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# Commemoration Policy

## 1. Introduction

This Policy details the University of Manchester’s (‘the University’) approach to commemorating persons, events and ideas. The process for considering a request for commemoration is set out in the University Commemoration Procedure document.

## 2. Purpose

The Policy aims to provide guidance and a set of considerations to assess applications for commemorations by the University. It seeks to ensure that commemorations are reserved for persons, events and ideas which have a connection with the University and where their impact and legacy is understood to have made an outstandingly positive contribution to society. Through this Policy the University seeks to ensure that commemorations benefit communities inside and outside the University, lead to greater understandings of the past and reflect the contribution and impact of the University and its predecessor institutions and the people associated with them.

The objectives of this Policy are:

1. To provide guidance for applicants submitting an application for commemoration.
2. To outline the University’s considerations for assessing applications for commemorations.

## 3. Scope and definitions

Any individual or group (including members and non-members of the University’s community) may submit an application for commemoration under this Policy.

This scope of this Policy includes:

1. Requests for the University to commemorate persons, events and ideas from the past (and, for these purposes, a period of 25 years should normally have passed since the death of the person, the occurrence of the event or the development of the idea).
2. Requests to install or exhibit commemorative items on the University’s estate (which are designed to commemorate persons, events or ideas as described in 1. above) which are created or developed by third parties.
3. Changes or alterations to existing commemorations on the University’s estate.

This scope of this Policy excludes:

1. Commemorative activities undertaken by, in the name and under the auspices of, University employees, faculties, schools, other units or societies (as opposed to institutional-level activities). Such activities must:
   1. have been approved under the applicable processes of the relevant faculties, schools, other units or societies;
   2. not be (or appear to be) organised or presented by or on behalf of the University at an institutional-level; and
   3. not impact (or have the potential to impact) on the University’s estate (for example, the installation of fixed or semi-fixed physical items), day-to-day operations or reputation.
2. The naming of gifts or endowments to the University (such matters are considered under the University’s Gift Acceptance Policy).
3. The naming of buildings and/or external spaces (such matters are considered under the University’s Policy on Naming of University Buildings and Identifiable External Spaces).
4. The installation of memorial plaques (such matters are considered under the Guidance on Memorial Plaques).
5. Decisions to commemorate persons, events or ideas which originate from, or have oversight by, senior officers or committees of the University.
6. The holding of events covered by the University’s Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and/or the Procedure Underpinning the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

For the purposes of this Policy, ‘commemoration’ marks out the special from the ordinary, or the extraordinary from the everyday, and acts of commemoration are about retaining in the memory, or committing to the memory, persons, events and ideas from the past. The considerations against which the University will assess applications for commemoration are identified in section 4 below.

Commemorations may take various forms and may include, but not be limited to:

* Fixed or semi-fixed physical items (such as plaques, benches, art, etc.).
* Holding commemorative events, performances and timed remembrances (in a manner not already covered by the University’s Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and/or the Procedure Underpinning the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech).
* Institutional-level awards recognising an historical person, event or idea.
* Digital or physical exhibitions or archives that seeks to commemorate on behalf of the University.

## 4. Assessment guidelines

The University has a rich and diverse past which presents many commemoration opportunities. In order to maintain the value of current and future commemorations and to avoid a profusion of events and physical markers, the University needs to set a high threshold for commemoration.

The University considers applications for the commemoration of persons, events or ideas through four categories. Applications are assessed holistically across all categories. It is expected that successful applications will have significant merit in each of the four categories.

A non-exhaustive list of indicative factors for consideration in relation to the four categories is included below.

**4.1 Place in history**

**Context:** It is important that the person, event or idea to be commemorated has established a place in history and that sufficient time has passed to allow the subject to be researched and debated. Where different interpretations of a subject exist, it may not be appropriate for the University to commemorate the subject if, by doing so, the commemoration may impact negatively on the University, be seen as an expression of opinion or cause division between communities.

**Consideration factors:**

* How long has passed since either the death of the person or last member of a group, the occurrence of the event or development of the idea to be commemorated (normally, at least 25 years should have passed)?
* How established is the historiography on the person, event or idea?
* To what extent does or might the person, event or idea foster pride and cohesion between communities inside and outside the University?
* Does commemorating the person, event or idea associate the University with views or actions that are compatible with its vision and values?
* Could commemorating the person, event or idea risk being interpreted as an expression of political or religious preference or views by the University?

**4.2 Contribution to the world**

**Context:** In order to maintain their value, commemorations should be reserved for the most noteworthy and outstanding examples.

**Consideration factors:**

* Has the person, event or idea made a contribution of outstanding and enduring impact which transcends communities and is understood to have made an important positive contribution to the world?
* Has the person, event or idea made a contribution of outstanding and enduring impact which is regarded as transformative in their field and is the subject regarded as an eminent individual/matter in their field today?
* Is there an expectation that the subject will continue to be recognised for their/its positive contribution to the world?

**4.3 Benefit of commemoration**

**Context:** A commemoration should bring positive benefits for the University and wider communities. There are a number of benefits which commemorations might bring including: being educational and informative, celebrating achievement and contribution, being inspirational, developing communities, recognising and including underrepresented groups, connecting the past and place and helping preservation and conservation.

**Consideration factors:**

* Is there a definable University and public benefit for the commemoration?
* Is the person, event or idea sufficiently well-known that the well-informed passer-by immediately would recognise and appreciate the subject?
* Is there an expectation that the subject will continue to be of interest and appeal to future generations?
* Is the subject commemorated elsewhere (whether on the University’s campus or otherwise) in a more appropriate manner or location?

**4.4 Connection to the University**

**Context:** Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the University will expect the person, event or idea to have a direct connection with the University. In order to be beneficial, it is usually important for the commemoration to be relevant to a structure, space or community that is present. The University also recognises that the places and spaces that it currently occupies have their own past and that it may be appropriate to recognise the connection of a space or place with an outstanding person, event or idea without a direct connection to the University.

**Consideration factors:**

* Does the person, event or idea have a connection to the University? If not, what exceptional circumstances justify the application?
* Does the subject have a geographical connection to the University’s estate and is the subject of such importance that the University considers it appropriate to install a physical marker?
* If a physical commemoration is being considered, is there a building or location which directly relates to the subject?
* For non-physical commemorations, is there appropriate time and location for a commemoration?

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| Policy owner: | Dr. James Hopkins, University Historian Head of Heritage |
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