NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

23 September 2026

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Quentin Anstee, Professor Jo Fox, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Li Li, Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr Matej Blazek, Professor Nils Braakmann, Professor Daniel Coca, Dr Nicola Clarke, Professor Heather Cordell, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Ben Farrand, Professor Ian Head, Dr Thorsten Heidersdorf, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor David Kennedy, Professor Andrew Kingston, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Emma Monaghan (Wellbeing and Communities Officer, NUSU), Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Dr Jemima Repo, Professor Murray Pollock, Dr Shweta Sharma, Muriel Snowdon, Gina Tindale (President, NUSU), Dr Helen St Clair Thompson, Anushka Sonwane (Academic Officer, NUSU), Professor Emma Stevenson, Professor Simon Tate, Professor Athanassios Vergados, and Dr Katharine Wright.

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

Apologies: Derek Bell, Nick Collins, Professor Cathrine Degnen, Professor Stuart Edwards, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Dr Emma Haagensen, Kyi Nue Phyu Sin, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe, Dr Grega Smrkolj and Dr Laura Woodhouse.

M I N U T E S

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed new members to their first meeting of Senate.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 23 June 2026 were approved as a correct record, subject to one amendment, and signed.

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

Reported:

a) There were vacancies for a Senate representative on University Museum and Gallery Board and University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Members of Senate were invited to submit expressions of interest to the Governance Office.

b) At its meeting held on 23 June 2026, Senate had approved the re-establishment of the Dean of Research Culture role. While the paper listed the role as the Dean of Research Culture, the original title for the role was Dean of Research Culture and

Strategy, and Senate was asked to note the correct title. It was noted that approval process for the establishment of a selection panel had been undertaken with a shortened timeline. The new process would be employed during the 2026-27 academic year and going forward.

4. 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) Student Minds University Mental Health Charter Award
It was reported that the University had been awarded the Student Minds University Mental Health Charter Award. The assessors had identified significant areas of excellent practice across the University including the Colleague Wellbeing Ambassadors and the Colleague Health and Wellbeing team's awareness work, the Student Insights Panel's role in shaping the new academic framework and the Impact Measurement Scale which provides the University with a clearer, shared language for understanding student need and managing escalation.

b) New Government and Devolution
The new government had identified some clear policy ambitions, including adopting a 'devolution first' approach, handing power back to local communities and with increased public control of key sectors. The government had already announced the merger of DSIT and DBT into a new department, the Department for Business, Innovation Science and Trade which would focus on new and emerging sectors and would connect the UK's world-class science and technology base directly to key businesses, places and workers to enable growth across the country.

c) University Rankings
The Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities been released by National Taiwan University and the University had been ranked 179th in the world, up from 185th last year.

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

The University had been ranked 82nd out of 123 universities in the Guardian University Guide 2027, dropping one place from 81st in the previous year's ranking.

Finally, the University had also been ranked 30th in the Sunday Times University Ranking 2027, up four places from 34th in the previous year.

d) Defence Universities Alliance
The University had been selected as a founding member of the UK's new Defence Universities Alliance, a collaborative network of UK Universities who were publicly committed to partnering with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the UK Armed Forces, the Office of the Chief Scientific Advisor for National Security, and the wider defence sector. The flagship alliance followed an £80 million MOD investment in 2,500 student places including £4m for Newcastle University to support student places in key engineering disciplines linked to defence and emerging technologies.

e) Office for Students – Financial viability and sustainability risk assessment framework
The Office for Students (OfS) had published their financial viability and sustainability risk framework, setting out how they assess financial risk in practice and highlighting the characteristics and indicators that inform financial risk judgements for individual providers. The framework also explained how the OfS applies regulatory judgement concerning published regulatory requirements in practice, and highlighted the level of regulatory intervention the OfS is likely to take in response to escalating risk.

f) Office for Students – Funding decisions and allocations
The Office for Students (OfS) had published the funding decisions and allocations for each provider for the 2026-27 academic year. The University had been allocated £23.9m in funding for high cost courses and £1.3m in funding for student access and success. The University's total allocation was slightly down (-6.8%) from the previous year.

g) Office for Students – Freedom of Speech
The Office for Students (OfS) had launched a new complaints scheme from 1 September 2027, offering a route to resolution for members of staff and visiting speakers whose free speech and academic freedom rights had been infringed.

h) Higher Education Student Outcomes and Quality
The University had received a copy of a letter sent to all universities by the Department of Education regarding student outcomes and quality. It was also noted that Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) results remained a key consideration (see also Item 6 below) as higher education institutions must hold a satisfactory TEF rating to charge maximum tuition fees, currently capped at £9,790 for home students.

i) Institute of Devolution
It was reported that the UK was entering a new era of devolution, creating growing demand for independent evidence, practical insight and thought leadership to support policymakers, practitioners and communities. Anchored in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences but with an institution-wide remit, and conceived of jointly with the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, a proposed Institute for Devolution would address a recognised gap by bringing together academic excellence, policymaking expertise, practitioner experience together with international perspectives, to understand both how devolution works and how devolved powers can be used to improve outcomes for people and places.

The Institute would build on Newcastle University's research strengths with close engagement with decision-makers, the convening power of Insights North East, and partnerships with leading international organisations.

Resolved that Senate endorse the creation of an Institute of Devolution for approval by Council, noting that an implementation plan would be presented to Senate at a future meeting.

j) Senate Membership
Professor Jo Robinson had resigned as the co-opted Member of Senate from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor from the Faculty had nominated Sam Ryan (Law School) to fill the vacancy.

Resolved that Senate approve the appointment of Sam Ryan as a co-opted member of Senate for a term of three years.

5. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 6 JULY 2026**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 6 July 2026.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

6. **ACADEMIC SHAPE: FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Received a presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Noted that:

a) The strategic case proposed a transformational restructure of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS), replacing the current ten-School model with four Schools and an Interdisciplinary Commons with underlaying principles of academic coherence, financial sustainability, and governance.

b) There was an urgent need to design an improved future for the Faculty that was aligned with local, national, and global priorities, and that built resilience for disciplines in response to sectoral and political volatility. A clear academic vision for sustainable growth was required, which would integrate academic ambition with operational efficiency and balance purpose with financial sustainability, without compromising academic integrity.

c) It was envisioned that the School of Creativity, Cultures, Communication and Heritage would create opportunities for richer collaboration across currently dispersed disciplines, and would provide a strengthened platform for engagement with the creative and cultural industries, heritage organisations, media partners, and the built environment sector.

d) The proposed School of Public Policy, Global Affairs, and the Environment would build on the University's significant strengths in policy, regional development, sustainability, and governance, and would provide a focal point for policy-relevant education, research, and partnership activity. It was noted that 'society' was not represented in the School of Public Policy, Global Affairs and the Environment and further discussions about the school name would be forthcoming.

e) It was proposed both Newcastle Law School and Newcastle University Business School would remain as a stand-alone schools. Ambitious goals and trajectories had been set for all four schools, including for the schools that would remain as stand-alone schools.

f) It would be key to ensure that the HaSS restructure would be aligned with any corresponding changes in the other two Faculties, and the consultation process had included key colleagues across the University outside of the HaSS Faculty.

g) There were considerations across the Faculty regarding staff capacity and duplication of roles which meant the current arrangements were not sustainable or fit for the future. The restructuring exercise had not been undertaken in response to financial issues, but financial benefits would be realised from the streamlining of processes and structures. Senate would be provided with further details regarding financial implications in due course.

h) Senate was asked to endorse the proposed direction of travel for the HaSS Academic Vision and the proposed academic unit reorganisation and future school structure for

Council consideration. Senate was also asked to endorse the proposed School names, recruitment of future Heads of School, subject to Council approval, and the proposed implementation approach, timeline, and engagement activities.

Resolved that Senate support and endorse the proposals as detailed in the strategic case, with the exception that further discussion would be forthcoming regarding one of the proposed school names as mentioned above.

7. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received reports from the meetings of:

a) University Education Committee: 13 May and 1 July 2026
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

b) University Research and Innovation Committee: 12 May and 23 June 2026
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

a) University Education Committee had discussed the institutional expectations for Academic Advising, the implementation of assignment libraries, and approved the introduction of a PhD by Distance Learning, the regulations of which would be provided to Senate at a future meeting.

b) University Research and Innovation Committee had discussed the financial sustainability of research, evolution of grant funding and the UKRI funding research assurance report.

8. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Received a paper from the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

a) The University had experienced a sustained decline in student satisfaction reported in the National Student Survey (NSS) over the last ten years. The NSS 2026 results provided support for cautious optimism that efforts to enhance the student experience had resulted improvements in positivity measure and in relative benchmarking across all NSS themes. Significant improvements could be seen in some, but not all, subject areas.

b) The University's results relative to other Russell Group universities remained relatively unchanged in 2026 compared with 2025. When compared to the sector as a whole, the University's position was improving.

c) Faculties would be undertaking their own reviews of NSS 2026 results reporting to University Education Committee (UEC) in October, including, but not limited to targeted interventions focused on subject areas where results were not at or above benchmark, or were showing progression towards benchmark. Targeted interventions at the institutional level would be agreed by UEC.

9. LEADING EDGE CURRICULUM

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

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

Noted that:

a) Learning from Phase 1 had informed the approach to the Phase 2 implementation and included the introduction of a six-week readiness phase, structured training, an extended eight-week design phase, the introduction of LEC champions and a fully-resourced Curriculum Transformation Team.

b) A full update on the Education for Life 2030+ strategy would be provided to Senate in January 2027.

10. **WHITE SPACE**

Received a paper on Sabbatical Officers' Priorities from the 2026-27 Newcastle University Students' Union.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

a) The President of Newcastle University Students' Union (NUSU) provided an overview of the Sabbatical Officer election process and outlined how each candidate creates a list of objectives and priorities that underpin the selection process.

b) Priorities for the 2026-27 year included organising a "Know Your Rights" campaign followed by drop-in sessions at key points in the year, active lobbying for students to have access to medical care at home and at university, and creating an accessible resource where students can access information regarding their academic rights, policies, procedures, and available support.

11. **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 be conferred on:
Professor Charles Harvey effective from 1 January 2027
Resolved that the title of Professor Emerita be conferred on:
Professor Sue Farran effective from 1 February 2027

12. **SENATE EFFECTIVENESS**

Received the effectiveness survey results.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

a) Senate received findings from the latest Senate Effectiveness Survey which the 2025-26 membership had been invited to complete. The paper had been prepared by the Governance Office liaising with the Senior Independent Governor.

b) University Governance was subject to an external review every three years, in alignment with guidance from the Committee of University Chairs. The next external review was provisionally planned for the 2026-27 academic year, with the scope of the review being subject to Council approval.

13. **UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS**

Received key changes to the University Regulations for 2026-27.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

14. **ANNUAL REPORT FROM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Received the minutes from the meeting held on 21 April 2026.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

15. **RESEARCH CULTURE PROGRAMME ANNUAL REVIEW**

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

16. **MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

Received the Senate membership for 2026-27.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

17. **SENATE DELEGATION OF POWERS**

Received Senate's Delegation of Powers.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

18. **STANDING ORDERS OF SENATE**

Received the Standing Orders of Senate.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

19. **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.]