



The University of Manchester

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Wednesday, 25 June 2025**

**Present:** Nazir Afzal (Chancellor, in the chair), Jim Hancock (Pro-Chancellor), Professor Duncan Ivison (President and Vice-Chancellor), Dane Anderton (remotely), Cesare Ardito, William Aughton, Ann Barnes, Lexie Baynes (Union Affairs Officer), Elliot Briffa, Gary Buxton, Sandra Collins, Steve Connor, Kathy Cowell, Anna Dawe, Will Day-English, Gillian Easson, Zeb Farooq, Nahid Farzalizadeh, Laura Flynn (remotely), Simeon Gill, Russell Gill, Kim Graakjaer, Susan Hilton, Venice Irving (remotely), Tom Jirat, Sam Kalubowila, Martin Lax (remotely), Ian MacArthur (remotely), Sheena McDonnell, Calum McGowan, George Obolo, Rodger Pannone (Founder), Zoe Papageorgiou, Mark Scoular, Deborah Streatfield, Niels Walet, Rhys Whalley, Mike Wilton, Helen Woodcock, Jiawei Yu (remotely), Ishaka Yukubu (remotely), Jiani Zhou. (42 members)

**In attendance:** Deputy Director (Development), Development and Alumni Relations, Deputy Secretary and Governance Projects and Protocols Officer (minutes). (3 in attendance)

### **1. Welcome and introduction from the Chancellor**

**Reported:** The Chancellor welcomed attendees in the room and online and encouraged those able to stay after the meeting for an opportunity to network.

Congratulations were offered to three alumni of the University who received national honours in the King's Birthday Honours list: Chi Onwurah, Member of Parliament for Newcastle Upon Tyne Central and West, and Chair of the Science, Technology and Innovation Select Committee, who has been made a Dame for services to public service; honorary graduate and former Chancellor of the University (2008-2015), Tom Bloxham, Chairman of Splash and Founding Chair of Factory International, who has been awarded a CBE for services to culture; and, member of the Board of Governors since 2016, Nick Hillman, Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, who has been awarded an OBE for services to Higher Education.

The Chancellor also extended congratulations to other University alumni, supporters and affiliates who had been recognised in the Honours List.

### **2. Minutes**

**Resolved:** The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 were approved.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

**Resolved:** there were no matters arising from the previous meeting

### **4. Report from Nominations and Governance Committee**

**Noted:** the appointment of Matt Haworth to the vacancy for a member of the General Assembly on the Nominations and Governance Committee.

## 5. Online engagement session with General Assembly members

- 5.i **Noted:** the report from the online engagement session held with members on 15 May 2025 and that the suggestions made at the session would be considered as part of the organisation and configuration of future meetings. **Action: Deputy Secretary.**
- 5.ii **Noted:** separately, as discussed at the online session, a report providing student context from the Students' Union's Union Affairs Officer.

The following was **noted** from the questions and comments on the report:

- i. The report provided frank and valuable insights into the current experiences of our students in educational and other ways, including where they were sub-optimal. The report proposed a framework which, in partnership with the University where appropriate, could help to improve the overall student experience for all students and help meet the University's student-focused objectives for Manchester 2035;
- ii. One of the aims of the work being led by the Students' Union was to ensure inclusive teaching practices, and this included encouraging decolonisation of the curriculum. Pilot work and toolkits were in development.

### Resolved:

- a) The Students' Union should be invited to present student voice reports at each General Assembly meeting. **Action: Deputy Secretary/Union Affairs Officer.**
- b) Consideration to be given to holding either a special session focusing on students and their experiences or having an extended item within a scheduled meeting. **Action: Deputy Secretary/Union Affairs Officer.**

## 6. Update on the Higher Education (HE) sector

**Received:** a presentation from the President and Vice-Chancellor on the HE landscape.

The President and Vice-Chancellor **reported:**

- i. It was encouraging that the Government recognised the critical role that universities play in driving growth locally, regionally and nationally. This was evident in both its research and development funding commitments and Industrial Strategy;
- ii. While there was some acknowledgment of the importance of international students to the sector and the UK economy more generally, the signal being given in the Immigration White Paper was at odds with a desire to welcome them, with the graduate route visa being reduced from two years to 18 months;
- iii. The proposal for a 6% levy on HE institutions' income from international students, to be reinvested into the HE and skills system, was a serious concern at a time when the UK had a rare opportunity to become a global beacon for HE (a theory posited by alumnus and Nobel Prize winning economist, Professor Simon Johnson);
- iv. The Freedom of Speech legislation had both positive and more problematic elements, with the guiding principles being securing and promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. Colleagues would be working through the Office for Students' guidance carefully to ensure compliance, noting the continued importance of fostering inclusive conversations;
- v. It was clear that within the sector there remained a substantial amount of financial instability. While this University was not unstable financially, there was an

understanding across the institution that there was no room for complacency, not least as funds were much needed for investment. The President and Vice-Chancellor, with other vice-chancellors and senior leaders, would continue to lobby the Government on the key issues bringing financial instability to the sector. Members of General Assembly who were in a position to do so were encouraged to use their networks to do similarly.

## 7. University Strategy: Manchester 2035

**Received:** an update from the President and Vice-Chancellor on the latest stage in the development of the University's Strategy for the next ten years, [Manchester 2035](#).

The President and Vice-Chancellor **reported:**

- i. Following the first 'ideation' phase and the second 'testing proposals' phase, the third 'approval and publishing' phase had now been entered;
- ii. The timetable for Board review and approval would enable the formal launch in October 2025;
- iii. Key concepts emerging for explicit inclusion in the Strategy included:
  - Partner-enabled learning – where every student has the opportunity to undertake learning in context. This could take many forms e.g. off campus or online work placements/internships, group work to solve a real-life set of problems on campus, etc. Students would be consulted to see what they would value, factoring in their personal circumstances;
  - Widening access for those who currently cannot benefit from a Manchester education by enhancing our digital offer and increasing flexibility to personalise learning options;
  - Making our interdisciplinary research partnerships the best and most appealing and identifiable in the world;
  - Accelerating the translation of our research to real life products/solutions to benefit society more quickly while increasing our income for investment.
- iv. In order to deliver on these 'leaps,' investment would be needed in them as well as in the 'foundations' which underpin the infrastructure needed to support them and more generally modernise and improve outdated systems.

After the presentation the following points were **noted** from the discussions:

1. While the benefits of partner-enabled learning were numerous, in order to be accessible and sustainable, providing financial aid for those based off campus without their own means should be explored; in this context, it was noted that the planned variety of partner learning opportunities envisaged would help to mitigate this risk;
2. Context-based learning would be challenging to set up for such a large student body (currently c.48,000) and would bring some safeguarding challenges. However, the assistance of willing partners and having a rigorous risk assessment framework in place, based on existing ones, where appropriate, should make it possible. Having online as well as on campus opportunities would not only increase choice for students but would reduce some of the potential regulatory burden;
3. While the University's importance to the city was undeniable, the city's significance to the institution was equally important and brought with it a profound level of responsibility which would be honoured by Manchester 2035;
4. Consideration would be given to the evolution of the University's identity over the lifetime of the strategy, built around our values and having at its core, the essential fundamental features of excellent teaching, learning and student experience,

- outstanding research and innovation and an ongoing commitment to delivering benefit to communities locally, regionally, nationally and globally;
5. Crucial to our success and reputation would be having robust criteria and procedures for managing all types of partnerships within the UK and internationally to ensure alignment with our strategy and underpinning values;
  6. Our scale would ensure that on-campus learning would continue alongside high quality digital options for those who want or need this type of access;
  7. Our commitment to enhancing educational attainment levels, and therefore the life chances of young people across the region, would be ongoing, working in partnership with the secondary level, the FE sector, businesses and others to provide flexible, personalised learning (potentially across the traditional binary, academic/technical divide).
  8. The potential for philanthropy to support further efforts to widen access.

**Resolved:** Any further feedback should be sent to: [deputysecretary@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:deputysecretary@manchester.ac.uk).

## 8. University Campaign

**Received:** a presentation from the Deputy Director (Development), Development and Alumni Relations, on the University's fundraising campaign.

### Reported:

- i. The campaign would formally launch in November, following a number of years of preparatory work during 'the quiet phase';
- ii. A significant amount of work with donors in the lead up to the launch had yielded a sum which would be announced in November to make the overall target feel more attainable to others and so more inclined to give;
- iii. The Campaign is a University-wide endeavour which focuses not only on raising Funds, but also volunteering. Every member of the University community would have the chance to get involved. To this end, four defined areas of impact to drive engagement have been identified:
  - student inclusion and success;
  - research with purpose;
  - innovation and enterprise;
  - culture and community.
- iv. Key objectives were to:
  - create a sustainable increase in philanthropic income, delivering an enduring uplift in fundraising income;
  - enhance our global reputation by telling a big, bold story about Manchester;
  - enable our people to take action to help deliver our strategic goals.
- v. The timing of the formal launch of the campaign had been chosen because of its direct link to the new strategy and its importance to achieving our 2035 ambitions. Philanthropy would be essential to delivering our foundations and leaps. It would provide funding for important schemes like transformational financial aid packages for students and assistance for early career researchers, high profile chairs, and major investments in our innovation ecosystem or cultural institutions.
- vi. Members who wish to help can do so by raising awareness of the campaign, volunteering, supporting relationships and considering potential donors in their networks, sharing any ideas with the Directorate of Development and Alumni Relations and donating.

After the presentation the following points were **noted** from the discussions:

- a) Donor profiles vary from those who give regular, small amounts to major donors who pledge several millions of pounds and bequests left in wills. All of these relationships are important and managed carefully and considerably.

- b) It is hoped that the campaign will deliver a sustainable increase in philanthropic income, by raising roughly double as much per annum by the end of the campaign compared to the period before campaign launch.

**Resolved:** Any feedback or queries should be sent to: [supporters@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:supporters@manchester.ac.uk)

## 9. Chair's Concluding Remarks

**Reported:** The Chancellor thanked presenters and members for their valuable contributions and concluded by highlighting the University's ongoing success in the QS World Rankings (35<sup>th</sup>), and in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings in which we retained our position as 1st in the UK and Europe and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world based on progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, Manchester Museum was recently awarded European Museum of the Year status.

Such achievements were already important parts of the University's identity and likely to remain so over the next decade.

## 10.\* Dates of meetings of the General Assembly in 2025-26

**Noted:** General Assembly would meet on:  
 Wednesday 14 January 2026  
 and  
 Wednesday 24 June 2026

Both meetings would take place between 3.00 and 4.30pm and be followed by a reception.

## General Assembly Actions from 25 June 2025

Minute	Action	Update
5.i	<b>Deputy Secretary</b> To consider the suggestions made at the online engagement session as part of the organisation and configuration of future meetings.	On-going
5.ii	<b>Deputy Secretary/Union Affairs Officer</b> a. The Students' Union to be invited to present student voice reports to that presented at each General Assembly meeting.  b. Consideration to be given to holding either a special session focusing on students and their experiences or having an extended item within a scheduled meeting.	As part of the agenda setting process for future meetings – on-going  As part of the agenda setting process for future meetings – on-going
7.	<b>All members</b> Any further feedback should be sent to: <a href="mailto:deputysecretary@manchester.ac.uk">deputysecretary@manchester.ac.uk</a> .	On-going
8.	<b>All members</b> Any feedback or queries should be sent to: <a href="mailto:supporters@manchester.ac.uk">supporters@manchester.ac.uk</a>	On-going