The University and public benefit

Introduction

The University of Manchester has exempt charity status derived from the Charities Act 1993 and is responsible to HEFCE, its principal regulator, which is charged with monitoring compliance with charity law obligations. The University, through its governing body, the Board of Governors, is aware of its responsibilities as a charity to act for the public benefit across all of its activities and has had due regard to the latest version of the Charity Commission’s public benefit guidance (issued September 2013, updated September 2014). The objects of the University, as set out in the Royal Charter awarded in 2004, are “to advance education, knowledge and wisdom by research, scholarship, learning and teaching, for the benefit of individuals and society at large”.

Strategic ambition

The University’s Strategic Plan 2020 sets out our mission to be ranked as one of the world’s leading universities by 2020, where all students enjoy a rewarding educational and wider experience, a place where the highest academic values and educational innovation are cherished, where research prospers and makes a real difference, and where the fruits of scholarship resonate throughout society.

Access to world-leading learning

We are committed to being an open, meritocratic institution that proactively seeks out people capable of benefiting from higher education, minimises barriers to their participation and contributes to the expansion of higher education opportunities, locally, nationally and internationally.

The University is committed to providing all of our students (38,838 in 2014/15) with an outstanding learning and student experience. We ensure that all of our graduates leave with advanced critical thinking, conceptual reasoning and analytical skills, mastery of a discipline, broad intellectual and cultural interests, advanced written and verbal communication and a personal commitment to equality and diversity. The University is developing generations of students to become internationally mobile professionals who can serve as informed, thoughtful, globally responsible citizens, equipped to make a valuable social and economic contribution to society.

We continue to work hard to improve the student experience for all of our students, and the results of the annual National Student Survey (NSS), show that we have increased overall student satisfaction by 7% over the last several years to 86% in the 2015 survey. This is a major achievement and can be attributed to developments in teaching and learning in the classroom and the laboratory, and to some major University-wide initiatives, including the University College and Alan Gilbert Learning Commons.

We seek to ensure that financial issues do not present an obstacle for learners to access the full student experience. Approximately a third of all our students will receive bursaries of up to £2,500 per year – and many other Widening Participation students will receive the University’s targeted Undergraduate Access Scholarship.

By supporting access, assisting student success, progression and employability the University seeks to address the specific challenges which students from widening participation backgrounds often face in making the transition to university study and subsequent employment. The University’s Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) provides detailed information on the University’s commitment to all students, regardless of background or financial considerations.

The University of Manchester currently performs towards the top of the English Russell Group for the proportion of students entering the University from disadvantaged backgrounds, and has set targets to continue this year-on-year increase. In addition to targets relating to students entering the University, the institution has set targets to improve the continuation rate of students from low household incomes and narrow any gap between Widening Participation and non-Widening Participation students achieving successful employability outcomes.

Our latest data indicates that 29.9% of students under the new fee regime were from low income households of less than £25,000 per annum, placing us 3rd in the English Russell Group. Only a handful of Russell Group institutions exceed their institutional benchmark for low participation neighbourhoods and disability – and Manchester is one of them: we admit and support students on the basis of academic ability, not their ability to pay.

The University is committed to raising awareness of the benefits of higher education through outreach activities that engage primary and secondary pupils and their teachers and parents, and assist further education students wishing to progress to university.

To provide an insight into higher education for primary school pupils, we take roadshows out to schools, run higher education awareness days on campus and run a primary placement scheme where undergraduate students are placed in local primary schools as classroom assistants.

Our flagship initiative, the Manchester Access Programme (MAP), supports outstanding Year 12 and 13 students from under-represented groups in Greater Manchester to progress successfully into The University of Manchester and other research-intensive universities. From 2005 to entry in 2014, 1,119 MAP students have been successful in gaining a place at The University of Manchester. In addition, many MAP students have also progressed to courses at other highly-selective, research-intensive universities.

The University is also committed to providing our students with volunteering opportunities to develop key employability skills via the
Manchester Leadership Programme (MLP). This enables students to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be a responsible global citizen, through a hands-on programme of academic events and community activities. 1,350 students took part in MLP in 2014/15 and since the programme was established we estimate that MLP students have contributed over £1.6m to the local economy through their volunteering work.

Our local communities in Greater Manchester have some of the lowest progression rates into higher education in the UK. Greater Manchester Higher has been developed as a new collaborative network promoting the opportunities for schools to engage with the outreach activities offered by local higher education (HE) providers. The partnership is a part of the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) scheme, which will deliver a nationally coordinated approach to working with schools, universities and colleges to help people access higher education. During 2014/15 more than 1,100 pupils aged between 12 and 15 visited the universities in the partnership, participating in events on campus. In addition, staff and student ambassadors delivered outreach activities in schools to 7,300 learners, their parents and carers.

Research, public policy, and wider influence

At The University of Manchester we conduct a wide range of high-quality research that is rivalled by few other universities, as demonstrated by our submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2014.

In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework exercise, 83% of our research activity was judged to be ‘world-leading’ (4*) or ‘internationally excellent’ (3*), and we were ranked in fifth place in terms of research power (calculated by grade point average times number of staff submitted or by 4*/3* times number of staff submitted). We had one of the broadest submissions of any university in the UK, with research evaluated in 35 discipline areas.

Much of this research combines expertise from across disciplines, making the most of the opportunities that our size and breadth of expertise affords.

Our research beacons show how this approach is improving the lives of people around the world. These areas of investigation feature a unique concentration of high-quality research activity. They allow us to bring the best minds together to find new ways forward. The researchers in these fields are at the forefront of the search for innovative solutions to some of the world’s biggest challenges.

The University of Manchester’s research beacons are examples of pioneering discoveries, interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-sector partnerships that are tackling some of the biggest questions facing the planet. These are:

- Addressing global inequalities
- Advanced Materials
- Cancer
- Energy, and
- Industrial Biotechnology

The benefits of our research to local, national and international communities are numerous. We have University-trained medical professionals working in local NHS Trusts, whilst on an international scale our pioneering research around global issues, such as climate change and sustainable energy, poverty and economics, and biomedical research, is helping to influence public policy and make a real difference to society.
Businesses that engage with the University see economic and social benefits, including improved competitiveness, productivity, job creation and the opening up of new markets. Research at The University of Manchester makes a positive impact on society, addressing key challenges such as inequalities, cancer, climate change and energy. By engaging communities with our research, we share our knowledge, expertise and skills. The encouragement of enterprise is a critical part of our culture and the commercialisation and exploitation of our intellectual property is a fundamental part of our activity. New jobs have been created, many processes improved and valuable new products have been developed which have been sold here and abroad.

In 2011, the UK chancellor, George Osborne, announced the allocation of £50m to support the commercial development of wonder-material graphene, to build upon the work undertaken at Manchester by our Nobel Prize winners Professor Sir Andre Geim and Professor Sir Konstantin Novoselov. £38m of this funding was allocated to the University to support the creation of a National Graphene Institute, a national hub which will attract further investment for applied research and collaboration and will provide the required catalyst for growth of businesses in the region to support the supply chain in various application sectors. The facility was opened in summer 2015. In September 2014, the University announced it is to build a £60m Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (GEIC). The facility will be critical in the development and application of advanced imaging methods in biomedical science and the Manchester Cancer Research Centre aims to more than double the level of cancer-related research activity in Manchester over the coming years.

Throughout the University, we have developed outreach projects and open events which enable us to transfer our research knowledge to the public. The University encourages the dissemination of research results as widely and as publicly as possible, especially to those who will benefit most from them.

**Social responsibility, cultural impact and environmental sustainability**

The University has embedded social responsibility within its research and learning activities. Our strategic vision commits the University to encompass sustainability, ethics and integrity; to find solutions to global challenges, engage with the public, support the community and to promote equality and diversity.

Skills and employment levels in some of our local communities are among the lowest in the UK. Our University is helping to address this through our leadership of ‘The Works’ – an innovative employment and training initiative at the heart of our local communities in Moss Side and Ardwick. This programme is transforming the life chances of local residents in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the UK. It seeks to provide opportunities and support to jobseekers including pre-recruitment training and job matching to local employers, including the University. ‘The Works’ supported 459 people back into work (316 at the University), bringing its total impact to 2,390 jobs since 2011.

Also part of our social responsibility goals, the ‘School Governor Initiative’ remains the fastest growing initiative of its kind in the UK, engaging increasing numbers of alumni and winning the Times Higher Education Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community award (the second year in a row for the University). The number of staff volunteering as school governors in 2014/15 was 161, from a baseline figure of 53 in 2011.

The University accepts an important responsibility for enriching the cultural lives and scientific understanding of its local community. Specific importance is attached to the work of the Manchester Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery, John Rylands Library, Deansgate and Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre in engaging with schoolchildren and people from under-represented groups. The University’s Cultural Institutions and Library form an integral part of our approach to engage young people and communities with forms of higher learning. They work actively with schools, colleges and prospective students of higher education through their own educational programmes which are developed and led by specialist staff. A new ‘Cultural Access Programme’ was launched in September 2014, engaging 70% of our most local nine year-old school children with our four cultural institutions; the Whitworth Art Gallery, the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester Library, Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre and the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre. Over the last year the University recorded over 972,000 public visits to these ‘cultural assets’.

Finally, the University remains committed to operating as a sustainable and socially responsible institution, minimising the impact of its own activities on the environment. Manchester 2020 has a clear focus on sustainability to “prioritise processes that support positive environmental behaviour and decision making”.

In early 2016 the Global Development Institute will unite the strengths of the current Institute for Development and Policy Management and the Brooks World Poverty Institute, building on more than 60 years of expertise in the field of development studies within the University. The new Institute will play a major role in supporting the University’s commitment to addressing global poverty and inequality.

The Biomedical Imaging Institute has been established to promote the development and application of advanced imaging methods in biomedical science and the Manchester Cancer Research Centre aims to more than double the level of cancer-related research activity in Manchester over the coming years.