

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester



Communications and Marketing Plan

Summary document 2015-2018

Contents

1 Mission and vision	01
1.1 Our mission	01
1.2 Our vision	01
1.3 Our key communications and marketing principle	01
2 Our reputation	02
3 Emerging themes	03
4 The role of communications and marketing	04
4.1 Developing a strategic approach to communications	04
4.2 Developing a strategic approach to marketing	04
5 Resources	06
6 Measurement	07
7 Actions	09
7.1 Supporting our three core goals (more distinctive offering)	09
7.2 Increasing our international profile (better reputation)	09
7.3 Harnessing the power of our stakeholders (better engagement)	10
7.4 Content marketing and digital first (more effective content production and channel selection)	11
7.5 Campus as canvas (more effective use of our physical assets and spaces)	11
7.6 Professional communications and marketing (more effective use of resources)	12
8 Communications and Marketing Leadership Team membership	13

1 Mission and vision

1.1 Our mission

This plan sets out a roadmap towards a more professional approach to communications and marketing at The University of Manchester. It is based on research undertaken over the past six months and outlines the role that communications and marketing will play over the next three years in helping the University to achieve the goals outlined in the Manchester 2020 vision.

The plan has been drafted and agreed by the Communications and Marketing Leadership Team (CMLT), which is made up of the Director of Communications and Marketing, the Head of University Marketing, the Head of Communications and senior communications and marketing representatives from the Division of Development and Alumni Relations, the Directorate for the Student Experience and the four Faculties (see p13 for a full membership list).

The accompanying actions describe how and where we will focus our efforts and add value. This summary is based on a longer document that gives more detail on our research and rationale.

The Plan is specifically targeted at achieving Enabling Strategy 5 – ‘A reputation for excellence’:

To strengthen the power of The University of Manchester brand, nationally and internationally, by celebrating our achievements and distinctiveness, and by engaging and mobilising staff, students, alumni and other key stakeholders to achieve the three core goals at the heart of the Manchester 2020 vision.

It also supports enabling strategies:

1. ‘Quality people’;
2. ‘World-class estate’;
6. ‘An international institution’;
7. ‘Quality processes’.

In particular, it supports the goal of a ‘motivated, engaged and informed workforce’ outlined in Enabling Strategy 1.

1.2 Our vision

From good to great.

The University has earned and enjoys a good reputation. We now want to build on this and create a great reputation. Our vision is:

To use professional marketing and strategic communications to establish Manchester as one of the top three university brands in the UK, and one of the top 25 university brands in the world.

We will use an agreed set of KPIs to measure our performance against this vision, as set out in Section 6 of this document.

1.3 Our key communications and marketing principle

In every sector, brands gain competitive advantage by being distinctive – by being better, different or bigger than their competitors. The most successful brands build their reputation through a combination of all three.

In the context of the University:

Better – is about the higher quality of our research and our student experience.

Different – is how we bring our distinctiveness to life.

Bigger – is about how we articulate the advantages and benefits of our size.

We will be more rigorous and disciplined in deciding what we communicate to ensure that it passes this principle test. All of the proposed actions align with this key principle.

2 Our reputation

Great reputations are created by great outputs (products or services), positioned and delivered with consistently high standards right across an organisation. Weak outputs of a strong organisation have a disproportionately detrimental effect on reputation. Effective reputation management, while playing up the strengths, also needs to address weaknesses and quality issues.

Our brand performs very well among some key audience and stakeholder groups:

Prospective students – we are first in the UK in terms of the number of UCAS applications and first in terms of the number of international students.

General public – we are fourth when the British public are asked to name 'the best UK universities'.

International academic community – we are seventh in the UK when academics are asked to name 'the best universities'.

Staff – we are second in the UK when staff are asked if they are proud to work here.

Media – we are fifth in the UK in terms of our international media profile and second in the UK in terms of visits and the effectiveness of our web presence.

It could be argued that in some quarters our reputation is ahead of our performance. For instance, we remain one of the most popular universities with applicants despite our NSS scores. Likewise, our research reputation in some fields and among some audiences is better than our performance judged by research income or the GPA rankings in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Great communications and marketing can tell our stories in the most compelling way, but they can only tell the truth. Ultimately our reputation and brand strength are reliant upon the actual performance of the University, particularly the quality of our research and student experience.

In terms of overall brand positioning, we should acknowledge that while the 'ambition' narrative launched in 2004 has served us well, it is no longer

new or distinctive. Almost every university in the UK now has an 'ambitious' strategic plan and is using the same words – 'international', 'world-class', 'research-intensive', 'engaged' and 'excellence' – to describe themselves. In this 'me too' environment there is an opportunity to stand out, but it will not be easy.

Convincing our audiences of the impact of our activities and the benefits of our services, rather than just describing what we do, will be crucial. Whether it's substantiating how our research is solving some of the world's most pressing problems, how we deliver business solutions for organisations of all types and sizes, or how UMI² brings our inventions to the commercial world, we need to demonstrate our distinctiveness in a selective and disciplined way.

Our focus on social responsibility – making a positive difference to people's lives – presents another opportunity. Our ability to drive positive change across all levels of society enables us to improve the social and economic well-being of our communities through our teaching, research, and public events and activities.

Our heritage is another key strength. Our unique combination of academic excellence, innovation and discovery means The University of Manchester holds a special place in history. Moving forward in that spirit of innovation – linking our long line of achievements to our vision for the future – will better enable us to position ourselves as a source of groundbreaking research and a centre of educational excellence.

The reputation of the University is also intrinsically linked with the city of Manchester, the world's first modern industrial city. This presents us with a huge advantage in the UK, with Manchester being seen as vibrant and exciting – vying for second-city status and driving economic regeneration within the Northern Powerhouse. Internationally, the city and the University are recognised and respected in parts of Europe and Asia, but neither the city nor the University are well known in North America, where global reputations are made.

Building on these strengths and addressing these challenges will require investment in targeted, objective-driven communications campaigns.

3 Emerging themes

The uncertain economic outlook and emerging social and technological trends mean the University is operating in an increasingly difficult external environment. Within the sector, changes to fees and funding for students, the recent REF results and increasing competition signify a more challenging marketplace, in which it will be more important than ever to stand out from the crowd.

A greater focus to our communications and marketing efforts can help us achieve this but we will need to give consideration and priority to emerging opportunities. Following discussions with SLT and other University colleagues, a number of key themes are growing in importance and will therefore play a more central role in our communications and marketing activities over the next three years.

Distinctiveness – the Plan includes a heightened focus on real distinctiveness in relation to each of our core goals. We will develop and deliver messages that convey where we are demonstrably better, different or bigger.

Our people – there is significant potential to harness the power of our stakeholders. First and foremost we want knowledgeable staff who can help deliver our core goals, and engaged students and alumni, but we can also motivate all three groups to be fantastic ambassadors for the University.

Internationalisation – the international strategy and Project 33 demonstrate the growth in importance of internationalisation and Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) 2016 provides a unique opportunity to enhance our international reputation.

New methods of learning – the University is committed to exploring new methods of delivering teaching, including distance and blended learning. The design, delivery and promotion of these programmes will require new approaches to recruitment and additional support from communications and marketing.

The city of Manchester – the University shares many aims and objectives with the city-region, from encouraging investment in the Northern Powerhouse to raising our profile on the international stage. This will require ever closer working with the city and its partners, and an alignment of our messages and campaigns.

Campus and physical assets – we are making a major investment in our campus, but we can do more to bring our campus to life through creative use of building exteriors, interiors, public realm and campus perimeters, which should showcase our heritage, achievements, scale, distinctiveness, international dimensions and cultural assets.

4 The role of communications and marketing

As at most universities, communications and marketing at The University of Manchester has historically been seen as a support service focused on communications (producing brochures, websites and press releases). This approach has helped us to build a strong reputation since the merger, but the higher education landscape is changing and it is no longer enough.

In order to be distinctive and competitive in a fast-moving global market, we need to develop a much more disciplined and strategic approach to our communications and adopt professional marketing principles and techniques where these are appropriate to a university.

4.1 Developing a strategic approach to communications

Building on recent successes, such as raising the profile of graphene and the 2015 staff survey, we will develop a new approach to our internal and external communications, with a commitment to delivering integrated campaigns.

We will set objectives and undertake audience research before developing content and selecting delivery channels. A greater emphasis on content strategy and scheduling will reduce duplication and ensure coordinated publication of content. Measurement and review will be important at every stage of a project.

We have had great success in generating volume, particularly with regard to media coverage, but in future greater targeting of key influencers and stakeholders will be necessary to ensure our key messages are heard by the right audiences. 'News' in the traditional sense will still be important in conveying our messages but the massive growth in social and digital media means that audiences expect to be involved in a two-way conversation with us, where they can share and comment on our content. This requires a commitment to engaging with audiences rather than simply telling them things, and a focus on social, shareable image-led material.

Storytelling and visual imagery will upgrade our communications from the factual to the emotional and engaging. Fact-based content can establish differentiation, but stirring emotions via human-interest stories is powerful and can help develop strong bonds with our brand, as demonstrated by the success of the recent Foundation Day film.

The increase in usage of digital and social media highlights the danger of an over-reliance on print materials. Building on the success of the new University website and our growing social media profile, we will implement a 'digital first' approach to communications, where digital and social media alternatives to print will become the norm rather than the exception.

4.2 Developing a strategic approach to marketing

Communications is a vital part of marketing, but marketing is not simply about communications. Marketing in most other organisations is now used to establish and enhance relationships with customers, partners and other stakeholders so that we address their needs in a way that helps us to meet our objectives.

Successful marketing comprises the full marketing mix, as normally expressed through the seven Ps of marketing:

- **Product or service** – what we are providing
- **Price** – what we are asking for in return
- **People** – those of us who come into contact with our customers and stakeholders
- **Place** – where the product or service is delivered
- **Process** – effectiveness of our systems and processes
- **Physical evidence** – helping our customers to see what they are buying
- **Promotion** – how we communicate what we do and what we offer

Each of the components of the marketing mix is crucial to the success of an organisation and no single element should be determined in isolation. Some of them may not seem directly applicable to higher education, but by considering these themes we can achieve a greater marketing orientation for the University and professionalise the way we respond to the needs of our stakeholders.

In many post-92 universities the product-price equation is simple: their courses are their product and their price is the fee and the entry requirements they demand in return for a place. In a research university like ours that model can equally apply to our student recruitment activity, but not to research. Research is often delivered as a solution to a specific problem or business need, but when it is a purely academic pursuit, it is much harder to class as a product. It is nevertheless a crucial component of our wider reputation and considering it in the context of the marketing mix can help us improve the way we communicate its impact and benefits.

Our people – staff, students and alumni – have the greatest potential to communicate all that's good about the University. Although we have regular communications with our staff, there is significant opportunity to take this to another level through enhanced engagement, training and support. The incentive is getting an alumnus or current student to recommend the University to a friend or family member; this is far more credible and compelling than us delivering that message in a corporate voice.

In higher education, place and physical evidence are interrelated and our campus is central to both; it therefore needs to represent and embody our brand. Likewise, every element of the process – a customer's dealings with the University – needs to be efficient and professional. And that could mean anything from using social media to target and attract new international students, to being able to read about our consultancy services on a fully responsive website.

Promotion brings us full circle to the communications principles outlined above. Only once we've considered the product, its price, and how and where we'll deliver it, do we communicate its distinctive Manchester excellence in a planned, coordinated and measurable way.

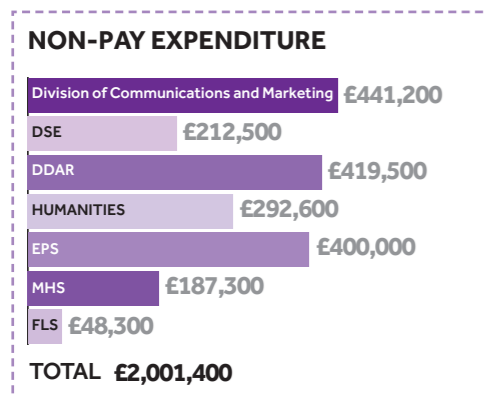
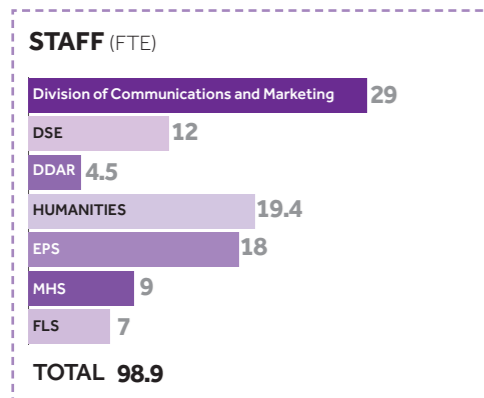
5 Resources

Communications and marketing staff and non-pay expenditure remain modest for the size of the institution and the scale of our ambition. Investment in marketing differs widely across different industry sectors, but as a general guide, most commercial organisations spend around 5–6% of gross revenue on marketing.

The UK higher education sector has traditionally had a far more modest approach, but as the sector gets more competitive and the market for students and research funding becomes global, many of our competitors are investing heavily.

Marketing spend and activity is very widely distributed at The University of Manchester, with a concentration of professional staff and expenditure in four main areas:

Division of Communications and Marketing
 Directorate of Student Experience (DSE)
 Division of Development and Alumni Relations (DDAR)
 PSS Faculty teams: Humanities; Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS); Medical and Human Sciences (MHS); and Life Sciences (FLS)



All of the areas above are represented on the new Communications and Marketing Leadership Team (CMLT) and we are committed to mobilising and deploying this resource in a coordinated manner, with a one-team focus to ensure the delivery of this plan.

More widely there are many other pockets of resource that are currently outside the control of CMLT. These include Manchester Business School (20.5), hospitality and events (3), IT Services (3) and Social Responsibility (1), plus individuals and teams in Schools, the Library and the cultural attractions. These are less central to the delivery of this plan, but further ahead we will need to decide how we audit, control and manage these resources, and who sets their priorities and reviews their effectiveness.

A significant proportion of the resource identified here supports communications activity for student recruitment. The University currently has an effective but relatively fragmented model for supporting student recruitment and admissions, and we will need a strategy and a model of support that is more agile and joined up across the institution if we are to meet our objectives in a fast-changing marketplace. How we achieve that will be the focus of the Student Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Review.

A far smaller proportion of our resource is allocated to promoting our research activities, especially in international markets, and this is something this plan seeks to address.

6 Measurement

We will assess progress using a number of key metrics, as measured by the following surveys and other measures:

KPIs – Reputation			
	Key performance indicator	Baseline figure as at 1/1/15	2017/18 target
1	Position in THE Reputational Survey	51–60 in the world, 8 in the UK	40 in the world, 5 in the UK
2	Position in US News Global Reputation Survey	47th	37th
3	Position in QS World University Rankings	30th	25th
4	Position in 2014 GTI Media Survey of UK's most popular universities (voted by 7,000 school and FE students Years 10 to 13)	3rd	3rd
5	Percentage of respondents to the independent omnibus opinion poll listing UoM in the top five HEIs in the UK	21%	25%

KPIs – Pride and engagement			
	Key performance indicator	Baseline figure as at 1/1/15	2017/18 target
1a	Staff – proud to work for UoM	94%	95%
1b	Staff – satisfaction with our communications	61%	70%
2a	Students – proud to be a UoM student	87%	90%
2b	Students – satisfaction with our communications	78%	82%
3a	Alumni – proud to be a UoM alumnus	97%	97%
3b	Alumni – satisfaction with our communications	94%	94%
4	UK standing with opinion formers – awareness of our points of distinctiveness in the biennial External Stakeholder Survey	Qualitative – knowledge of one of our five research beacons (graphene/advanced materials)	Qualitative – knowledge of three of our five research beacons

7 Actions

KPIs – Outputs			
	Key performance indicator	Baseline figure as at 1/1/15	2017/18 target
1	Volume of UK print and broadcast media coverage (number of stories)	24,062	26,468
2a	Social media engagement (Facebook likes plus Twitter followers)	79,000	100,000
2b	Social media referrals to the website	150,000	175,000
3	Number of unique website users	5,094,957	5,288,383

7.1 Supporting our three core goals (more distinctive offering)

a. PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16
World-class research
 Deliver enhanced research communications focused around a campaign to demonstrate our distinctiveness, the benefits of our size, our interdisciplinarity and our collaborations – principally but not exclusively through the promotion of our five research beacons: addressing global inequalities, advanced materials, cancer, energy and industrial biotechnology.

b. PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16
Outstanding learning and student experience
 i) In partnership with DSE, articulate the distinctiveness of our student experience by creating a named package (working title 'Manchester Extra') as a vehicle for communicating the University-wide opportunities available to all students here – based around the current HEAR.

ii) Via the Student Recruitment Review, examine the way that teams across directorates, Faculties and Schools support and influence portfolio review, pricing, course marketing, student recruitment and admissions.

iii) Marketing support for distance learning expansion.

c. Social responsibility
 Deliver enhanced communications highlighting the social responsibility features of all our activities, our signature programmes and a major new 'hyperlocal' initiative to demonstrate the University's positive impact in its neighbouring communities.

7.2 Increasing our international profile (better reputation)

a. Appoint a dedicated communications and marketing professional to plan and run campaigns aimed at raising our profile in the international academic community, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by ESOF, influencing the reputational HEI rankings and supporting staff and student recruitment.

b. Promote internally the multinational credentials of the University (number and diversity of international staff/students/alumni, number of staff research citations, number of staff working on international collaborative research).

c. In partnership with DSE, invest in communications and marketing to support the growth and diversification of our international student base.

7.3

Harnessing the power of our stakeholders (better engagement)

- a. Develop an employee engagement strategy to help improve staff performance and brand advocacy, including the appointment of a professional employee engagement manager working across communications, marketing and HR.
- b. In partnership with STDU, develop and deliver a training programme (in person and online) to equip staff – particularly those travelling overseas – to become ambassadors for the brand, supported by a toolkit of resources, including an agreed set of high-level marketing messages.
- c. Adopt as a key University goal, and a key feature of our evolving IT strategy, the establishment of a single digital community for staff and students to replace existing intranets and platforms and to deliver relevant, targeted information and foster two-way engaging and collaborative communication.
- d. In partnership with DDAR, develop brand ambassadors across the world through enhanced communications and engagement, and grow the number of top-level alumni influencers who are knowledgeable about and meaningfully engaged with the University.
- e. Review the identity and branding of our cultural attractions to help grow visitor numbers, while ensuring that visitors to them understand their connection with the University.
- f. Reconsider the terms of reference and membership of the External Engagement Group with a view to it becoming the body that develops and delivers a comprehensive strategy for senior stakeholder engagement, to be informed and monitored by the biennial External Stakeholder Survey.

7.4

Content marketing and digital first (more effective content production and channel selection)

- a. Develop a planned, campaign-led approach to all internal and external communications, ensuring that they are built around clear objectives, audience research, consistent messaging, appropriate selection of channels, continual measurement and coordination of effort across the University.
- b. Review print bought across the University and create a policy for the approval of print-based activity governed by CMLT.
- c. **PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16**
Reposition *UniLife* as an external-facing magazine complemented by a digital counterpart, each with a clearly defined and targeted audience of key stakeholders.
- d. Create a virtual social media hub by bringing together expertise from our leading social media practitioners to coordinate activity and share content, knowledge, skills and best practice.
- e. **PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16**
Building on the success of the new corporate website, further improve our wider web presence by integrating further with social media, making content more shareable, introducing greater interactivity, removing superfluous or obsolete content and establishing a more seamless user journey across University websites.
- f. Adopting a more proactive approach to our media relations activities by identifying media experts and campaigns focused on the five research beacons and creating a new package of media training and support.

7.5

Campus as canvas (more effective use of our physical assets and spaces)

- a. In partnership with Estates, bring our achievements to life by communicating the University brand through our physical environment, via the creation of brand guidelines to inform future building projects, installation of more visible perimeter signage, development of storytelling routes through campus and installation of display screens to enable coordinated campus-wide campaigns.

7.6

Professional communications and marketing (more effective use of resources)

a. PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16

Establish the Division of Communications and Marketing and CMLT as the bodies responsible for the leadership, governance, strategy and coordination of University communications and marketing activity, including approval of marketing plans and campaigns, and coordination of resource.

b. Commit to the current devolved resource model until 2017, but clarify and codify the relative roles and responsibilities of communications and marketing teams across the University, harmonising job descriptions and structures as appropriate.

c. PRIORITISED FOR 2015/16

Launch a suite of professional training and development for communications and marketing staff, including a series of workshops, toolkits and networking opportunities.

d. In partnership with IT Services and Finance, agree a roster of creative agencies and a standard suite of platforms and systems for all communications and marketing activity. Publish a comprehensive set of brand guidelines for all channels and media, and empower CMLT to ensure adherence.

We believe that the adoption and implementation of these actions will bring a step change to the University's communications and marketing activities, and will set us on course to become one of the top 25 university brands in the world.

8 Communications and Marketing Leadership Team membership

Alan Ferns (Chair)

Director
Division of Communications and Marketing

Terry Hudghton

Head of University Marketing
Division of Communications and Marketing

Rachael McGraw

Head of Communications
Division of Communications and Marketing

Marie Gray

Head of Communications and Marketing
Faculty of Humanities

Simon Merrywest

Director of Faculty Operations
Faculty of Life Sciences

Sali Midjek-Conway

Head of Communications and Marketing
Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

James Tallentire

Marketing and Communications Manager
Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Claire Kilner

Deputy Director and Head of Alumni Relations and Donor Communications and Engagement
Division of Development and Alumni Relations

Paul Govey

Head of Student Communications and Marketing
Directorate for the Student Experience

Andrew Simmons (Secretary)

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