graham Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Professor Alison Shaw, Professor Annie Tindley, and Dr Eimer Tuite.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services), Louella Houldcroft (Director of Communications) and Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office).

Apologies: Dr Shoba Amarnath, Professor Bruce Baker, Aleena Ikram (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Kate McGill

MINUTES

38. WELCOME

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

40. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 16 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

41. 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. New Year's Honours

The following individuals associated with the University had been recognised in the New Year's Honours list:

- CBE Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President). For services to Health Research and Treatment.
- CBE Professor Colin Riordan (Formerly Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences, currently Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University). For services to Higher Education.
- OBE Emerita Professor Kim Reynolds. (Author and Professor of Children's Literature). For services to Literature.
- MBE Sally Ingram. (Director of Student Health and Wellbeing). For services to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- MBE Honorary Emeritus Professor Eugene Milne. (Professor of Public Health and recently retired Director of Public Health for Newcastle upon Tyne). For services to Public Health and Wellbeing.
- MBE Dr Ingrid Pollard. (Visual Artist Fellow). For services to art.
- MBE Emeritus Professor Roy Taylor. (Professor of Medicine and Metabolism in Translational and Clinical Research). For services to Diabetic Research.

2. Industrial Action

The University and College Union is calling on its members to take discontinuous strike action and a continuous period of action short of strike (ASOS) in support of its dispute concerning the USS pension and pay. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education was chairing and Education Continuity Group that was meeting regularly to consider the academic implications of the action for students. The announcement of further strike dates in February and March was expected.

3. Teaching Capital Investment Fund

The University had successfully secured £5.52m of Office for Students (OfS) funding to strengthen the delivery of two priority capital projects supporting the teaching and learning and strategic growth of student numbers in Mechanical Engineering and Dentistry. In the School of Mechanical Engineering, £2.97m of OfS funding would be used to acquire new equipment for four teaching laboratories and a Student Makerspace in the new Stephenson Building. In the School of Dental Sciences, £2.54m of OfS funding would be used to develop two new clinical skill training suites.

4. Research Funding

Research England had announced the provision of £100m of additional QR (Quality-Related) and £70.65m of additional RCIF (Research Capital Investment Fund) allocations and a new £30m Talent and Research Stabilisation fund for universities to address ongoing uncertainty over access to the European Union's Horizon Europe research funding programme. Newcastle University expected to receive an additional £5.7m. The funding was provided to support retention of wider research capabilities, development of international collaborations and partnerships, recruitment and retention of talent, and supporting early career researchers.

5. Online Programmes

The Vice-Chancellor reported on progress with the development of new online data science programmes. Subject to successful tender bids, the University would be seeking endorsement to enter into a contract with an Online Programme Management provider.

6. Global Engagement Principles

Executive Board approved a Due Diligence Framework for external University activity, proposed principles for engagement, and a framework for determining when to make public statements on national and international events. Members of Senate were provided with a copy of the framework and principles.

7. Infrastructure Strategy Group

Executive Board had approved the establishment of an Infrastructure Strategy Group to replace the Estate Capital Strategic Planning Committee, Digital Campus Steering Group, and Campus of the Future Group. The creation of the group would build on outcomes of the Campus of the Future Group and aimed to bridge the gaps that had been identified in future planning for the University's infrastructure, including its physical and digital estate and facilities.

8. Public Orators

Senate approved the appointment of the following individuals as Public Orators:

Professor Vee Pollock (Professor Public Art, Art and Cultures) for a period of three years from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2026

John Williams (Head of Collections Management and Digital Library Services) for a period of three years from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2026.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Vice-Chancellor reported that internal discussion of options for the future leadership of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were continuing, and a proposal would be brought to the next meeting of Senate on 1 March.

Noted that:

1. A member of Senate enquired as to what extent the University was experiencing attrition among colleagues hailing from the European Union. The University was not aware of colleagues departing, and one of its main concerns was ensuring colleagues from the EU felt supported and valued as an essential part of our University community.
2. A member of Senate enquired about the applicability of the global engagement principles to university collaborations with Chinese organisations and current reliance on China with respect to international student recruitment. The University was engaged in scenario planning for the loss of recruitment from China as a result of geopolitical developments, as well as exploring routes towards diversifying its student profile. In terms of research, Executive Board had decided not to proceed with two dual purpose research projects due to the level of risk involved.

42. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 12 DECEMBER 2022**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 12 December 2022.

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

43. TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

Received a draft of the University submission from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Senate received a final draft of the University's submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. A number of Senators had submitted detailed feedback.
2. Members acknowledged the process for assessment of the submission and announcement of the outcomes, as well as the implications of respective outcomes scenarios.
3. The submission outlined a forward-looking Education for Life Framework, which articulated the University's intent for students' educational gains. This would be embedded into students' personal development and educational experience over the coming years.
4. Senate recorded its thanks to the TEF submission writing team.

Resolved that Senate endorse the submission for approval by the Vice-Chancellor as accountable officer.

Received the Newcastle University Student Union submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework.

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

Noted that:

1. The submission was an evidence-based contribution to the TEF process as well as to the Students' Union's ongoing work with the University to enhance the student experience.
2. Senate complimented the Students' Union on the quality of the submission.

44. DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT

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

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

Noted that:

1. The report provided an analysis of the University's degree classification profile for undergraduate and Integrated Master's awards.
2. The data showed a slight upward trend over the period since 2014-15 in the proportion of First Class honours degrees awarded, followed by a 10% increase during the two most pandemic-affected years. The 2021-22 results showed a fall back towards pre-pandemic levels of awarding, but a full return had not yet been observed.
3. Noted the crucial role of external examiners in providing reassurance about the integrity of awards.

4. At University level the proportion of First Class degrees awarded in 2021/22 was 5.3% higher than the last pre-pandemic year in 2018/19. This rate was similar across faculties, but there were substantial variations at school level ranging from 2.2% below 2018/19 levels in Engineering, to 18% above for Computing. The School of Computing had reflected on this trend at length, and concluded that there was no disparity with outcomes for programmes in this subject area elsewhere in the sector.
5. Reflected on a summary of awarding gaps. There was a notable difference between the proportion of First Class degrees awarded to Black and White students, and it was understood that this gap had grown nationally as well as at Newcastle.
6. International students, including those who had previously followed programmes at INTO Newcastle, were a lot less likely to achieve a First or 2:1 degree. Integration and English language proficiency continued to be challenging issues. More granular analysis was required to understand the inequity in experience, and how to better support students with language and foster a feeling of belonging.

Resolved that Senate approve the statement.

45. ASSURANCE OF ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

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

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

Noted that:

1. The report provided a summary of the operation of the University's framework for the management of academic quality and standards, in order to demonstrate that the University was meeting national regulatory requirements in this area.
2. The Office for Students had announced a review of blended learning amidst concerns that the poor quality of the online experience for some students during the pandemic had undermined the positive potential of mixing in-person and online course delivery. Members agreed that there should be sound pedagogic reasons underpinning a blended approach, and that the rationale should be communicated to students clearly and consistently.

Resolved that Senate approve the report for onward submission to Council.

46. RESEARCH ETHICS

Received a report summarising the University's revised Research Ethics Policy.

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

Noted that:

1. The policy had been updated as part of the periodic review of research governance.
2. The title and scope of the policy had been changed to reflect the terms of reference of Research Ethics Committee. All reference to teaching activities had been removed as these were governed by separate policies and processes.
3. Following consultation with the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB), a broader definition of "animals" had been used following the recent Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act (2022).

4. In line with the recommendations of a recent Internal Audit report, the updated policy emphasised the need to obtain Informed Consent in studies involving working with human participants and the University's expectations around document retention.

Resolved that Senate approve the revised Research Ethics Policy.

47. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received a report from the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Students' Union.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Although students still valued the Students' Union very highly, there had again been a reduced engagement rate in the previous year compared with pre-Covid levels.
2. As a result, a new strategic plan with three cross-cutting principles of wellbeing, accessibility and inclusion, and sustainability had been developed. There was a significant emphasis on support and advice, through the opening of a new advice hub, the appointment of a new Accessibility and Inclusion coordinator, and outreach activity across campus aimed at tackling mental health issues.
3. A number of space improvement proposals were being drawn up for submission with the Students' Union subvention bid. Themes revolved around accessibility and welfare, and more modern spaces for social learning.
4. Noted ongoing work to develop cross-campus relationships to improve the student experience in Malaysia and Singapore. It was suggested that marketing and promotional materials could be created in different languages. Members also discussed connectivity of Students' Union activities across the Newcastle campus for students who were primarily based on Newcastle Helix and at the Medical School. Segmentation data to help encourage engagement was being analysed.
5. It was suggested that the Students' Union's experience of engagement levels bore parallels with the academic engagement picture, and joined-up analysis of these trends might be worthwhile.

48. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

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

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

Received a report from the meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee which took place on 15 December 2022.

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

Resolved that Senate approve the award of honorary degrees to the individuals recommended by the Committee.

Received the revised terms of reference for Honorary Degrees Committee.

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

Noted that:

1. Move to having a second student representative, and to clarify that Deputy Chair of Convocation would be the second alumni representative.

Resolved that Senate approve the updated terms of reference for Honorary Degrees Committee.

50. RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Received a report from the PVC Research and Innovation.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

51. SENATE-APPOINTED MEMBERS ON COUNCIL

Received a report from the Registrar.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

52. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 14 December 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Global Committee: 22 September 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Research and Innovation Committee: 25 October and 13 December 2022
[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. A discussion of the Postgraduates who teach policy would take place at the next meeting of Senate.

53. UNIVERSITY CLOSURE DATES

Received the University Closure Dates for the 2023-24 Christmas and New Year period.

54. 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 S. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]