

# NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

## SENATE

13 November 2024

**Present:** The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Ruth Valentine, Professor Chris Baldwin, Jasmine Banks (Education Officer, Students' Union), Leo David (President, Students' Union), Professor Stuart Edwards, Professor Catherine Exley, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Professor Andy Husband, Dr Darren Kelsey, Professor David Kennedy, Dr Ray Kent, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Professor Claire Lomax, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Graham Morgan, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Murray Pollock, Professor Judith Rankin, Hisham Salamathullah (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Robert Shaw, Muriel Snowdon, Linming Sun (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Professor Simon Tate, Professor John Wildman and Dr Laura Woodhouse.

**In attendance:** Lucy Backhurst (Academic Registrar) for Minute 25, Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Neil Gardner (Director of Strategic Planning and Change) for Minute 27, Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office), Jen Middleton (Head of Communications), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services) and Heidi Shultz (Executive and Governance Team Manager)

**Apologies:** Nick Collins, Dr Marie Devlin, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Professor Rachel Pain, Dr Jemima Repo, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe, Dr Grega Smrkolj, Professor Chris Whitehead and Dr Emily Yarrow

## MINUTES

### 19. WELCOME

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

### 20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 18 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

Noted that:

- a) There were currently three vacancies for elected members of Senate (1 professorial, 2 non-professorial) and an extra election was being held to fill the vacancies. There had been two candidates in the non-professorial category who were duly elected unopposed, Dr Katharine Wright and Dr Shweta Sharma. The election for the professorial vacancy would close in December.

- b) There was one non-professorial vacancy for a Senate appointed member on Council and an election was being held to fill the vacancy. Senators were invited to vote via Teams poll which had opened on 11 November and would close on 22 November.
- c) Two co-opted members had reached the end of their term of appointment. New co-opted members would be announced at the January meeting of Senate. The Vice-Chancellor thanked Professor Graham Morgan and Professor Andy Husband for their valuable contributions and service to Senate as this was their last meeting.
- d) As a result of Professor Husband's retirement as a member of Senate there was a vacancy for a Senate representative on University Education Committee. There was an additional vacancy for a member of Senate on Environment and Sustainability Committee.

## 22. 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) Derek Nicholson  
With deep regret the Vice-Chancellor reported the death of Emeritus Registrar, Derek Nicholson. Derek joined the University in January 1971 as an Assistant Registrar and was Senior Assistant Registrar (Faculty of Medicine) from 1978 to 1983, when he was appointed as Registrar, a role he held for 19 years until his retirement in 2002. In 2005, Derek was one of the first recipients of an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of his service to the University.
- b) Mike Davison  
The Vice-Chancellor expressed deep sadness in reference to the recent death of Mike Davison, who passed away in early July. Mike did a great deal to support Newcastle University, as a lay member of Council between 2010-19, a member of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee from 2005 until 2017 (chairing the committee between 2013-17), as Honorary Treasurer of the Development Trust, lay member of Senate, and until recently as a member of Research Ethics Committee.
- c) Opportunity, growth and partnership: A blueprint for change from the UK's universities  
The Vice-Chancellor reported on the Universities UK blueprint for change, published on Monday 30 September. The report covered what universities already do in education, research, knowledge exchange and innovation, and examined what works, what should change and what the sector needed from government to achieve more. Amongst other things, the blueprint argued that Government should increase funding for teaching to meet the real costs through a combination of linking fees to inflation and restoring the teaching grant.
- d) University of Sanctuary  
The University was pleased to report that the University had been reaccredited as a University of Sanctuary for a further three-year period, a status the University had held since 2021. The reaccreditation reaffirmed the University's long-standing commitment to offering educational, research and engagement opportunities to people fleeing violence and persecution.
- e) Knowledge Exchange Framework 4 Update  
The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) results had been published on 18

September 2024. The University's performance was strong and had improved year on year. In addition to "working with the public, "IP and commercialisation" and "working with the public sector", the University was now at the top quintile for "Working with Business". achieving the highest possible ranking in four out of seven perspectives.

f) Universities for North East England

A collaboration between Newcastle University, Teesside University, Durham University, Northumbria University, and the University of Sunderland had been launched. The initiative aimed to ensure the five universities were speaking with a unified, place-informed voice to make higher education in the North East more accessible for study, business, innovation and investment and offering regional insight to help inform national higher education policy.

g) Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global

Professor Chris Whitehead had been appointed to the post of Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global and took up the post on 1 October 2024. Chris would be responsible for providing academic leadership across the University's global portfolio, working closely with senior management to drive the implementation of our refreshed Global Strategy.

h) Late News - Colleague Success

Professor Andrew Jackson (Biosciences Institute) had secured an award from ARIA - Precision 4D Control of Cortical Circuit Function.

Dr Marie McIntyre (School of Natural and Environmental Sciences), a NUAcT fellow (co-funded by the Food Standards Agency), was part of a consortium that had received total £5.5m funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to establish a new unit to study gastrointestinal infections.

i) University Finances

As reported in the September meeting of Senate, the University was facing significant financial challenges this academic year, due to a shortfall in international student intake. The shortfall in income was being offset by a combination of newly identified measures alongside short-term actions which had been previously identified, and these were being implemented with immediate effect to create savings in the 2024-25 financial year. The measures include a recruitment freeze, the launching of a new phase of the voluntary severance scheme and a pausing of the academic promotions and progression exercise for the current academic year.

The NUShape initiative had set out the academic strategy for the period to 2030 with objectives and underpinning actions defined at unit, faculty and university levels through a series of Strategic Delivery Plans. Those academic goals remained in place, particularly around themes such as interdisciplinarity, place-based partnerships and transnational education, but student number targets and financial plans which underpinned these delivery plans were now under review. The progress made in developing the NUShape Strategic Delivery Plan had been useful in identifying local strengths and challenges across the University, which was now of increased importance due to the current financial circumstances.

Academic integrity remained a key priority, alongside the commitment to being a research-led, comprehensive university which delivered an excellent student education experience. It was recognised that certain restrictions currently in place could only be short-term controls to help manage expenditure in a fast and agile way.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion endeavours across the University were being classed

as business critical, but not every initiative planned for 2024-25 would take place due to the financial circumstances. Equality analysis has been undertaken, and People Services processes were in place to identify how cost control measures might impact colleagues. It was noted that there was recruitment exceptions process to ensure that the recruitment freeze did not unduly affect hiring in instances where a robust case could be made for recruitment. The Voluntary Severance Scheme had been re-opened and a second tranche of applications had been received, suggesting the scheme was attracting interest and was providing a viable and practical option for colleagues' consideration.

Protecting the student experience continued to be a priority consideration, alongside continued investment in the University's future and building financial reserves to buffer against next year's challenges. The group reflected on ethical issues inherent in relying on an international student market, and noted it was an ongoing risk to be financially dependent on international markets to such a high degree. Forward planning had commenced and a range of measures for the 2025 recruitment cycle and future recruitment sustainability had been, and would continue to be, considered by Executive Board.

### 23. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 14 OCTOBER 2024**

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 14 October 2024.

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

### 24. **NUCoRE BEHAVIOUR**

Received a paper from Professor Matthew Grenby, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

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

Noted that:

- a) Senate was invited to consider for approval a proposed NU Centre of Research Excellence in Behaviour (FMS-led). It was intended that this NUCoRE would become the 17th NUCoRE, which would enable the University to offer a coherent narrative of collective excellence in behaviour research.
- b) Responding to high-profile calls for more unified approaches in behavioural sciences, this NUCoRE would connect and platform the behavioural research community across Newcastle University and beyond by uniting existing, but still siloed, structures and areas of excellence.
- c) Behaviour, rather than Behavioural Science, had been chosen as the centre designation to signal a broad and welcoming approach beyond a science-based remit.
- d) Though identified NUCoRE aims were focused on enhancing research quality and maximising research collaborations, the support for curriculum development and teaching were also integral to the work of the centre.

***Resolved that Senate approve the proposed NUCoRE Behaviour.***

### 25. **ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

Received a paper from Professor Ruth Valentine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.

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

Noted that:

- a) Amendments to the academic calendar were proposed to address challenges in the current calendar that impact upon the student and colleague experience, and to futureproof the calendar in the context of the new Education Strategy and other key drivers.
- b) Led by the Academic Registrar, the Academic Calendar Reference Group had convened in September and October 2024 and had been composed of academic and professional services colleagues, student representatives and INTO colleagues, in consultation with key stakeholders. The work of this group had resulted in the proposed amendments to the academic calendar.
- c) Challenges identified relating to the current calendar included semester start dates that caused difficulties for some international students who needed to secure visas, the challenge of an 11-week semester structure, a lack of time post-assessment for marking, feedback and exam administration, a lack of protected research time, the use of non-inclusive language (i.e., Christmas and Easter breaks), and a lack of discipline-specific flexibility.
- d) The model proposed a 24-week academic year with a three-week spring break that could be adjusted to accommodate Easter. It was confirmed that this did not reflect a proposed increase in academic work-loading or student contact hours.

***Resolved that Senate approve the new model for the academic calendar.***

## 26. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY REPORT

Received a paper from Professor Ruth Valentine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

- a) The paper presented a brief summary of results for two of the University core student experience surveys: the National Student Survey (NSS) of undergraduate finalists (compulsory as part of our registration with the Office for Students); and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) of all postgraduate taught students undertaken voluntarily by 107 institutions in 2024.
- b) The NSS response rate for 2024 was 69.1%, almost identical to the previous year putting the University slightly behind the Russell Group (70.4%) and full-service sector (73.5%) but showing a good level of engagement.
- c) Across all themes and questions the University's positivity score had increased, being the proportion of students giving a positive answer to the new four-point scale questions.
- d) In relation to all seven themes the University's results had moved closer to, or beyond, benchmark, noting that performance was still below benchmark for five themes, indicating room for improvement.
- e) The response rate for PTES for 2024 was 34.9%, above last year but below 2022, and substantially above the sector average of 24.7%. Response rates varied by Faculty.
- f) PGT student satisfaction was generally positive. Overall satisfaction was 85.4% which was very similar to 2023 and above the sector median of 85.0%.

- g) There was an improving trend across most question groups, with particularly encouraging trend in key areas of Teaching and Assessment and feedback, noting still weaker performance in engagement and community.

**27. WHITE SPACE**

Received a discussion item from Professor Ruth McAreavey and a presentation from Justin Cole, Executive Director of External Relations.

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

Noted that:

- a) Professor Ruth McAreavey had proposed a White Space discussion on Marketing and Recruitment: how to attract international students. This topic was raised due to concerns that centralised marketing processes and local programme development in schools were not always joined-up at the necessary stages.
- b) The Executive Director of External Relations provided an overview of student recruitment governance, showing the process for recruitment plans individual to each subject area and how those plans flow through regularly occurring committee meetings to ensure colleague engagement and consultation, while also moving the plan forward at the necessary pace.
- c) It was noted that weekly admissions summary emails and some regular in-cycle reports were not shared consistently from faculty-level to schools, creating a sense that some data was more available in some areas compared to others.
- d) The group reflected on capacity within the External Relations Directorate and within all faculty and school recruitment teams, understanding that there were opportunities to better coordinate resources. Ideally, enquiries about marketing new programmes should be made firstly to the school and faculty recruitment teams, who can then triage these. Work is being done to increase co-ownership and integration between central teams and schools.
- e) The Health and Wellbeing model was discussed as an exemplar where there is a centralised service but also advisors assigned to specific schools to ensure there are clear and practical communication lines from the centre outward to schools, and back again.
- f) Members reflected on ways to incentivise international students by offering discounts for paying tuition fees in full up-front or offering packages (i.e., including accommodation). It was noted packaged offers to include accommodation were already under consideration for postgraduate students.
- g) It was suggested that requests for marketing support and advice should perhaps not be triaged only according to student numbers, as this means that only high-volume numbers received marketing attention.
- h) It was agreed that marketing should be involved from the outset of many programme development timelines, to ensure the programme is given the best chance for success and to ensure that marketing colleagues were not asked to contribute at a point when it was too late to provide useful advice.

**28. 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 H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that the title of Professor Emeritus or be conferred on:  
Professor Brian Morgan with effect from 1 January 2025  
Professor Thomas Scharf with effect from 1 January 2025***

**29. HONORARY BACHELOR OF EDUCATION AWARDS**

Received a paper from Dr Colin Campbell, Registrar.

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

***Resolved that Senate approve the award of Honorary Bachelor of Education degrees to eligible alumni.***

**30. CODE OF ETHICS**

For information: The revised Code of Ethics.

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

**31. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE**

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 9 October 2024  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- i) University Global Committee: 9 May 2024  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 23 September 2024  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Research and Innovation Committee: 17 September 2024  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

**32. UNIVERSITY GLOBAL COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

For information: The updated terms of reference.

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

**33. MUSEUM AND GALLERY BOARD**

For information: The annual report.

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

**34. 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 R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]