**NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY**

**SENATE**

**3 May 2023**

**Present:**  The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Dr Vanessa Armstrong, Professor Caroline Austin, Madeline Baugh (President, Students’ Union), Professor David Burn, Professor Zofia Chrzanowska-Lightowlers, Dr Barbara Eberth, Professor Darren Evans, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Alex Hughes, Professor Andy Husband, Aleena Ikram (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students’ Union), Jenny Johnstone, Dr Darren Kelsey, Dr Anjam Khan, Danica Limawan (Postgraduate Officer, Students’ Union), Mack Marshall (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Kate McGill, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Claire Morgan, Professor Graham Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Professor Jane Robinson Professor Alison Shaw, Professor Annie Tindley, Dr Eimer Tuite and Professor Ruth Valentine.

**Virtual attendance:** Professor Chris Baldwin

**In attendance:** Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Eleanor McCarthy (Educational Governance Manager, for Minute 86), Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager).

**Apologies**: Dr Shoba Amarnath, Professor Bruce Baker, Professor Richard Davies, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Nigel Harkness, Professor Jens Hentschke, Dr Gareth Longstaff, Jackie Scott and Professor Brian Walker.

**M I N U T E S**

74. **WELCOME**

The Chair noted that this was the final meeting for the current Newcastle University Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers and thanked them for their contributions to Senate.

75. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

76. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 1 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

77. **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. Industrial Action

The Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education reported on the work of the Education Continuity Group and on discussions with the Russell Group regarding the likely implications of the marking and assessment boycott for subjects accredited by professional bodies.

The University had decided to mitigate the disruption with a ‘no detriment’ approach to Board of Examiner decisions which was approved by University Education Committee on 19 April 2023.

The ‘no detriment’ approach applies to taught programmes, and includes research degrees with a taught credit-bearing element. There are a number of programmes, with professional recognition or core elements, where there were requirements of the relevant Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) or programmes with non-standard structures, which may not allow the “no detriment” approach to be taken. Unclassified degrees or unaccredited degrees may be awarded in those instances.

1. Varsity 2023

Team Newcastle had scored a comprehensive victory (99.5 points to 33) in the annual Varsity sports contest with Northumbria University on 24 March 2023.

1. The Education Awards

The annual Students’ Union Education Awards ceremony had taken place on Thursday 27 April 2023 celebrating exceptional colleagues who had made a positive impact on the student experience. Close to 600 nominations had been received from students.

1. Turing University Network

The University had been successful in applying to join the new Turing University Network. The Network replaced the previous model, in which 13 universities, including Newcastle, were designated ‘University Partners’.

1. Investment Zones

The Government had published a revised policy announcement on 15 March 2023, setting out its approach to the creation of new Investment Zones, including places selected, funding envelope and policy offer. The proposed North East Combined Mayoral Authority was one of eight areas selected to begin discussions with Government and co-develop proposals for an Investment Zone. The new combined mayoral authority will lead on a bid on behalf of the North East with an expected focus on electrification and green energy.

1. Newcastle University Students’ Union

Lindsey Lockey had been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the Students’ Union, replacing Simon Gerry who would retire in June 2023.

1. Library Customer Service Excellence

The Library Service had regained its Customer Service Excellence award with a total of eight commendations, a new record for the team.

1. Dean of Social Justice

University Executive Board had approved recruitment for a Dean of Social Justice to lead the implementation of a forward-looking social justice programme of activity.

78. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 20 MARCH 2023**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 20 March 2023.

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

79. **AI TEXT GENERATION**

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

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

Noted that:

1. Following discussions at the previous meeting of University Education Committee (UEC) in February, and at Senate’s last meeting on 1 March, the University had clarified its position on the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT.
2. A communication and training campaign was planned for both colleagues and students (at both the Newcastle and overseas campuses) which would signpost to various resources and workshops, beginning after Easter vacation.
3. The resources, workshops and website would be available on an on-going basis, and student inductions from September 2023 would include information on how to use AI tools in the University environment ahead of students commencing their studies. A range of communications would be utilised to disseminate information to students including emails from student representatives, online workshops and face-to-face teaching and advice.
4. University Education Committee had endorsed the position for the remainder of the academic year to not prohibit the use of AI tools, but to support students to use them responsibly, ethically and transparently. It was equally important to be clear that students must use their own words when submitting assessed work and in line with current policies and procedures should not deliberately submit AI generated text as their own.
5. Senate supported the idea proposed by University Education Committee to create a task force to consider the wider implications of AI across the institution and the task force established would need to look at the wider picture including AI in education, but also in research and how it could be used in the workplace. The task force would need to have interdisciplinary representation from across the Faculties as well as from Professional Services. It would be particularly important to take GDPR considerations into account.
6. AI offered an opportunity to share best practice across the University. Senate noted practical examples where AI and ChatGPT could be utilised in teaching and research environments in advantageous ways.

80. **STUDENT EVAULATION OF TEACHING**

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

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

Noted that:

1. In the light of the falling response rate and ongoing lower levels of student satisfaction as identified through both stage evaluation of teaching surveys and national surveys, UEC had been asked to approve two recommendations:
2. That the Educational Policy and Governance Service (EPGS) carry out a review, involving key stakeholders (colleagues and students) of the University’s current approach to education surveys to consider whether the timing, question style, question coverage and programme/module approach remains fit for purpose. Any potential revisions would be implemented for 2023-24.
3. That faculties gather information on the implementation of mid-module check-ins

amongst their schools and work with EPGS and the Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS) to identify the barriers which need to be addressed in order to close the feedback loop effectively.

1. Members of Senate discussed methods of communication and types of surveys as factors in ensuring student engagement with evaluations, and it was noted that responding to the results of real-time polls and pulse surveys, and having informal supportive conversations, were ways of providing students with assurance their feedback had more definite and immediate impact.
2. Sabbatical Officers should be consulted to assist in designing meaningful and fit-for-purpose communication strategies, and the strategies should be flexible year-on-year in response to the changing student cohort.
3. End of module evaluations were not currently in use by the University but had previously been crucial in helping to gain granular, local student feedback. University leadership and culture were critical in ensuring that colleagues were supported in the event they received negative feedback and how to use it to effect positive change.
4. An ‘induction’ programme for students entering their final year in 2023 was proposed as a way of restoring a sense of engagement and routine for those students who entered the University environment during Covid. A deeper understanding of student connectedness and belonging, or the lack of it, was required, building on effective practice that had been identified within the University, and from partner institutions in the sector.

81. **COMMUNICATING THE ROLE OF SENATE AND THE SENATOR**

Received a paper from the Registrar.

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

Noted that:

1. At the meeting of Senate on 1 March 2023, there had been a discussion on the role of Senate/Senator and the arrangements that would be put in place for future elections. It was noted that actions to ‘demystify’ the role of Senate/Senator were linked to recommendations made in the recent external review of governance, which would help to enhance the diversity and representativeness of the committee.
2. In addition to the normal processes the following additional measures have been introduced for 2023:
3. Accessibility of Senate – inviting colleagues to observe meetings to support understanding and increase confidence in taking on the role; governance and election briefing sessions open to all; a summary of each meeting published on NUConnect and highlighted in the Registrar’s weekly circular email; language used in written materials being made simpler and clearer.
4. Promotional material – a short video had been produced to outline the role of Senator and what was expected featuring testimonials from several Senators talking about their experience of being on the committee (and contribution to the work of sub-committees); a virtual ‘candidate pack’ with frequently asked questions was also being produced.
5. Information sharing – elections would be promoted through internal comms channels, and by engaging with colleague networks to raise awareness; following elections, a ‘Meet the new Senators’ piece would be published in NU Connections; more detailed information would be published on the Governance webpages including testimonials from past and present Senators.

82. **WHITE SPACE**

Noted that:

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

83. **ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS – TITLE OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS (STATUTE 29(4))**

Received a report from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

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

***Resolved that Senate approve the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus on:***

***Professor Andrew Willmott, with effect from 1 August 2023***

84. **ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN**

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

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

85. **OFFICE FOR STUDENTS CONSULTATION ON TACKLING HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

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

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

86. **SENATE ELECTIONS**

Received details of the 2023 election for Senate membership.

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

Noted that:

1. Five individuals were due to retire as elected members of Senate on 31 July 2023. Nominations would be invited for five non-professorial constituency vacancies to serve from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.
2. An election for Senate representatives to serve on Council would also take place soon, as three submissions for a professorial vacancy had been received. As only one non-professorial submission had been received the individual had duly been elected to Council and their membership of Senate would be extended for a further three years.
3. A query was raised regarding whether the statutes would allow for the members of Senate appointed to Council to be counted as additional to the 20 elected members”.
4. Details of the elections would be circulated and published in line with Senate’s Standing Orders and the election strategy agreed by Senate earlier this academic year.

87. **MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE**

Received a report from the meeting of:

1. University Engagement and Place Committee: 27 March 2023

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

88. **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 M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]