

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
SENATE
25 June 2025

- Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Jo Fox, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, 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 Darren Kelsey, Professor David Kennedy, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Murray Pollock, Dr Jemima Repo, Dr Shweta Sharma, Dr Robert Shaw, Dr Grega Smrkolj, Muriel Snowden, Professor Simon Tate, Professor John Wildman, Dr Laura Woodhouse 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), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager).
- Apologies:** Jasmine Banks, Leo David, Professor Ruth Morrow, Professor Judith Rankin, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe, Hisham Salamathullah, Professor Emma Stevenson, Linming Sun and Dr Katharine Wright.

M I N U T E S

83. WELCOME

The Chair thanked Professor Chris Baldwin, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Darren Kelsey and Professor Anoop Nayak for their contributions to Senate and noted this was their final meeting.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

85. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 30 April 2025 and the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Senate held on 21 May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents A1 and A2. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) The Vice-Chancellor reported that Senate elections had closed on Monday 23 June 2025 and the below colleagues had been elected to Senate for the 2025-26 academic year:

Professor Nils Braakmann
Professor Cathrine Degnen
Professor Ian Head
Professor Athanassios Vergados
Dr Matej Blazek
Dr Thorsten Heidersdorf

- b) The Registrar noted the ongoing commitment towards ensuring that Senate membership represented the University community and a diverse range of views and experiences. In future election cycles, additional materials and briefings would be provided to ensure prospective candidates understood the nature of the role. Underrepresented areas of the University may be highlighted during election cycles to encourage participation in Senate membership going forward.

86. 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) Government Spending Review

The Chancellor Rachel Reeves' spending review, the first multi-year review since 2021, was published on 11 June 2025, and key points include an £86bn research and development funding package over the next four years to support key growth sectors. Several funds had been created to directly support local economic growth, and to enable local job creation and the economic regeneration of local communities.

b) Immigration White Paper

The Government's Immigration White Paper had been published in May and it was noted that the terms of the Graduate route remained unchanged, though the duration had been reduced from 24 months to 18 months. The introduction of a levy on Higher Education provider income earned through international tuition fees was being explored, with an indication that the money generated would be reinvested into higher education and the skills system.

c) Turing Budget

The Department for Education had confirmed that the national Turing budget for 2025-26 had been reduced by almost a third from £110m to £78m. This reduction had been anticipated and it was expected the University would secure just over £1m, which was down from last year's figure but was broadly equivalent to the amount secured in 2023-24.

d) Office for Students – Reportable Event

The University had submitted a reportable event to the Office for Students on 7 May 2025. A report was provided to the regulator regarding the second period of industrial action announced by the Universities and Colleges Union for 21 days taking place through April, May and June. Having considered the criteria for reportability, and the OfS guidance on disruption to marking and assessment, the University took the decision to report the disruption for its potential to materially affect the education of students in the subject areas impacted.

e) Coimbra Group Membership

Newcastle University had been included in the Coimbra Group membership, a prestigious association of high international standards which had expanded its membership to 42 universities, including the three additional distinguished European universities of Newcastle, Leeds and Wroclaw, in Poland. The association leverages advocacy and collaboration to promote higher education internationalisation, academic collaboration, excellence in learning and research, and service to society.

f) Industrial Action

The University had received notice of further industrial action from the local Universities and Colleagues Union (UCU) branch, consisting of 30 days of

discontinuous strike action through June and July. UCU national congress had voted to prepare for an industrial dispute with the Secretary of State for Education over university funding. The Education Continuity Group was meeting regularly to consider how to mitigate the impact of strike action on the student experience. The Vice-Chancellor noted that a consultation meeting with UCU was due to take place on 26 June to consider next steps following achievement of the recurrent savings target.

g) Regional Research Commercialisation

The SCENE (Strategic Commercialisation Ecosystem North East) project, a five-year programme led by Durham University and involving Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside universities and other partners, had been awarded £8.9 million from Research England. Building on the foundations of the Northern Accelerator spin-out programme, the SCENE project would grow the North East's capacity and capability to commercialise impactful university research.

h) University Compare 2026 and What Uni Student Choice Awards 2025

The University had been ranked 1st in the Russell Group and 4th overall in the University Compare Ranking 2026. This was a relatively new ranking that used recommendation scores and student reviews to determine an overall score validated by a quantitative scoring system. Within the ranking, Newcastle had been ranked 1st in the UK for Student Life.

The University had also won top place in the What University Student Choice Awards (WUSCA) in the category of 'Student Life'. The award recognised all aspects of student life from extra-curricula activities to the general feel of campus.

i) Colleague and Student Success

Professor Clare Bambra (Population Health Sciences Institute) and Professor Robert Taylor (Translational and Clinical Research Institute) had been elected as Fellows of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Professor Tony Champion (Emeritus Professor of Population Geography) had been honoured for contributions to population geography and migration studies as part of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'s prestigious annual medals and awards.

Professor Cathrine Degnen (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had been elected to become a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Professor Bernard Corfe (Population Health Sciences Institute) had been elected as the next President of the UK Nutrition Society.

Professor Hayley Fowler (School of Engineering) had been awarded a Faraday Discovery Fellowship worth £8m over 10 years by the Royal Society.

Professor Rachel Franklin (Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies) had been honoured for contributions to smart data research as part of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'s prestigious annual medals and awards.

Dr Jonte Hance (School of Computing) has been awarded a prestigious Quantum Technology Career Acceleration Fellowship by the UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

Professor Thomas Penfold (School of Natural and Environmental Sciences) had been awarded the 2025 Faraday mid-career prize: Bourke-Liversidge Prize.

Dr Srikanth Ramaswamy (Biosciences Institute) had been awarded the 2026 R Jean Banister Prize for Early-Career Physiologists, and was the first computational neuroscientist to receive the prize.

- j) Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Medical Sciences
Professor Quentin Anstee (currently Faculty Dean of Research and Innovation) had been appointed as the next Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Medical Sciences, for an initial period of five years from 1 August 2025.
- k) Dean of Culture and Inclusion
Professor Candy Rowe had been appointed to the new role of Dean of Culture and Inclusion for an initial period of one year from 1 August 2025.
- l) Interim Head of School
The Vice-Chancellor reported that Professor David Seifert had been appointed as the interim Head of School of Mathematics, Statistics & Physics from 1 July 2025 for a period of one year.
- m) Honorary Degrees in Education
At the meeting of Senate on 13 November 2024, it had been agreed that the University should offer Honorary Bachelor of Education awards to former students who missed their chance to receive their awards in October 2023. The awards recognised and celebrated former students who graduated with Certificates in Teaching from partner colleges prior to the introduction of the B.Ed. degree in 1970. Following a communication campaign with alumni, a total of 141 former students had been identified and validated by the student data team. Due to the geographical spread of recipients and other accessibility issues, the awards were conferred *in absentia* for the second and final tranche of recipients.
- n) Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
The Freedom of Speech Code of Practice had been approved at Council on 2 June 2025 and following the publication of the Office for Students' guidelines it was anticipated minor editorial changes to the code would be required.
- o) Industrial Strategy
The Government's modern Industrial Strategy had been published, presenting a new economic approach. This included a whole-of-government effort to back the UK's strengths, with ambitious plans for eight high-growth sectors and the frontier industries at their leading edge to support the whole of the UK economy. Further discussion would take place in the September meeting of Senate to help ensure a joined-up approach across the University.

87. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 2 JUNE 2025

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 2 June 2025.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

88. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 14 May 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Global Committee: 23 January 2025
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Research and Innovation Committee: 18 March 2025

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

Noted that:

- a) The University Education Committee had received an update on the progress to date on the Education Strategy, and in particular noted the progress in relation to Objectives 1 and 3. The Committee also noted unanimous support for the overall aims, alongside some queries about how those aims may be achieved while considering workloads, resourcing and delivery timelines.
- b) The University Global Committee had received an update on the refreshed Global Strategy and implementation. Continued work was required to link the Global Strategy with other core strategies as well as to embed it in University systems and within key teams and workstreams.
- c) The University Research and Innovation Committee had received updates on the PGR Strategic Plan refresh and the formation of the Innovation Board to support and facilitate a joined-up approach to innovation activities across the University. The Committee had noted ongoing work was needed to ensure UKRI timesheets were compliant with auditor requirements.

89. BUILDING A SIMPLIFIED CURRICULUM – PROPOSAL FOR A NEW QUALIFICATIONS, CREDIT AND PROGRAMME DESIGN FRAMEWORK (QCPDF)

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 proposal for a new Qualifications, Credit and Programme Design Framework (QCPDF) was the first formal output of the project to deliver a Leading Edge Curriculum. The QCPDF builds on and expands the current Newcastle University Qualifications and Credit Framework.
- b) Key change proposals within the QCPDF were noted as follows:
 - All modules would be taught in linear mode, and would be taught and assessed in a single semester with limited pre-agreed exceptions.
 - All UG and PGT programmes would be comprised of 20 credit modules, with limited use of 10, 40, 60 and 120 credit modules only in specific prescribed circumstances.
 - Standardised requirements would be implemented for compulsory capstone project (e.g. dissertation, project or equivalent modules) for Bachelors, Integrated Masters, Taught Masters and Research Masters.
 - For UG a staggered maximum volume of optional credits per stage, and for PGT per programme.
 - Qualification and credit restrictions would be adjusted to accommodate the 20 credit module base.
- c) Benefits to the new framework included that standardisation of credit and teaching patterns would provide simplicity for joint honours programmes and would create flexibility for multidisciplinary programmes. Consistency of structures would also alleviate the administrative burden of managing wide variations in programme design.
- d) The QCPDF would be implemented as part of the overall Leading Edge Curriculum and as part of the curriculum transformation programme from 2025-26 onwards with pilots planned for Spring 2026.

- e) Discussion included the necessity of modelling optionality, with particular focus on potential impact on workloads and implications in relation to assessments. It was suggested that pausing the QCPDF implementation would allow for further consultation and further scenario analyses. It was also suggested that maintaining momentum was crucial and the decision to approve the proposal would still allow for ongoing review and adjustment to the framework, if and when that was deemed necessary.
- f) Voting by show of hands confirmed that the majority of Senators present in the meeting agreed the proposals. It was agreed that if modelling and pilot programmes revealed areas of significant concern, necessary adjustments would be considered prior to wider implementation.

Resolved that Senate approve the recommendations in the report noting that further consultation on implementation would take place to include modelling outcomes.

90. LEADING EDGE CURRICULUM – EDUCATION FOR LIFE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES APPROACH

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

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

Noted that:

- a) The *Education for Life Skills and Attributes* (EfL SA) proposed a new institutional approach which had been developed following extensive horizon scanning of competitor institutions; a review of employee organisation publications on the future of work, and of academic literature on future skills; and engagement with students, alumni, employers, and colleagues.
- b) The current graduate framework was outdated and was not aligned with academic and employer literature on the future of work and the skills and attributes graduates would need to achieve excellence and impact after graduation. The EfL SA provided a simplified, coherent approach that would support colleagues to enable students to identify, explore, apply and reflect upon the development of skills and attributes that will ensure they are fit for their futures.

Resolved that Senate endorse the approach as presented in the proposal.

91. SENATE OVERSIGHT OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Received a paper from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

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

Noted that:

- a) At the meeting of Senate on 19 February 2025, it had been agreed that Senate should receive a framework for monitoring the academic character and mission of the University. As part of the discussion, it was noted that Senate already receives a significant volume of quantitative and qualitative information and reports, including the reports from Senate sub-committees.
- b) It had been agreed that Senate would receive a regular verbal update from the Senate representative and/or Chair of the sub-committee on any significant matters of business, and this had been implemented for the 30 April meeting of Senate and ongoing.

- c) A new Power BI dashboard would provide useful and transparent trend information relevant to education and research at an appropriate level of granularity. It was envisioned that data on all units would be presented at Faculty and School level with the ability to drill-down to constituent disciplines in the larger Schools. It was also noted that information relevant to the ongoing sustainability of academic units should be included where possible.
- d) At the recent meeting of Council on 2 June, it had been agreed that a regular joint session should be arranged in the new academic year to facilitate greater joint working between Senate and Council. The topic of the joint session would be to discuss future ideas for the academic shape of the University.

92. AI SAFETY NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

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

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

Noted that:

- a) The proposed NU Centre of Research Excellence (NUCoRE) in AI Safety would join a portfolio of 19 NUCoREs enabling the University to offer a coherent and distinctive narrative of collective excellence in this area of AI Safety research, education, and engagement with global reach. The NUCoRE had been designed to help the University take advantage of external funding in this growing area of research and innovation.
- b) Ongoing work was required to ensure coordination within the University in relation to expanding AI research, education, policy development and innovation.

Resolved that Senate approve the establishment of a NUCoRE AI Safety to be reviewed at a two-year interval to assess institutional optimisation and join-up of AI activity.

93. WHITE SPACE

Noted that:

- a) The Vice-Chancellor invited members of Senate to submit suggestions for future agenda items.
- b) A proposed discussion of scholarship strategy was deferred due to meeting time constraints.

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

Received a report from the meeting of Honorary Degrees Committee that took place on 12 June 2025.

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

- a) Senate wished to record their thanks and appreciation to Jill Taylor-Roe for her valuable contributions as Senior Public Orator as she will be standing down from this role in July 2025.

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

Resolved that Senate approve the appointment of Public Orators as recommended by the Committee.

95. 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 Per Berggren 1 August 2025
Professor Grant Burgess 1 July 2025
Professor David Burn 1 August 2025
Professor John Bythell 31 August 2025
Professor Deborah Chambers 4 September 2025
Professor Prue Chiles 1 August 2025
Professor Richard Collier 1 August 2025
Professor Angharad Gatehouse 1 August 2025
Professor Robert Hirt 1 October 2025
Professor Chris Jones 1 August 2025
Professor Shirley Jordan 1 August 2025
Professor John Lunec 1 August 2025
Professor John Mathers 1 July 2025
Professor Ruth Morrow 1 August 2025
Professor John Pendlebury 1 October 2025
Professor Allyson Pollock 1 August 2025
Professor Steve Rushton 1 August 2025
Professor Paul Seedhouse 1 August 2025
Professor Tracy Shildrick 1 August 2025
Professor Dawn Teare 1 August 2025
Professor David Thwaites 1 October 2025
Professor Tim Townshend 1 September 2025
Professor Paula Waterhouse 1 September 2025
Professor Mark Whittingham 1 August 2025
Professor Tony Young 1 August 2025

96. SENATE-APPOINTED CHAIRS AND MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES 2025 EXERCISE

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

97. ANNUAL REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

98. 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.]