

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
SENATE
28 February 2024

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Brian Walker (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Richard Davies, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Shah Yaseen Ali (President, Students' Union), Professor Caroline Austin, Professor Chris Baldwin, Professor Mike Capaldi, Lulu Chen (Education Officer, Students' Union) Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Jens Hentschke, Professor Alex Hughes, Professor Andy Husband, Dr Darren Kelsey, Professor David Kennedy, Dr Anjam Khan, Chirag Kumar (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Lucy Leeds (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Gareth Longstaff, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Kate McGill, Professor Graham Morgan, Dr Charles Morisset, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Vee Pollock, Professor Alison Shaw, Dr Robert Shaw, Dr Laila Singh, Professor John Wildman, Dr Laura Woodhouse and Dr Emily Yarrow.

In attendance: Sandy Alden (Team Leader, Student Services) Item 54, Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Sally Ingram (Director of Student Health and Wellbeing) Item 54, Angela McNeill (Director of Student Progress Service) Item 54, Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Melanie Reed (Head of Corporate Communications), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager)

Apologies: Dr Shoba Amarnath, Professor David Burn, Justin Cole, Professor Darren Evans, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Claire Morgan, Professor Judith Rankin, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe

MINUTES

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

49. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 17 January 2024 were approved, subject to minor amendments, as a correct record and signed.

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

Noted:

- a) Minute 38 (Definitions of Discrimination) would be updated to include a specific reference to a letter that was written and submitted by colleagues who were members of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.

50. 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) International Student Recruitment Transnational Education

Professor Sir Steve Smith, International Education Strategy Champion, had visited the University on 6 February 2024 and had offered his perspective on the University's overall global performance within both the UK and global context. His focus was on international student recruitment and transnational education, the two main objectives of the UK's International Education Strategy. It had been recognised that while the University had welcomed our highest international intake in 2023-24, it was within extremely challenging circumstances. Increasing global competition and government changes to immigration policy (among other factors) meant UK universities were operating in a volatile environment in relation to the international student market and conversations were on-going across the University concerning the future size and shape of the student population.

b) International Students and Foundation Programmes

On 28 January 2024 the Sunday Times had published a report on international foundation programmes, claiming that international students were using them to buy their way onto degree programmes at UK universities with lower grades than home applicants. In response, Universities UK (UUK) had issued a statement, pointing out that the newspaper story failed to distinguish between entry requirements for full degrees and those of international foundation years, which were designed to prepare students for degree-level study but did not guarantee entry. Senators reflected on the nature of the foundation programmes offered by INTO Newcastle and the University.

c) Generative AI and Automation

A small task and finish group on generative AI and automation had been created to look at the wider implications of AI beyond teaching and assessment. The group had concluded its work in January 2024, and key themes and recommendations had been presented to Executive Board on 13 February 2024. It was recognised that leadership needed to have the skills and confidence to facilitate the adoption and use of AI, and colleagues required support to identify new ways of utilizing AI. Greater coordination of colleague guidance and prioritisation of, and investment in, automating processes was also required. The implementation of high-level recommendations had started across the University.

d) Neurodisability Rehabilitation Trial

Newcastle University was leading a clinical trial to assess how parents and professionals could support young children with neurodisability to develop independence in everyday self-care tasks. The Children's Early Self-Care Support (CHESS) trial had been made possible due to £2.3m funding from the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR). The trial team was led from Newcastle University alongside Northumbria University and Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

e) Ageing Cluster

The Medical Research Council (MRC) had awarded an additional £3 million of funding to the Ageing Cluster, being led by researchers from Newcastle University and the University of Cambridge, taking the total investment in the Cluster to an excess of £25 million. The Cluster aims to unveil new mechanisms driving age-related diseases and accelerate national understanding of how we can promote healthy ageing. Newcastle University's research will include contributing to new mouse models for the National Mouse Genetics Network, expanding on the existing programmes to enhance the UK's position as a leading centre of excellence. Dr Laura Greaves and Dr Karen Suetterlin were the Co-Investigators from Newcastle University on the Ageing Cluster, and Dr Laura Greaves was also a member of the Executive Board of the National Mouse Genetics Network.

- f) Environmental Biotechnology Innovation Centre
The Environmental Biotechnology Innovation Centre (EBIC), a £13m research centre, would bring together scientists from ten leading UK institutions including Newcastle University in a mission to advance the properties and functions of micro-organisms, creating more effective ways to monitor the environment and remove pollutants.
- g) UK-KSA International Institute for Sustainable Energy
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global and Sustainability and the Director of Business Development and Enterprise had attended Number 10 Downing Street on 7 February 2024 to meet with UK government officials, representatives from UK Infrastructure Bank and dignitaries from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to discuss the proposed joint development of an international institute for sustainable energy.
- h) Definitions of Discrimination
As agreed at the last meeting of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor had engaged extensively with sector representatives and other experts on the use of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in higher education. A message had been cascaded to colleagues to provide assurance that endorsement of IHRA did not interfere with academic freedom. It was noted that the Department for Education had announced plans to develop and implement a programme of activities to support universities tackle antisemitism on campus including developing criteria for a "Quality Seal". Professor Judith Rankin (Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) would gather input from colleagues to support the Vice-Chancellor and the University in responding to sector consultations.
- i) Late News - Independent Review of the Office for Students
Sir David Behan who is leading the independent review of the Office for Students met with the Vice-Chancellor and other colleagues on 16 February 2024. The review was expected to report to the Department for Education in May 2024.

51. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 29 JANUARY 2024**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 29 January 2024.

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

Noted that:

- a) Council had received a presentation from representatives of PwC, outlining the findings of their research, as commissioned by Universities UK, into the financial sustainability of UK higher education and its future outlook. The [report](#) was available on the Universities UK website.

52. **EDUCATION STRATEGY**

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

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

Noted that:

- a) The Education Strategy (Education for life 2030+: A vision for education and skills at Newcastle) had been created in partnership with colleagues and students, and outlined three key aims: Equity, Encounters with the Leading Edge, and Fit for the Future.

- b) Further internal documentation on the shape of the offer and the delivery plan were in development and would be circulated to Executive Board, Senate and Council in due course and would include resource implications.
- c) The shape of the offer would include considerations for lifelong learning (including industrial apprenticeships and continuing profession development) in collaboration with the Dean of Lifelong Learning and the Lifelong Learning Hub. The shape of the offer would also include clear links to the recruitment strategy as a fundamental component of the education strategy.
- d) Rather than undertaking a formalised restructure of education services, a review and realignment of resource would ensure expertise was available where most needed in order to facilitate change and knowledge sharing.
- e) Global engagement beyond the student programme could be delivered in a variety of methods, including an online experience or a physical placement, with the objective of equity for each student.

Resolved that Senate approve the Education Strategy for onward submission to Council.

53. DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT

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

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

Noted that:

- a) The University had consistently awarded a smaller proportion of firsts and upper second class awards than the average across the Russell Group.
- b) In July 2022 Universities UK had made a commitment on behalf of the sector to return to pre-pandemic levels of awarding First Class and Upper Second Class degrees by 2023 and the University's 2022-23 results had met that commitment.
- c) The largest awarding gaps were for international students, minoritised ethnic students and mature students (those age 21 or over on entry). The Access and Participation Plan would include interventions to address awarding gaps and to ensure the offer was inclusive.
- d) Discussed the importance of embedding support resources into University courses and activities from induction onwards, to ensure the right support is in place for those students who may have cultural and personal inhibitors around seeking assistance.

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

54. ANNUAL STUDENT CASEWORK REPORT

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

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

Noted that:

- a) Received the annual report relating to Formal Student Procedure Casework including Appeals, Complaints, Assessment Irregularities, Disciplinary, Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) submissions, Support to Study, and Fitness to Practise cases.

- b) There was an increasing trend of cases across most of the other categories covered by the report, although reports of antisocial behaviour and noise nuisance had decreased following a sustained effort by the University to develop and maintain key community partnerships in this area.
- c) The number of students referred to a Level 3 Fitness to Study hearing had continued to rise, reflecting the increasing health challenges faced by students. This highlighted the growing demand for resource within Academic Units and the Student Health and Wellbeing Service to support students experiencing health issues.
- d) The 2022-23 year had been challenging for many students, with the cost-of-living crisis and the rising prevalence of mental health difficulties presenting additional challenges. The overall number of Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) submissions and the number of individual students requesting adjustments had continued at the same high-volume, which continued to cause difficulties in processing.
- e) A working group within Student Services was reviewing the process for Support to Study Plans (SSP), with a view to reducing workloads by ensuring universal and inclusive design where possible.
- f) Over 12,000 students had engaged with the Student Health and Wellbeing Service during the 2022-23 academic year. Partnerships and signposting were in place to ensure students were receiving necessary medical care where appropriate.
- g) Senate recorded its thanks to all colleagues involved in supporting student casework and procedures.

55. **WHITE SPACE**

Noted that:

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

56. **APPOINTMENT OF UNIVERSITY DEANS**

Received proposals regarding the appointment of University Deans.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents Gi and Gii. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) Senate had agreed extended terms for the Dean of Research Culture and the Dean of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) until 31 July 2025, and those extensions had provided the opportunity to advance plans for leadership across the EDI and Culture agendas.
- b) The first proposal outlined the creation of a full-time Dean of Culture and Inclusion who would have oversight of existing activities, responsibilities and organisational governance across EDI and culture domains, and who would co-ordinate the University's ambitions across multiple action plans.
- c) Members of Senate considered that the creation of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Culture and Inclusion would better demonstrate to the University community and other stakeholders that matters of equality, diversity, and inclusion had prominence at executive level. It was also noted, however, that an individual working in a full-time role as academic lead

for culture and inclusion might be denied the ability to fulfil research-active commitments, and that the other institutional duties of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor could act to the detriment of the culture and inclusion focus.

- d) Following discussion, it was agreed that Executive Board would consider further the executive leadership of Culture and Inclusion.
- e) The second proposal requested the continuation of the post of Dean of Innovation and Business following the retirement of the current post holder. The Dean would provide leadership for the university's Innovation and Business Strategic Plan and the post therefore remained strategically important in ensuring collaboration between academic and commercial partners.

Resolved that Senate endorse the continuation of a Dean of Innovation and Business role.

57. RE-APPOINTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY DEAN

Received an update from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

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

Resolved that Senate endorse the re-appointment of Professor Rene Koglbauer as Dean of Lifelong Learning and Professional Practice until 31 July 2029, and to increase the fte by 0.2, subject to final approval from Council.

58. 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 be conferred on:
Professor Nick Girdler, with effect from 1 February 2025***

***Resolved that the title of Professor Emerita be conferred on:
Professor Sian Robinson, with effect from 1 July 2024***

59. PUBLIC LECTURES COMMITTEE

Received the annual report of the Public Lectures Committee.

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

60. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Engagement and Place Committee: 29 January 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Global Committee: 16 November 2023
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]