Newcastle University Strategic Risk Register Summary

Background

Since the March meeting of Council two strategic risks (SR14 & SR15) have been updated by their risk owner and reviewed by Executive Board. There was also a detailed discussion of SR14 at the May meeting of ARAC, the risk did not require any amendments as a result of the discussion.

There has been no change to the risk scores. SR9 (financial viability in the long term) continues to be one of the highest rated risks for the University and will be subject to review by ARAC at their next meeting in July.

			Gross Score			Net Score						Target Score		
REF	Risk Name	Risk Owner	I	L	S	I	L	S	R/A/G	Trend	At Target?	I	L	S
	Education													
SR1	Our Education and wider University experience does not meet student expectations	Ruth Valentine	5	5	25	4	4	16	Amber	↔	No	4	3	12
SR2	Student health and wellbeing needs are not supported	Ruth Valentine	5	5	25	4	4	16	Amber	↔	No	4	3	12
SR3	Home student recruitment targets are not met	Ruth Valentine	4	5	20	4	3	12	Amber	↔	No	4	2	8
	Research													
SR4	Inability to deliver research growth, power and intensivity	Matthew Grenby	4	4	16	4	2	8	Green	↔	Yes			
SR5	Research compliance and governance standards are not met	Matthew Grenby	4	5	20	4	4	16	Amber	↔	No	4	3	12
	Engagement & Place													
SR6	Failure to improve health, social wellbeing, economic & cultural richness in the places in which we operate (locally, nationality & globally)	Jane Robinson	4	4	16	4	2	8	Green	↔	Yes			
	Global													
SR7	Global vision is not delivered	Richard Davies	4	4	16	4	2	8	Green	↔	Yes			
SR8	International student recruitment targets do not satisfy financial requirements whilst maintaining quality and diversity	Richard Davies	5	5	25	5	4	20	Red	↔	No	5	3	15
	Strategic Enablers													
SR9	The University is not financially viable in the long term	Nick Collins	5	5	25	5	4	20	Red	↔	No	4	3	12
SR10	Poor colleague culture, recruitment, retention, health & wellbeing	Jackie Scott	5	4	20	4	4	16	Amber	↔	No	4	3	12
SR11	Failure to accurately create, securely manage, securely store data and protect against cyber risks	Nick Collins	5	5	25	5	4	20	Red	↔	No	4	3	12
SR12	University Estate (physical and digital) is not suitable for current and future needs	Nick Collins	4	4	16	4	3	12	Amber	↔	No	4	2	8
SR13	Failure to continually improve sustainability in order to protect the environment and ensure the future	Richard Davies	5	4	20	4	3	12	Amber	↔	No	4	2	8
SR14	Improper conduct of business (governance failure, public interest disclosures, fraud)	Colin Campbell	4	5	20	4	3	12	Amber	↔	No	4	2	8
SR15	Disruption caused by the external environment	Colin Campbell	4	4	16	4	3	12	Amber	↔	Yes			

Strategic Risks, Owners and Scores

Encampment on Campus

Students had set up an encampment on 1st May, they also issued the University with a list of six "demands" which include disclosure of all investments, divestment from work with defence and security sector, calling for a ceasefire and a commitment to support for Palestinian universities. An emergency management team (EMT) has been set up to deal with the operational aspects of the encampment, this has included reiterating the university's guidance for protests on campus. Although the University will not be entering into negotiations with the group a series of meetings have taken place to listen to the students and consider workstreams that link to the demands. This work is being led by an academic group chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation.

Daily rallies or vigils are also taking place on campus, these have been mostly peaceful, however there has now been three occasions when these events have become disruptive and have involved external parties. Disruption has included the blockading of building entry/exit points, vandalism of buildings, statues and artwork across campus and occupation of university buildings. Some colleagues, students and members of the public are now expressing concern about the encampment and more specifically some of the activity that is seen as intimidating, and several complaints have been received and will be responded to. We are now one of 30 universities with an encampment and are part of a UUK group that is looking at responses to the encampments.

Defence and Security Sector

Working in partnership with defence and security sector companies is standard practice at UK and international universities which can bring many benefits. World events have led to questions being raised about the University's policies on working with defence and security sector organisations. The University already has policies and processes for flagging concerns about potential partnerships but some amendments have been agreed which provide clarity and set clear parameters for any future partnerships.

Freedom of Speech and regulating Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

The Code of Practice for Free Speech is being updated for the 2024/25 academic year to bring it up to date with changes implemented by the 2023 Higher Education (freedom of speech) Act, this will be presented to the next meeting of Council. However, the OfS have not yet issued the outcome of their consultations on the free speech guidance, free speech complaints scheme or the consultation on harassment and sexual misconduct all of which are likely to require further amendment to the updated code. It is expected this will now be delayed until after the general election.

Dr Colin Campbell
Registrar, 3 June 2024