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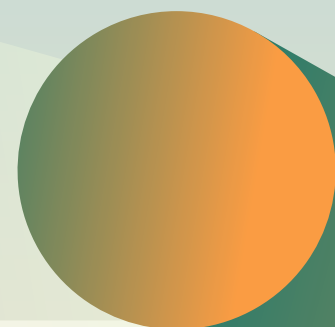
The University of Manchester



# From Manchester for the world

Our strategy to 2035

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# Our North Star



## **The University of Manchester was born as an answer to a question posed amid the Industrial Revolution: what kind of new knowledge and citizens do we need for our city to thrive in a world undergoing profound change?**

As we enter our third century, we stand at a similarly pivotal moment. Technological, geopolitical, economic and social revolutions are reshaping the world. What knowledge and skills does our age demand? What changes lie ahead?

Once again, we will define what it means to be a great civic university – this time, for the 21st century. *From Manchester for the world* means working with our city and region deeply to develop the ideas and solutions our communities and the world urgently need. From splitting the atom, isolating graphene, challenging social norms, and building the first programmable computer, Manchester has always sought to lead.

We will focus our strengths on the areas where Manchester can make the greatest difference: for example advancing health and life sciences to drive inclusive growth and turning world-changing discoveries, from materials to digital technologies, into practical impact.

This includes harnessing our cultural institutions – the Whitworth, Manchester Museum, the John Rylands Library and Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre – as engines of inclusion and creativity, and building on our global leadership in social responsibility and widening participation.

Our deep-rooted sense of place is matched by global reach, through researchers, partners and alumni who share our purpose to improve lives, strengthen communities and tackle the world's biggest challenges. What makes us distinctive is *how* we connect our research, students, partners and civic institutions locally and globally to achieve more, together. Our role in helping to transform Manchester into one of the UK's fastest-growing city regions shows what we can achieve when working in ways that reflect the diversity, ambition and radical spirit of our city.

By working more closely with employers, entrepreneurs, donors, alumni, civic leaders and cultural partners, we will help drive inclusive growth in our city and region – creating good jobs, in-demand skills, and supporting industries that reflect Manchester's strengths. This blend of civic purpose and economic benefit is a distinctive contribution we can make to the future prosperity of the North and beyond.

We must close the gap between discovery and impact to get our research and teaching out into the world faster and more sustainably to make a positive difference. That means bringing our extraordinary range of disciplines together in new ways, becoming more collaborative and working more creatively with our partners. We can only tackle climate change, the growing polarisation of our society, health and social inequalities, or harness the transformative power of technology, if we do so.

At the heart of this ambition is a world-leading student experience. We will build this around partner-enabled learning that connects every student with challenges in our city, our region and across the globe, and prepares them to become the leaders and citizens our world needs. This means applying their learning in practice, working across disciplines and developing the ability to have difficult conversations – respectfully and generously – with those with whom they profoundly disagree.

A necessary condition for our success is a deep commitment to academic freedom, freedom of speech, excellence and inclusion.

Our students and colleagues must be free to pursue questions wherever they lead. And they must be supported by the systems, infrastructure and culture that enables them to do their best work.

## This is our North Star: From Manchester for the world.

# It's not about knowing the future, but being ready to shape it

**Our strategy starts from the premise that the future is inherently uncertain. We want the ability to define our future, not merely react to it.**

We are living through a time of transformation. AI is reshaping how we teach, learn and discover. Climate change will require us to rethink our operations and how we conduct our research. Geopolitical instability and technology are blurring boundaries between states, institutions and people, bringing new kinds of political, economic and cultural challenges to our campus. Demographic shifts – including an ageing population – will also reshape demand for skills, lifelong learning and innovation, and who comes to learn with us.

In the UK, the future of higher education funding is uncertain. At the same time, expectations are rising – on value for money, social impact and how well students are prepared for life beyond university. But if we make more deliberate choices about where to focus our energy, universities will be engines driving innovation, good jobs and inclusive growth in our communities and beyond.

Manchester must lead – setting out a clear vision that strengthens our city and region and tackles global challenges. To succeed, we need to face the future together, not as individuals or isolated teams, but as a community. Our people – students, researchers, teaching and professional services colleagues – will be central to this, supported with the right tools and environments to stay confident, creative and connected.

This will only be possible if we connect the 'foundations' and 'leaps' this strategy sets out – treating teaching, research, innovation and partnerships not as separate, but as an integrated system for success.

Our foundations are the enduring strengths we must get right and our leaps are the bold choices where we will go further and faster. And we will build the capacity to bridge between them – including Manchester Online, Unit M, our research platforms and digital transformation – each designed to underpin success and accelerate change across multiple areas of the strategy.

Our strategy is a framework for the future, not a fixed route. It focuses on the areas where we can make the biggest difference, while opening up future possibilities.

## KEY CHALLENGES OUR STRATEGY FACES INTO:

### CHANGES TO HOW WE LEARN AND WORK

Building a culture of engagement and collaboration to make Manchester the best place to work and study.

### SHIFTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Staying distinctive and resilient amid financial and policy pressures.

### ECONOMIC, TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Tackling inequality and meeting demand for knowledge, skills and leadership.

### GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Remaining collaborative, open and impactful as global centres of social and political gravity shift.

## TRUE TO OUR VALUES

As we adapt for what's to come, who we are and what we stand for won't change. Our motto – *knowledge, wisdom, humanity* – continues to guide us as we chart our next chapter as a globally recognised civic university in the 21st century:

- **Knowledge** – open, challenge-led discovery, shared to improve lives.

- **Wisdom** – integrity and courage in the decisions we make and the futures we shape.
- **Humanity** – compassion, inclusion and community in how we treat one another locally and globally.

Our strategy sets out how we will meet the demands of our time and support our students, colleagues, and partners to succeed.

# Co-creating our strategy



**Over a year-long process (October 2024 – September 2025) we brought 12,000 of our students, colleagues, alumni and partners together to reimagine what’s possible for our university.**

**We challenged ourselves to picture 2035 – imagining the world we want to create and the part each of us could play.**

The decision to structure our strategy around foundations and leaps came directly from the ideas and themes raised by our community through our consultation process. Reflecting what people told us mattered most: getting the basics right, building on our strengths and being bold enough to do things differently.

The way we developed our strategy sets the tone for how we will deliver it – honestly, openly, collaboratively, and focused on the best outcomes possible for our community and the partners we serve.

## FOUNDATIONS

The core commitments our community believes must be true in any future.

## LEAPS

The bold, strategic choices that set a new trajectory for the kind of university the future demands.

## PHASE ONE

Our community thought big – pitching and debating ideas through workshops and online sessions.

<b>6,000+</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1,500+</b>	<b>2,900+</b>
Colleagues, students, alumni and local community members involved	Workshops held	Workshop bookings	Online ideas and comments

## PHASE TWO

We brought together more than 120 members of our community in sprint groups – leaders, subject matter experts and the Students' Union Executive Officers – to turn those early ideas into proposals.

The foundations and leaps were shared back with the community through our Ideas Lab – an interactive pop-up exhibition on campus and online hub – for final feedback.

<b>~2,000</b>	<b>1,200+</b>	<b>200+</b>	<b>950+</b>
In-person visitors	In-person submissions	Online submissions	Online votes

## THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who took part: you helped us decide together who we need to be by 2035.

# Our strategy on a page

## OUR NORTH STAR

To be a great civic university for the 21st century, creating knowledge for the public good, locally and globally.

### Built together

A year-long process of sharing, discussing and developing ideas led to this joint strategy.

### Our foundations

Core commitments we must fulfil in any future.

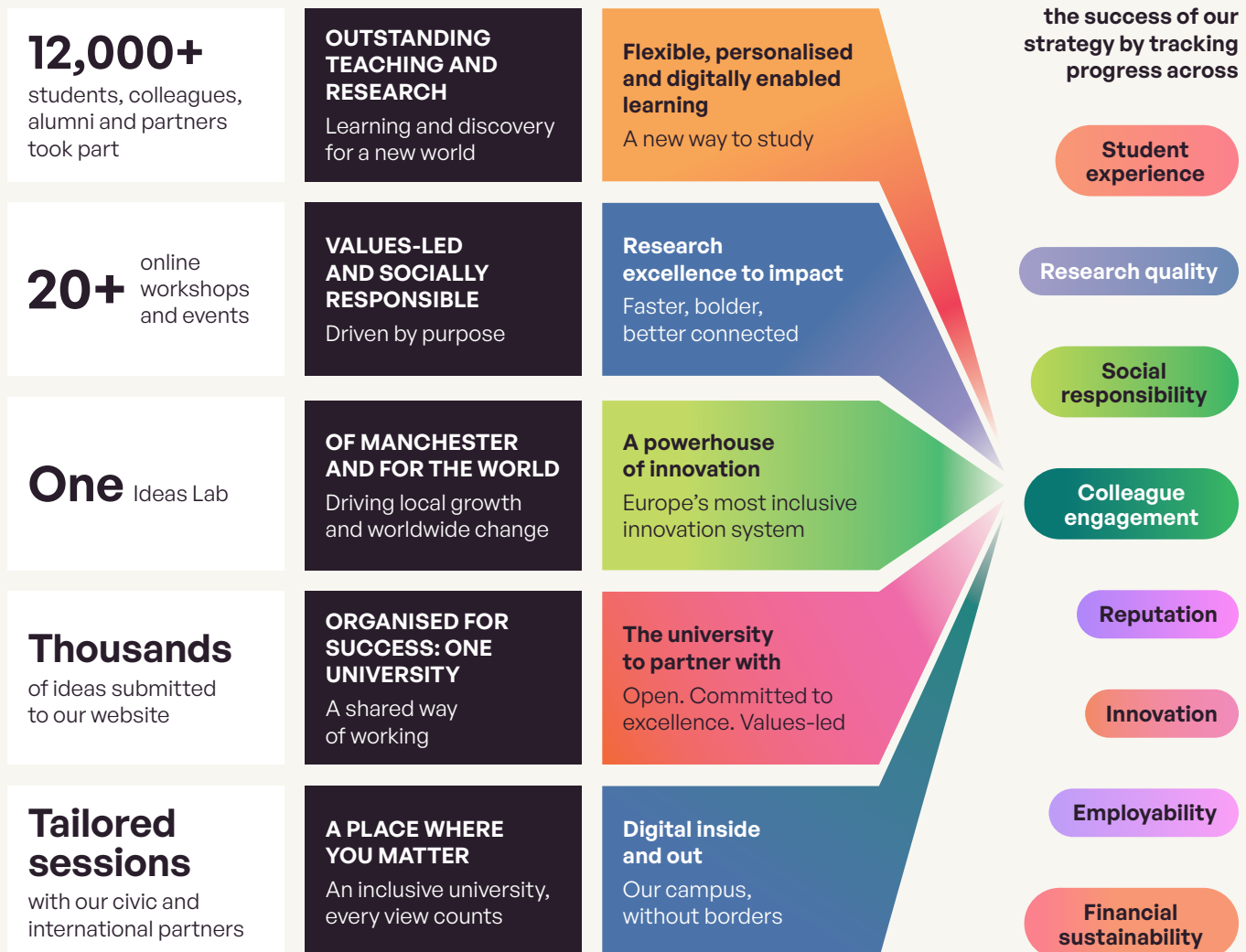
### Our leaps

Bold choices to go further, faster, and set us apart.

### Our outcomes

Everyone has a part to play in creating the university we want and need to be by 2035.

**We will measure the success of our strategy by tracking progress across**



# Building on our strong foundations



**Our university community made it clear that some things hold true under any version of the future.**

**We are ready to think bigger and do things differently – but also need to get the fundamentals right. These foundations are our enduring strengths and areas to improve further, grounding our ambition and enabling the leaps ahead.**

## OUR FOUNDATIONS

### COMMITTED TO OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND RESEARCH

With discovery and truth-seeking at the heart of our mission, Manchester will inspire innovation and create the knowledge and graduates that will help change the world for the better – starting in our local communities in the North and scaling globally.

#### BY 2035:

- We will be equally recognised for the quality of our research, teaching and student experience, supported by shared resources and aligned goals that attract funding and talented students and colleagues from across our region and the globe.
- We will tackle the most pressing challenges, bring this research into our teaching and work with civic partners to ensure it addresses real needs.
- In an increasingly polarised world, we champion open debate, academic freedom and respectful disagreement as essential for discovery, shared understanding and rebuilding trust.

## VALUES-LED AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

As the first UK university to place social responsibility at the heart of our mission, we are consistently ranked among the world's leading institutions for social, environmental and economic impact. We are committed to embedding social responsibility across everything we do.

### BY 2035:

- We will set the standard for embedding social responsibility across teaching, research, public engagement and operations, aligned with our civic ecosystem. From the NHS, local authorities, cultural institutions and communities – we will co-create solutions with our closest neighbours and global partners.
- We will fully embed our responsibility to create societal benefit across the University – from achieving true zero carbon Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2038 and net zero Scope 3 emissions by 2050, to fostering respectful dialogue and producing knowledge that tackles local and global challenges. We will remain a leader in Open Access and public research, making knowledge more accessible, transparent and useful to the world.
- Our commitment to social responsibility will be more visible and distinctive – strengthening our reputation and inspiring colleagues, students and partners to choose Manchester. Equity and social impact will be a key lens for defining our work with the communities we serve, especially those who have historically been excluded from higher education's benefits.

## OF MANCHESTER AND FOR THE WORLD

At home in Manchester, but with a global outlook, we connect students to skills, our community to ideas, and our research to solutions that drive inclusive growth locally and globally.

Our deep connection to the city and the North shapes how we work, combining ambition with intense collaboration and practical delivery to help transform lives, nurture responsible citizens, and support communities to thrive. This includes working with partner universities and civic leaders to co-deliver on the priorities of the *Greater Manchester Strategy 2035*, driving skills, innovation and real economic impact across our region.

### BY 2035:

- All students and colleagues will have more opportunities to make a difference by working closely with our partners across health, government, industry, community organisations and cultural institutions. Together, we will make the city and region central to how we develop and apply knowledge to share with the world.
- Our work will make an even greater impact in our local communities – with deeper partnerships and shared outcomes and stronger accountability to the people and places around us. We will expand employer-responsive and lifelong learning that opens new pathways into good work, widens participation and ensures higher education drives opportunity and social mobility across our city and region. We will also redesign our spaces to be open, accessible and woven into civic life.
- We will enhance our national influence and global reputation – particularly in areas where Manchester can lead: driving inclusive growth through health innovation, translating discoveries from graphene to AI, world-renowned inclusive cultural institutions and a global reputation for social responsibility and widening participation.

## ORGANISED FOR SUCCESS: ONE UNIVERSITY

People are at the heart of our success. To deliver on our ambitions, we need a supportive and empowering working environment – one where students and colleagues have the clarity, tools and culture they need to do their best work. We need to improve our systems, reduce bureaucracy and provide better support for our colleagues, students, and partners.

### BY 2035:

- We will reduce barriers and unnecessary complexity – creating more consistent models of working that free up time and make it easier to focus on what matters. Digital transformation will connect our students, colleagues, disciplines and partners, streamline our processes, and accelerate the path from idea to impact.
- We will build a culture where collaboration is the norm and everyone is empowered to innovate with cross-functional working and shared accountability across teams and disciplines.
- All colleagues will be supported to learn, lead and adapt – with fair access to development opportunities and clear, consistent expectations for how we work together. We will strengthen progression, reward and recognition so colleagues can thrive and feel valued for their contributions.

## A PLACE WHERE YOU MATTER

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of our university. We honour individual identities while coming together as one university to ensure that every person feels valued. Matterer here means knowing your views help shape decisions, your work drives change, and your presence makes a difference in our shared future.

### BY 2035:

- Our inclusive culture will be a defining reason why people choose to join and thrive here. We will be recognised globally for leading transformative change through evidence-informed approaches that challenge convention and lead to real change in people's experience. Our colleague, student and alumni community will reflect both the diversity of our city and region and our global reach.
- Every person will be a force for change. Inclusive leadership and shared accountability will be embedded across the University, ensuring our strategy is lived in everyday decisions, and our culture enables challenge, ambition, and collaboration to flourish.
- We will be a university where people feel deeply connected – to each other, to Manchester, and to the wider world.

## MAKING THE LEAP

Our foundations provide the cornerstone for our success – the core commitments we need to get right.

Our leaps are the bold choices to go further and faster – driving innovation, responding to profound changes in our sector and the world, and defining what it means to be a great civic university for the 21st century.

# Our five leaps

## Flexible, personalised and digitally enabled learning



**Manchester will be known for a new kind of student experience – more flexible, connected and personal, so students from every background feel they matter and are equipped to thrive on campus and online. What will set us apart is combining personalised support, hands-on learning in the community and global connections – opening higher education up to more students to drive social mobility.**

### WE'VE ALREADY STARTED:

- [Manchester Online](#)
- [Student experience](#)
- [Cultural institutions](#)
- [Fundraising and volunteering campaign](#)

### OUR AMBITION

By 2035, our students will learn at different paces, in different places, at different stages of life, and more will balance study and paid work. We will support them by creating tailored and equitable routes through university, with learning that flexes around people's lives and reflects the world students are preparing to enter, by enhancing the in-person campus experience through better spaces, services and community.

At the heart of this is 'partner-enabled learning' – redesigning our curriculum and assessment to ensure every student can put their learning into practice. Building on our origins as the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, created to connect learning with civic progress, every student will work with employers, public bodies and community organisations as part of their course for credit – building skills, confidence and connections while tackling challenges that matter.

### We will:

#### REINVENT OUR STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- Personalised support will be at the heart of the student experience – combining digital innovation with the care and connection that comes from people who know and understand you to ensure every student feels seen, supported and able to succeed. Students will co-design their experience, grounded in real needs, trust and transparency.
- We will integrate academic and pastoral support – so students only need to tell us once. This will be backed by investment in flexible spaces and 24/7 digital platforms. Stronger academic communities and student-led activity will build connection and care into everyday life.

- We will tackle differential attainment through inclusive curriculum and assessment design and providing earlier, data-informed support. This means blending intelligent tools – including AI – with in-person care and teaching to adapt to different learning styles, to ensure classroom sessions can focus on deeper exploration and discussion – making every interaction more purposeful.
- Targeted financial help – bursaries, scholarships, paid roles and philanthropic support – will ensure cost isn't a barrier to learning. With our Students' Union, we will build one of the UK's most extensive programmes of student-led activities.

### **EMBED PARTNER-ENABLED LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS**

- Partner-enabled learning means our students will work with employers, public bodies and community organisations as part of their course, whether through service learning, consultancy-style projects with industry, co-designed briefs with community groups, placements, school outreach initiatives or cultural collaborations. Through cross-disciplinary projects, students will bring fresh perspectives into partner organisations and gain new insights in return – combining academic excellence with community impact.
- We will build on existing innovations across our curriculum through a one university approach, sharing practice more widely so all students build skills, confidence and connections while tackling challenges that matter.
- We will scale up our current provision of collaboration labs – including the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL), the Living Lab and Global Classroom – connecting students across disciplines, cultures and sectors.

### **DEVELOP NEW PATHWAYS AND MODES OF DELIVERY FOR MORE TYPES OF STUDENTS**

- Our new hybrid model will expand choice over pace, place and pathway – aiming for half of our students to study online or through workplace routes. At the same time, we will enhance our on-campus community through better services,

stronger student voice and a vibrant culture created in collaboration with our Students' Union, as well as modern, purposeful accommodation designed for belonging, wellbeing and community.

- Equity will be a key design principle with part-time, self-paced and modular options helping students balance commitments. We will also create new ways for students to return to study, or start later in life. Both on campus and through Manchester Online – working with employers and further education partners to meet workforce needs and strengthen the skills needed across our region and beyond.

### **DEVELOP A CURRICULUM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

- Our signature curriculum will prepare students to apply knowledge in practice – through problem-based interdisciplinary projects and partner-enabled learning rooted in our public mission. It will expose students to diverse perspectives, give them access to our world-leading facilities and help them to challenge dominant narratives and understand the world from multiple viewpoints. This also means equipping our teaching colleagues with the time, tools and support to innovate with confidence.
- Our research platforms will feed directly into our teaching – giving students exposure to cutting-edge ideas and opportunities to contribute to discovery. This will develop the skills and mindset employers value – from collaboration and adaptability to civic consciousness and the ability to move between disciplines.
- Assessment will shift to competency-based progression and applied tasks that reflect what students can do, not just what they know. Immersive technologies will expand what's possible in teaching – through virtual fieldwork, simulations and more inclusive forms of engagement.
- Employability will be a core outcome – with stronger career pathways through alumni mentoring and the UK's widest range of paid roles during study.

# Accelerating the path from research excellence to impact

**We'll be known for outstanding fundamental and interdisciplinary research. We'll bring together our disciplines and partners to tackle society's hardest problems.**

**What will set us apart is connecting world-leading research with our innovation ecosystem, civic networks and entrepreneurial hubs to deliver impact faster, and at a breadth few can match.**

## WE'VE ALREADY STARTED:

- [Unit M](#)
- [AI Skunkworks](#)
- [Manchester Online](#)
- [Research platforms](#)

## OUR AMBITION

By 2035, we will be recognised as the university that turns great research into public good by integrating discovery, innovation and civic partnership – faster, bolder and at greater scale. We will be easier to engage with, built to make ambitious research happen and better connected beyond academia.

We will focus our energy where Manchester can lead at scale: advancing health and life sciences, driving climate resilience and the transition to net zero – tackling inequalities and strengthening social cohesion, shaping creativity and culture as engines of inclusion and innovation, harnessing the power of

data, digital and AI, and leading in advanced materials, biotechnology and manufacturing – from graphene to the Royce Hub.

We will organise ourselves around the most pressing challenges, not disciplines – connecting people, ideas and infrastructure in new ways, from Unit M, Manchester Online and The Innovation Factory, to city partnerships and curriculum – closing the gap from discovery to impact, while nurturing fundamental discovery that seeds the next wave of breakthroughs.

Working more closely with partners within and beyond academia will make our research more powerful by helping us to ask better questions, uncover new directions, and build deeper understanding. It will open new opportunities – for funding, for collaboration, and generating the evidence that will influence policy. It will also make our teaching more connected, giving students a window into how knowledge gets used and shaped.

From Greater Manchester partnerships and the Civic University Agreement, collaborations with Cambridge, Liverpool and our international centres in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai and Singapore, we will act at scale and deliver impact that no single institution could achieve alone.

Our enhanced interdisciplinary platforms will mobilise our infrastructure, expertise, ambitions and energy to generate solutions for a healthier, greener and fairer world. Rooted in academic freedom, inclusion and excellence, we will build one of the world's most enabling environments.

**We will:****FOCUS OUR RESEARCH ON THE WORLD'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS**

- Our 'M2035 challenges' will mobilise our university around the world's most pressing problems – from health inequalities and climate resilience to social cohesion – connecting researchers, students and partners across disciplines to explore bold ideas and deliver meaningful impact.
- They will shape major projects, partnerships and curricula, and give researchers clearer pathways to contribute to the questions governments, communities, innovation partners and civic institutions urgently need answered.
- Social responsibility will run through this – encouraging discovery that improves lives, while championing open research to make our data and ideas accessible.

**TRANSFORM OUR RESEARCH PLATFORMS BY MOBILISING THE BREADTH OF OUR STRENGTHS**

- The next decade will see a step change in how we deliver interdisciplinary research with our platforms – Creative, Digital, Environment and Health – a model we will supercharge to become central to how we organise as a university. As part of our one university approach, platforms will connect people, ideas and resources across the University – helping researchers form teams, design curricula, secure funding and work with partners on shared goals. They will also guide priorities, resources and investment – creating clearer pathways from discovery to impact. This will be underpinned by world-class facilities, laboratories and technical services across all disciplines – a major draw for international talent and a driver of research quality, collaboration and reputation.

- Most of our researchers will be affiliated to at least one of our internationally recognised platforms by 2035, and we will explore new platforms as our strengths evolve and new challenges emerge. Students will have the opportunity to learn through challenge-focused teaching, summer schools and research-led experiences that bring these platforms to life. Unit M will play a central role in connecting our platforms with enterprise, investment and entrepreneurship, so that discoveries move more quickly into ventures, services and civic solutions.
- This model will mobilise our research capabilities more effectively, build deeper partnerships and link platforms to our innovation ecosystem, philanthropy and international centres, to turn ideas into action locally and globally.

**LEAD THE UK IN AMBITIOUS, INCLUSIVE RESEARCH AND CAREERS**

- We will be recognised as one of the best-organised research environments in the world – a place where researchers come to do their boldest, most meaningful work, within a culture that champions collaboration, creativity and inclusion. With shared platforms and infrastructure that incentivises collaboration, integrated systems that reduce duplication and supportive teaching models that protect time, we will create the conditions for great ideas to thrive and careers to flourish. The ethical deployment of AI will become part of our research toolkit, helping colleagues analyse complex data at speed, model climate and health scenarios with greater accuracy, accelerate drug and materials discovery, and open new avenues of enquiry in humanities and social sciences.
- Our environment will be people-centred and values-led – grounded in academic freedom with protected time and recognition for curiosity-driven work, clearer career pathways, fairer recognition and a shared commitment to inclusion and integrity. Building a more enabling research culture will be a shared endeavour, co-created with our community.

# A powerhouse of innovation

**We will become Europe's most inclusive and impactful innovation ecosystem, recognised globally for getting our research and teaching out into the world, faster, with our partners. This will make a difference in people's lives – here in Manchester and around the world.**

## WE'VE ALREADY STARTED:

- [Unit M](#)
- [Manchester Online](#)
- [Cultural institutions](#)

## OUR AMBITION

With the connectivity of our Manchester ecosystem and a systematic approach to innovation, we will turn ideas into impact faster, and for more people.

Innovation is about making things better – not just new technology, but ways of doing things that enable people to flourish and society to progress. That could mean new discoveries that lead to new companies and partnerships, industry collaborations, but also student-led social enterprises, co-designed community initiatives and system-wide innovations in our health system. By embedding entrepreneurship across the University, we will ensure innovation at Manchester is something everyone can contribute to – wherever they work, study or volunteer, and whatever their role.

We will mobilise and integrate all our innovation assets – Unit M, The Innovation Factory, Sister, the Masood Entrepreneurship Centre, and Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange – to drive this vision.

We will grow a community of innovators across the University and a wider network of supporters to help us deliver more innovation, for more people, with greater impact than ever before.

## We will:

### BUILD A THRIVING INNOVATION COMMUNITY ACROSS OUR UNIVERSITY

- We will make innovation part of everyday life at Manchester – by supporting students and colleagues from all disciplines to develop ideas, collaborate and gain the skills to turn insight into action.
- By putting entrepreneurship for all at the heart of our student and colleague experience, we will build capability and a shared culture of innovation – making Manchester the university of choice for those who want to start their own companies and social enterprises and work deeply with community and industry partners. We will also encourage our colleagues and students to test ideas and improve how things work day-to-day.
- Beyond campus, we will expand our network of innovation supporters – alumni, local community members, our civic partners, funders, mentors and business leaders – making entrepreneurship a driver of social mobility and building one of Europe's best innovation ecosystems.

## PROVIDE CLEARER, FASTER PATHWAYS TO COLLABORATE AND GROW IDEAS

- We will make it easier for people inside and outside the University to turn ideas into action – whether launching a new social or commercial venture, working with a business or community organisation, or developing a research partnership through clear routes for sponsored research, consultancy, licensing and co-development.
- Unit M, our new gateway to innovation, will welcome students, colleagues and partners, and lead the integration of our innovation assets. From expert advice and funding to place-making and industry connections, Unit M – working across the University – will help unlock our full range of skills and expertise for our local and global partners to turn ideas into action.

## DRIVE INCLUSIVE GROWTH FOR THE REGION

- We will build stronger links with the people and places of Manchester – working with communities, civic partners and businesses to make sure innovation benefits the region. We want to help generate better jobs, more economic growth, improved healthcare and social services, and contribute to an even more dynamic cultural sector.

- We will focus on areas where we can have the greatest impact – from improving health to creating low-carbon technologies – and make it easier for social entrepreneurs and community partners to get involved.
- This means deepening how we work with Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and others to grow the city's innovation ecosystem and help to deliver regional projects such as Atom Valley, alongside partnerships in Rochdale, Tameside and Cumbria. Together, we will help shape Manchester's newest innovation district, Sister, through our partnership with Bruntwood SciTech – creating a hub for spin-outs, partners, students, colleagues and residents.
- Inclusive growth means sharing the benefits of our expertise more widely – through social entrepreneurship, new partnerships and work that responds directly to community needs. We will work closely with further education colleges and employers to create porous pathways and stackable credentials, ensuring innovation skills are accessible across Greater Manchester and beyond.

# The university to partner with

**By 2035, we will be the partner of choice for those who share our commitment – to excellence and to turning knowledge into impact – for the public good. Our collaborations will reflect who we are: open, values-led and focused on making a difference. From philanthropy to international, industry and civic links – we will be easier to work with, clearer in what we offer and more ambitious in what we achieve together.**

## WE'VE ALREADY STARTED:

- [Fundraising and volunteering campaign](#)
- [Unit M](#)
- [Manchester Online](#)

## OUR AMBITION

People choose partners not just for what they do, but for what they stand for. Manchester has always partnered for impact: from our civic roots to today's global research networks.

We are already recognised as a global leader in social and environmental impact – ranked first in the UK and Europe, and second in the world in 2025 and the only university to place in the global top ten in all seven years of the *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings. It's why our research shapes climate and social policy, why our cultural institutions are recognised across Europe, and why our alumni and partners continue to choose us.

But we can – and must – go further. By 2035, we will be recognised not only for the quality of our teaching and research, but for how we work with others to put that knowledge to work.

## We will:

### BECOME A GREAT PHILANTHROPIC UNIVERSITY

- We will become a great philanthropic university – where giving, volunteering and connection are part of how we deliver our civic purpose. Our alumni and supporters are already backing the people and ideas that can change the world. This will be reflected in a step change in the amount of funds we raise every year, as well as growth in our endowment.
- By 2035, we will harness this network not just as donors, but as mentors, advocates, collaborators and convenors. With more than half a million alumni worldwide, we can scale the reach, insight and impact of the University in ways we could never achieve alone.
- We will build on this momentum with integrity and focus – connecting people to the causes that matter most and showing the difference their contribution makes. Philanthropy will be aligned to our strategic priorities – backing our ambitions in innovation, digital, health and culture, as well as supporting our students. We will invite our supporters not just to back us, but to challenge us – funding bold bets that only a university like ours can deliver.

- Much of this investment will directly benefit our students – through scholarships, internships, mentoring, innovation funding and enhanced learning opportunities. As we grow our philanthropic ambition, we will ensure that it is visible in student lives and outcomes, supporting a more inclusive and transformative Manchester experience.

## INTERNATIONAL CENTRES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Our international partnerships will be guided by a clearer framework – aligned to our strategy, academic strengths, long-term ambitions and values of social responsibility, equity and inclusive collaboration. We will focus on deeper relationships with institutions who share our purpose and on structuring our collaborations for mutual value.
- Our international centres in Dubai, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore already provide a Manchester education globally. They will now take on a more active role in acting as springboards for research, engagement, philanthropy and industry collaboration.

- Our international centres extend Manchester’s civic reach and enable us to take what works in Manchester to the world but also learn from what works globally to bring back to Manchester. Our collaborations will be more flexible and responsive – from grassroots organisations to policy institutes, social enterprises and communities – creating insight, innovation and impact in diverse contexts.

## MAKE IT EASIER TO PARTNER WITH US AS ONE UNIVERSITY

- We will make it easier to partner with us through a one university approach – and deepen the relationships that turn shared values into sustained action, at home and around the world.
- Externally, we will be easier to navigate, more joined-up and less bureaucratic – with initiatives such as Unit M and Manchester Online helping partners work with us across disciplines and functions. Internally, we will invest in the skills, systems and culture that make cross-university working the norm.
- Our world class facilities and technical expertise will be a key draw for collaboration with research and industry partners, through joint testbeds, contract research and co-funded equipment.



# Digital inside and out

**AI is transforming society and higher education. We need to harness its benefits – including for improving our colleague and student experience, preparing our students for an AI-driven world, and empowering our researchers – but do so responsibly and ethically.**

## WE'VE ALREADY STARTED:

- [Unit M](#)
- [Manchester Online](#)
- [AI Skunkworks](#)

## OUR AMBITION

Building on Manchester's history as the birthplace of modern computing and a city defined by social progress, our digital approach will be inclusive, practical and people-led – creating environments where students and colleagues can do their best work and stay connected across campus and beyond.

We want to use technology to enhance a lasting sense of belonging, connecting members of our community no matter where they are – including through Manchester Online, which is expanding access to our education globally. This includes upholding our commitment to digital equity – through inclusive design, accessible platforms and the right support for every user.

## We will:

### TAKE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO INVESTMENT IN OUR DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL CAMPUS

- We will create a seamless experience across our digital and physical environments so students can learn, colleagues can work, and researchers can collaborate through systems and spaces designed to work together. Our physical spaces will be designed not only to bring people together across disciplines, but to work seamlessly with our digital tools to support inclusive group work, flexible teaching and research, and new forms of connection across campus and beyond, including with our local communities.
- Our digital campus doesn't end at Oxford Road – Manchester Online will expand access to our education locally and globally, widening access to benefit students in our city-region as much as those worldwide. It will also give us a testbed for interdisciplinary and flexible learning models that meet real needs and help us explore how we partner at scale – blending internal and external expertise to move faster and more effectively – a model we will need across our wider digital transformation.
- A new digital-physical masterplan will guide the design and use of our spaces and technology – embedding sustainability and accessibility. Digital twin technology – virtual models of our campus that mirror real-time operations – will help us test ideas, monitor energy use and plan changes more effectively – supporting our ambition for true zero carbon emissions from the energy we buy and use on campus (Scope 1 and 2), powered by smart infrastructure and renewable energy.

## USE AI AND DIGITISATION TO ENHANCE TEACHING, SUPPORT AND DECISIONS

- We will use AI and automation to enhance, not replace, teaching, support and decision-making. By automating routine tasks, colleagues will gain more time for meaningful work. Our approach will be ethical, human-centred and grounded in trust. We will phase out fragmented systems and rebuild key services around what people actually need – creating a connected ecosystem that delivers more personal, frictionless experiences across everything from timetabling to feedback and wellbeing.
- This means deploying intelligent tools where they add value: surfacing insights, reducing admin and freeing up time for meaningful interaction, problem-solving and relationship-building. From personalised and accessible support for learning and the student experience, to new tools to connect students, colleagues and partners – we will build more efficient services and inclusive communities.
- AI is also creating extraordinary new opportunities for research – supporting new ways of working across disciplines, helping researchers interrogate vast datasets, simulating complex systems and revealing insights sooner – opening up new spaces for the curiosity and creativity of our people.

- We will be transparent about how these tools are designed, working with experts across the University to develop responsible practice around ethics and environmental impact. Our AI Skunkworks team is already testing new ideas and identifying ethical challenges.

## BUILD A DIGITALLY-CAPABLE COMMUNITY

- To make this leap, students and colleagues must feel confident in how new digital tools are used. We will invest in training, support and systems that build digital confidence and reduce complexity.
- We will simplify access to tools and systems with user-friendly platforms and responsive support, embedding digital skills into our curricula and career development for every role.
- We will also work with our Students' Union and civic partners to address digital poverty on campus and in our city – ensuring every student and colleague has the connectivity they need, recognising the social and cultural factors that shape participation and belonging in digital spaces.



# What will 2035 feel like?

**How will we know if our strategy is successful? By the positive impact we create and how quickly we deliver it.**

**This means making real change visible in people's lives. Here, we look ahead to what that might feel like for different members of our community in 2035.**

“

**Starting university felt overwhelming – but Manchester helped me settle in quickly and feel like I belonged.**

## **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, ON CAMPUS**

- I've shaped my course around what matters to me – with flexible modules, projects that connect to real challenges and the chance to work with partner organisations tackling issues I care about.
- I've had paid experience through the University's 'earn as you learn' scheme, and my advisor helps me connect what I'm doing now to what I want next.
- When I need support – academic, wellbeing or financial – it's all joined up. I don't have to tell my story twice to get the help I need.

## RESEARCHER IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

- I'm part of the Sustainable Futures platform – working across climate, biodiversity and food systems to co-develop solutions that are ambitious, joined-up and have real impact.
- Our teams form around urgent questions, not disciplinary lines – bringing together researchers, external partners from local government, business sectors and communities to explore what works and what needs to change.
- The environment here enables action – with aligned funding, shared infrastructure and support to lead projects that move fast and reach beyond academia.

“

**I've always wanted to tackle the big, messy questions – and now I can.**

## STRATEGIC EXTERNAL PARTNER

- We chose Manchester because of what it stands for – a university committed to equity and excellence and making real impact that benefits society. That shared purpose runs through everything we do together.
- Through Unit M, we know who to speak to and how things join up. It feels like working with one coordinated team, not separate departments.
- What sets Manchester apart is the mindset – open, ambitious and genuinely collaborative, with students involved in the partnership too. Having bright, motivated students working alongside us brings fresh ideas and energy we really value.

“

**We don't just work with Manchester – we build things together that matter.**

“

**We have a shared purpose and I feel part of something ambitious.**

## COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Our systems work with us, not against us – from AI that handles repetitive tasks to workspaces and tools that flex to how we actually work.
- I'm part of cross-functional teams that have clear goals, space to experiment and leaders who back our suggestions for making things run better.
- What we say is heard, and what we learn is used to improve further. It feels like we're building something together, purposefully and strategically, not just keeping things running.

## LECTURER IN CREATIVE WRITING

- Partner-enabled learning is built into my modules. We co-design briefs with employers, public bodies and community groups. Students earn credit, build a portfolio, and can take paid “earn as you learn” roles.
- My research and scholarship feed into my teaching, which means I'm able to make content relevant with a real-world focus and innovate how I teach and assess.
- The basics are better. A single front door joins up academic, wellbeing and financial support. Timetables make sense with protected project days. Flexible studios, labs and collaboration spaces are open when we need them.
- The infrastructure helps me teach. AI and digital services cut admin and make cross-disciplinary work simple. Workload and recognition frameworks protect time to innovate in the curriculum.

“

**I can teach the way I always wanted to: in-person time for deeper work, hands-on experience for students, and clear support.**

# Delivering our strategy



**This strategy sets our direction, and we will guide how we deliver it: clear principles, shared ways of working and achievable change focused on improving outcomes for our students, colleagues, partners and the communities we serve.**

**We will:**

## **ENABLE COLLABORATIVE, EMPOWERED DECISION-MAKING**

- We will work within a clear framework for engagement – inviting input early, listening throughout, and being transparent about how decisions are made and what success looks like.
- This approach will help focus our collective efforts with a shared understanding of when we are seeking ideas, feedback or endorsement.
- We will work collaboratively with our Trade Unions, the Students' Union and our colleague networks to build trust and work through difficult issues constructively and effectively.

## **TEST EARLY, LEARN QUICKLY, SCALE WHAT WORKS, STOP WHAT DOESN'T**

- Our way of working will be more iterative. We will test ideas early, learn quickly and adjust as we go, scaling up things that work and discontinuing things that don't.
- Feedback will be embedded from the start, so colleagues, students and partners can influence both what we do and how we do it.

- We will place just as much value on lived insight as on data – so we as a community can influence what we do and how we do it, whether that's shaping new learning models, rethinking how we partner with our city, or accelerating research impact.

## **PRIORITISE AND PLAN WITH THE RESOURCES TO SUCCEED**

- We will make clear choices – prioritising the most important work, sequencing activity thoughtfully with the right support and resources, and paying close attention to how change affects colleagues and students.
- We will be rigorous in our financial due diligence as well – understanding both the costs and opportunities of every project we pursue and how it fits into our commitment to financial sustainability and resilience.

## **SUPPORT LEADERSHIP THAT ENABLES, NOT DIRECTS**

- Those in leadership roles will be expected to create the conditions for others to succeed – taking responsibility, listening well and enabling collaboration.

We can only succeed if our community feels able to forge our future together.

MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester



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