

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

SENATE

18 September 2024

Present: The Vice-Chancellor and President (in the Chair), Professor Nigel Harkness (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor David Burn, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Stephanie Glendinning, Professor Matthew Grenby, Professor Jo Robinson, Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Jasmine Banks (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Stuart Edwards, Dr Joanna Elson, Professor Catherine Exley, Dr Marie Devlin, Professor Anya Hurlbert, Dr Darren Kelsey, Professor David Kennedy, Dr Ray Kent, Professor Claire Lomax, Professor Rhiannon Mason, Professor Ruth McAreavey, Claire Morgan, Professor Graham Morgan, Professor Anoop Nayak, Dr Meiko O'Halloran, Professor Murray Pollock, Professor Vee Pollock, Dr Jemima Repo, Hisham Salamathullah (Welfare and Equality Officer, Students' Union), Dr Robert Shaw, Dr Grega Smrkolj, Muriel Snowdon, Linming Sun (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union), Professor Simon Tate, Dr Laura Woodhouse, and Dr Emily Yarrow.

In attendance: Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Yvonne Chase (Head of Student Life) for Minute 6, Rachel Dearlove (Head of Educational Governance and Quality Assurance) for Minutes 7 and 8, 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: Professor Chris Baldwin, Nick Collins, Leo David, Professor Andy Husband, Professor Rene Koglbauer, Dr Charles Morisset, Professor Rachel Pain, Professor Judith Rankin, Professor Jane Robinson, Professor Candy Rowe, and Professor John Wildman

MINUTES

1. WELCOME

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 26 June 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) As reported to Senate in June, several nominations were received for vacancies advertised on Public Lectures Committee. After consideration by the co-chairs of the committee, and by Executive Board, it was recommended that Senate approve the following to be appointed/*re-appointed as members of the committee from 1 August 2024 until 31 July 2027:

- *Professor Hayley Fowler (School of Engineering)
- *Professor Angharad Gatehouse (School of Natural and Environmental Sciences)
- *Owen Hopkins (Director of the Farrell Centre)
- Professor Raj Kalaria (Translational and Clinical Research Institute)
- Lily Moore (NU Advancement)

b) There were currently three vacancies for elected members of Senate (1 professorial, 2 non-professorial) and an extra election would be held to fill the vacancies, with relevant details to be provided soon.

4. 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) Access and Participation Plan

The Office for Students (OfS) had provisionally approved the University's 2025-26 Access and Participation Plan (APP) for a period of one year in the first instance. This was the best possible outcome and Senate recorded its thanks to colleagues from the University's APP Working Group, in particular Rachel Dearlove, who had contributed to the writing of the plan. The working group would now become an APP Monitoring group, reporting to University Education Committee.

b) Turing Scheme

The University had been informed that its Turing Scheme funding award for the 2024-25 academic year was expected to be £1.63m, the highest amount that the University had ever received. Turing was the government's student exchange scheme, established in 2021 as a replacement for the UK's participation in the European Union's Erasmus programme. The outcome was subject to any changes made by the Secretary of State following the General Election.

c) Colleague and Student Success

Jack Mutton (Lecturer in Architecture) had won this year's Architect's Journal Small Projects Sustainability Prize for his work retrofitting the disused five storey Shieldfield Centre for The NewBridge Project.

Professor Jacob Polley (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) had been named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Professor Stewart Robinson (Newcastle University Business School) had been appointed new Chair of the Chartered Association of Business Schools.

d) Appointment – Interim Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities and Social Sciences

Professor Jo Robinson had been appointed as interim Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Humanities and Social Sciences and took up the post on 1 September 2024. Jo was previously the Head of the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics.

e) Dean of Culture and Creative Arts

It had been announced that Professor Vee Pollock (Dean of Culture and Creative Arts) would be leaving the University to become Director of Collection and Research at National Galleries of Scotland. The University would seek to appoint a replacement Dean of Culture and Creative Arts, subject to Senate and Council approval. The University would also seek to appoint a Public Orator, subject to Senate approval.

Members of Senate were invited to submit nominations for the office of Public Orator to the Vice-Chancellor by 29 November 2024. An open invitation would also be circulated via the Registrar's weekly circular.

f) Representatives on Senate Committees

Members of Senate were invited to submit expressions of interest for vacancies on three Senate sub-committees for members drawn from the membership of Senate.

Resolved that Senate approve the appointments as detailed below:

Professor Ruth McAreavey

University Global Committee

Dr Laura Woodhouse

***University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Committee***

Dr Jemima Repo

University Research and Innovation Committee

Members of Senate were invited to submit expressions of interest for the vacancy on the Environment and Sustainability Committee to be considered at the next meeting of Senate on 18 November 2024.

g) Late news – Freedom of Speech Legislation

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Code of Practice discussed in the June meeting of Senate would not be implemented due to deferred legislation.

h) Late news – University Finances

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University was facing significant financial challenges this academic year owing to a shortfall in international student recruitment.

There were systemic issues in the UK higher education funding model as the funding universities receive from the Government and UK students' tuition fees did not cover the real costs of teaching courses or conducting research. This had resulted in a shortfall which was increasingly covered by tuition fees from international students. Demand from international students to study in the UK had recently reduced from a high point in 2022, owing to a range of factors including the impact of UK Government policy changes. Student visa applications in August 2024 were down by around 17 per cent across the sector compared with August 2023.

The University had made provision for a decrease in income when submitting the budget to Council earlier this year. The scale of the shortfall was likely to be larger than anticipated, however, and further measures would be needed. NUShape Strategic Delivery Plans would be reviewed, and recruitment tactics to support future student number growth would be prioritised. Colleagues in all budget areas had been asked to immediately implement cost control in their spending plans.

University leadership and working groups were exploring whether there were factors specific to Newcastle that the University could learn from to inform future recruitment strategies urgently. Considerations would include how the University might become a destination of choice for students, and what key factors were within the University's control to ensure higher QS Rankings which are crucial to the international student market and in particular within China.

5. SUMMARY REPORT FROM COUNCIL, 8 JULY 2024

Received a summary report from the meeting of Council that took place on 8 July 2024.

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

6. STUDENT COST OF LIVING

Received a paper from Yvonne Chase (Head of Student Life).

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

Noted that:

- a) The Newcastle University Students' Union Cost of Living Survey in 2023 had found that 41 per cent of respondents had thought about leaving university due to financial pressures. The Office for Students 2023 poll had highlighted that almost 20 per cent of respondents had considered dropping out of university due to the high cost of living.
- b) The Cost of Living Working Group had been created to work with students to create a comprehensive support offer to address their main areas of concern. They found that short-term crisis interventions, such as £1 meal deals, needed to be managed differently as long-term necessities.
- c) The working group had become more strategic in developing targeted initiatives and working on a comprehensive evaluation framework, with student input, to better understand the impact of their work and priorities to focus on in future.
- d) Priorities and on-going initiatives included: bursaries and scholarships, affordable meals on campus, continuation of the NUSU Pantry, provision of essential hygiene products, sharing realistic information with students on costs and budgets and addressing common issues around housing provision and safety.
- e) The working group would continue to actively engage with students to map financial 'pain points' throughout their University journey, allowing University colleagues to proactively tailor communications and interventions to address students' needs as they arise.
- f) The committee noted various ways in which surplus food can be efficiently redistributed to those in the student community who may benefit from it, including sharing information via chat groups and utilising apps such as 'Too Good To Go'.
- g) Students increasingly needed more flexibility around their timetabled studies in order to plan and balance work commitments, and this was a key area of focus within the new Education Strategy which included review of modes of delivery, module offerings and assessment practices.

7. STUDENT OUTCOMES

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) The Office for Students (OfS) maintained a standard set of student outcome and experience data measures for use in informing their regulatory judgements on access and participation, student outcomes through registration condition B3, and assessments through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).
- b) Condition of Registration B3 set out universal sector thresholds for performance, while TEF assessments were made in relation to individually-set benchmarks. Judgements relating to Access and Participation Plans (APP) were focused on variations between different student groups to identify crucial gaps.

- c) In February 2023 the OfS opened assessments for 12 providers where student outcomes were significantly below thresholds, and case reports on 11 of those providers were published in July 2024. Three providers were able to provide context which justified the provider's performance, but the remaining eight providers had been given improvement notices requiring further action.
- d) Newcastle University was above numerical threshold in relation to student continuation, completion and progression and was therefore in a position to meet Condition of Registration B3 but senior managers would still continue to monitor and review performance in relation to these outcomes.
- e) Entry requirements would continue to be a key consideration, as lowering requirements could allow for higher student intake and increased tuition income but could also negatively impact student outcomes (and hence the University's ability to recruit robustly in the student market) in the long term.

8. **TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK IN PROGRESS – HALFWAY TO TEF 2027**

Received a presentation from Rachel Dearlove(Head of Educational Governance and Quality Assurance).

Noted that:

- a) Participation in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a requirement of the Office for Students (OfS) Condition of Registration B6.
- b) In 2023, the University had achieved bronze ranking in student experience, silver ranking in student outcomes and an overall ranking of silver. The TEF panel had considered performance in relation to benchmarks, in addition to provider and student submissions, to enable a holistic judgement.
- c) The OfS required that all registered institutions meet a high-quality baseline and therefore evidence of 'outstanding' and 'very high quality' practices and outcomes were necessary in order to receive judgements of excellence.
- d) It was expected TEF 2027 would continue to take a retrospective, evidence-based and metrics-based approach, pending any changes to the OfS which might take place as a result of the recent change of government.
- e) Uncertainties remained around educational gain and student experience metrics which would be areas of on-going focus in the lead-up to TEF 2027.
- f) Current metrics and student experience indicators all showed positive moves towards or beyond benchmark, and Year 1 to Year 2 improvement across all themes.
- g) Features of excellence across the sector included consistency across submissions, clear demonstration of impact, targeted interventions and student partnership in improvements, and these insights would be considered when preparing for TEF 2027.

9. **WHITE SPACE**

Noted that:

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

10. SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Received a report from the Vice-Chancellor and President.

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

Noted that:

- a) In accordance with Statute 11, a selection committee had been convened to appoint an interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global and interviews had been held on Tuesday 17 September 2024. The panel had made a decision to appoint Professor Chris Whitehead. A recommendation would be submitted to Council to commence the process to recruit to the substantive role at its next meeting on Monday 14 October 2024.
- b) In accordance with Statute 12, Senate was invited to nominate members for an appointment panel the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global role.

Resolved that Senate recommend to Council the appointment of a replacement Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global.

11. APPOINTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY DEAN

Received a report from Professor Ruth Valentine (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education).

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

Noted that:

- a) The need for greater leadership capacity around education and the student experience had been identified as part of the development of the Education for Life 2030+ Strategy.
- b) Education Deans provided leadership at faculty level but had only limited capacity within their role to contribute to strategic change and oversight at University level.
- c) Additional resource would enable the step change necessary to achieve the education ambition and relevant targets which were being reviewed in line with OfS benchmarks which would feed into TEF 2027.
- d) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor would consider alternate titles for the post such as Dean of Student Experience, or Dean of Educational Experience, to highlight student experience as an area of focus within the remit of the role.

Resolved that Senate recommend to Council the establishment of a Dean of Students (pending confirmation of title) for a period of five years.

12. 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 Emerita be conferred on:
Professor Lorraine Agius with effect from 1 December 2024***

13. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES OF SENATE

Received a report from the meeting of:

- a) University Education Committee: 6 June 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

The alternative format for candidature for PhD by published work was a pilot study and would follow normal University processes and procedures.

- b) University Engagement and Place Committee: 20 May and 22 July 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- b) University Research and Innovation Committee: 14 May 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
- c) University Museum and Gallery Board: 24 July 2024
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

14. REPORT FROM NU WOMEN

Received the annual report.

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

15. MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

For information: The Senate membership for 2024-25.

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

16. SENATE DELEGATION OF POWERS

For information: Senate's Delegation of Powers.

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

17. STANDING ORDERS OF SENATE

For information: The Standing Orders of Senate.

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

18. 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.

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