

Social responsibility framework

From Manchester for the world

2026



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Background

We worked with more than 12,000 colleagues, students, alumni, civic, industry and community partners to develop our Manchester 2035 strategy *From Manchester for the world*. In this we established Social Responsibility as one of the five 'Foundations' – something that underpins everything we do. Social responsibility is embedded across a range of our strategy 'Leaps' – specific and bold initiatives that the future demands.

As the first UK university to establish social responsibility as a core goal, *From Manchester for the world* commits us to build on our world-leading reputation for social, economic, environmental, health and cultural impact. Because of our success to date, we are establishing social responsibility as a Foundation across all that we do – in our research, our teaching and learning, our engagement with the public and how we operate across our professional services.

As a foundation of our new strategy, social responsibility – including public and civic engagement, environmental sustainability, cultural engagement and equality, diversity and inclusion – will become even more visible and distinctive. It will influence and inform our broadest range of policies across the University, enhance our external partnerships and engagement, inspire colleagues and students to choose Manchester, advance equity of access to higher education and inform our commitment to environmental sustainability.

We also aim to redefine what it means to be a great civic university in the 21st century. Drawing on our work with the Greater Manchester city and region, we will codevelop ideas and solutions that our communities and the world urgently need.

We're internationally recognised for our positive social, economic, environmental, health and cultural impact, particularly through our performance in the Times Higher Education Impact Ratings, where we lead the UK and Europe in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are a Platinum Watermark holder for Public Engagement. We hold external accreditation for Race, Gender, Disability and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Our cultural institutions – Manchester Museum, the Whitworth, the John Rylands Research Institute and Library and Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement – serve as models of social responsibility, inclusion and creativity. We are committed to widening educational opportunities in Greater Manchester and beyond. And we are committed to achieve zero direct carbon emissions for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2038 and net zero by 2050 for Scope 3 emissions. But the world is changing fast and we need to be dynamic in responding to new challenges.

This framework for social responsibility aligns institutional priorities across public, civic and community engagement, cultural engagement, environmental sustainability, and equality, diversity, and inclusion agendas. It will build on our successes and support the delivery of Manchester 2035 by signalling new priorities, opportunities, and measures of success.

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Scope

The scope for this Social Responsibility Framework is the key portfolio areas of the Vice-President for Social Responsibility and aspects of the Vice-President for Civic Engagement and Innovation. It therefore includes.

- Public, civic and community engagement
- Environmental sustainability
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Cultural institutions and engagement

Pillars

There are four pillars that frame how we will support our foundational commitment in Manchester 2035 to be values-led and socially responsible. These are:

1. Engaged research
2. Engaged teaching, learning and students
3. Engaged practice
4. Engaged operations



Pillars

Theme	Descriptor	Manchester 2035
Engaged research	Our research will address pressing societal challenges, create real public benefit, involve people in participatory ways, be inclusive and operate sustainably, all while safeguarding academic freedom and integrity.	Foundation: Commitment to outstanding teaching and research Leap: Accelerating the path from research excellence to impact
Engaged teaching, learning and students	Students from all backgrounds will actively contribute to social responsibility through their learning, wider student experience and future impact as citizens and professionals, helping to build a fairer, healthier, more sustainable and prosperous society – locally, nationally and globally.	Foundation: Commitment to outstanding teaching and research Leap: Flexible, personalised and digitally enabled learning
Engaged practice	As a public-facing institution, we are committed to sharing our knowledge, partnering with others and acting as a convener to advance social responsibility, environmental sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion. We will invest in our world-leading spaces of culture and advance dialogue and meaningful interaction that opens our University to local and global communities. Through events, training, programmes and partnerships, we will support colleagues and students to engage with the public, co-produce ideas and solutions, operate inclusively and sustainably and strengthen social responsibility through mutual learning.	Foundation: Valued-led and socially responsible Leaps: The University to partner with; Accelerating the path from research excellence to impact; Flexible, personalised and digitally enabled learning
Engaged operations	As a major anchor institution, we will advance social responsibility, environmental sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion through our core University operations – finance and procurement, employment, estates and facilities, communications, governance and reporting – by advancing inclusive, ethical and transparent practices that generate social and environmental value and strengthen community engagement.	Foundations: Values-led and socially responsible; Of Manchester and for the world; A place where you matter Leap: The University to partner with



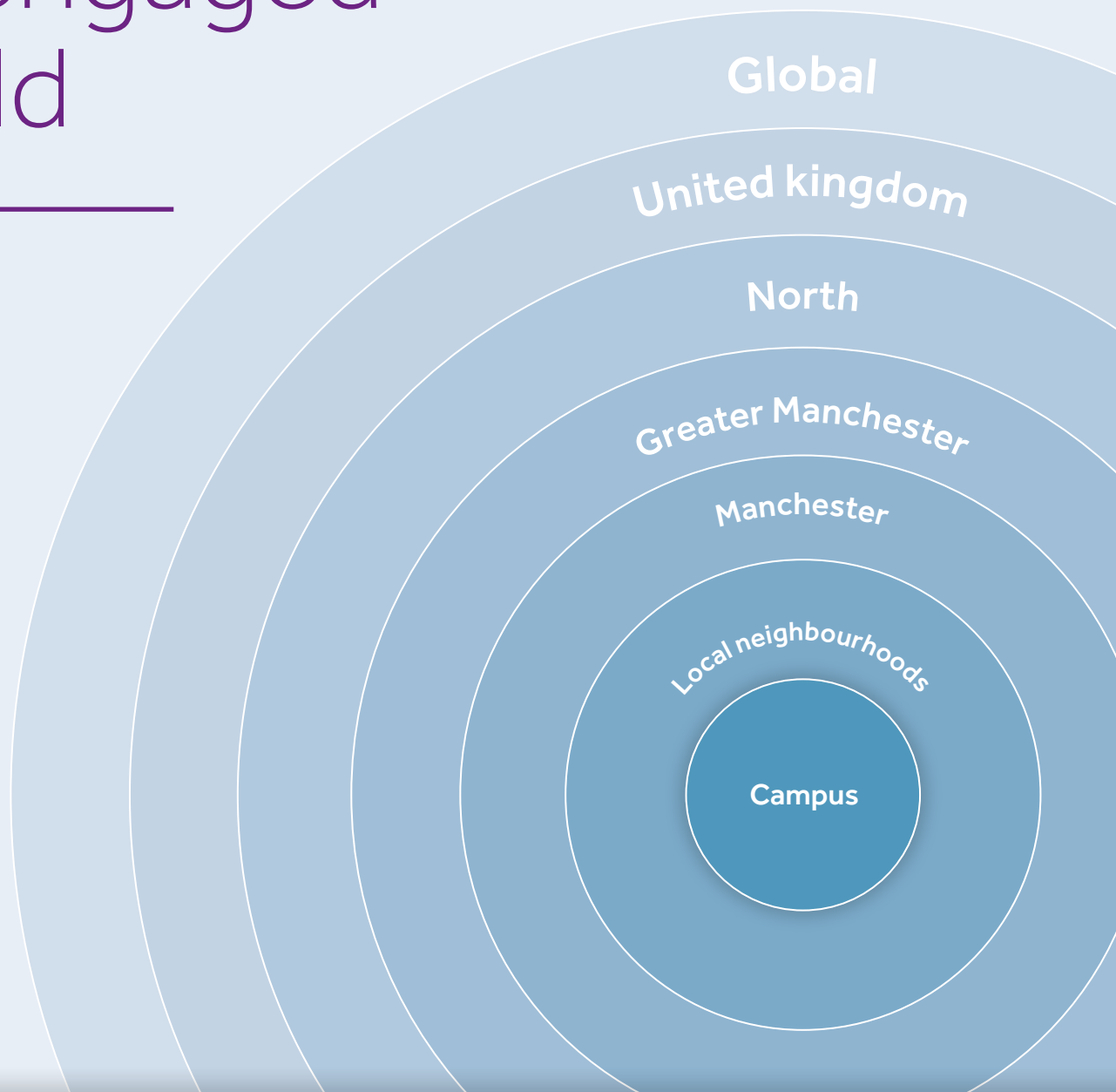
Place: civically engaged and for the world

The focus and impact of the University's work on social responsibility – including public and civic engagement, environmental sustainability, cultural engagement and equality, diversity and inclusion – can be seen at all levels.

These span our campus – engaging colleagues, students and our infrastructure – and extend into communities and schools across our region and beyond, right through to partnerships in the Global South.

The priority we give to our programmes of work, partnerships and impact in Greater Manchester is part of what we call civic engagement.

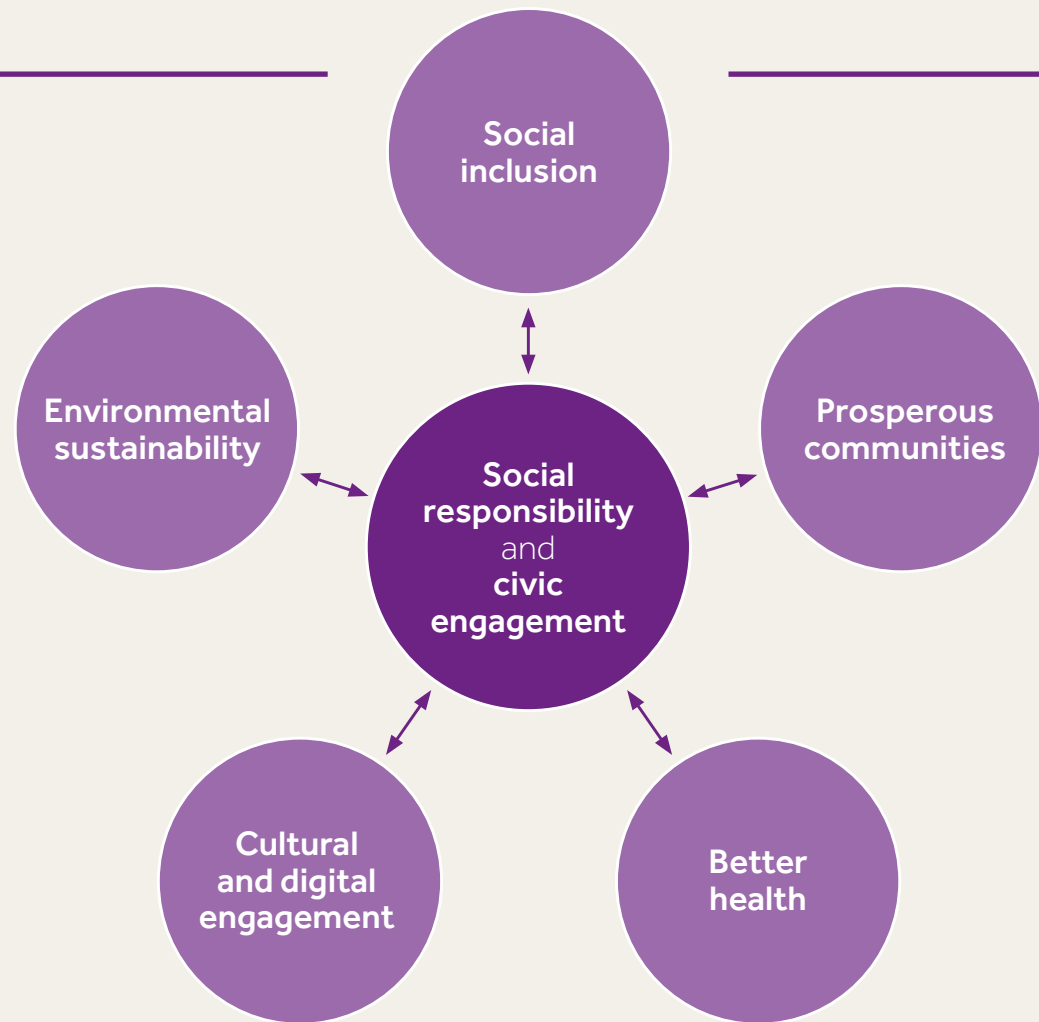
As the original civic university, The University of Manchester was established by and for the people of Greater Manchester during the industrial revolution. As we enter our third century, we want to redefine what it means to be a great civic university for the technological, geopolitical, environmental, economic and social revolutions shaping the 21st century. Greater Manchester is where our main campus is based, where three-quarters of our colleagues choose to live, where our major cultural institutions are based and where we recruit our largest number of UK-home students. It is also where we prioritise and build the deepest relationships with public, private and community partners. The work that we undertake to advance social, economic, environmental, health and cultural wellbeing in Greater Manchester is part of our commitment to civic engagement.



Priorities

Our work on social responsibility – including public and civic engagement, environmental sustainability, cultural engagement and equality, diversity and inclusion – is focused on addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our communities and the wider world.

To ensure that our efforts are well aligned and have the greatest possible impact, we have agreed five shared priorities that bring coherence and alignment to our social responsibility and civic engagement priorities. These priorities, linked to the University's core strengths and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, provide a common framework for action, guiding how we connect our research, teaching and partnerships to the issues that matter most across our work on public and civic engagement, environmental sustainability, cultural engagement and equality, diversity and inclusion



Priorities

Social inclusion

The challenge

Pronounced social inequalities, growing polarisation, prejudice and discrimination blight people's lives in Greater Manchester, the UK and worldwide.

Our response

We will listen to, engage, and involve colleagues, students, communities, and partners to advance social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and diversity. We will widen access to our education, work opportunities, and lifelong learning, ensuring that people from all backgrounds can benefit from the knowledge, skills, and experiences that empower individuals and strengthen society. Through inclusive campus operations and collaborative partnerships, we will create pathways that reduce barriers and promote fairness at every level.



Priorities

Prosperous communities

The challenge

Despite Greater Manchester's strong regional partnerships and innovation assets, persistent productivity gaps compared to the South East mean that too few high-quality jobs are being created in the sectors that can secure the region's long-term prosperity.

Our response

We will drive the future prosperity of Greater Manchester and beyond by forging stronger partnerships with employers, entrepreneurs, donors, alumni, civic leaders, and cultural organisations to advance inclusive growth. Through transformative initiatives such as Unit M, our Sister innovation district and a full-stack ecosystem spanning enterprise, education, and research, we will unlock the University's potential to catalyse inclusive innovation and create lasting impact



Priorities

Better health

The challenge

Disease and health inequalities permeate our city region and the wider world, affecting individuals, communities and populations.

Our response

We will support advances in health equity through our Healthier Futures platform, and help tackle disease by listening to, partnering with, engaging, and involving people on campus, in local communities and worldwide. In Greater Manchester, we engage students, collaborate closely with NHS trusts and Health Innovation Manchester, and work with our city-region's health and social care partnership. Nationally and globally, we will strengthen partnerships with healthcare providers, policymakers, and organizations.. In particular, we will target work in the Global South to tackle disease, improve access to care, and deliver inclusive solutions that transform lives.



Priorities

Environmental sustainability

The challenge

Climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion are among the most urgent challenges facing humanity and the natural world.

Our response

We will contribute to a just transition to net-zero, protect and restore nature, and inspire action through our knowledge, skills and collaboration, particularly through our Sustainable Futures platform. This will involve cutting direct and indirect carbon emissions from our campus operations, inspiring students and communities to address sustainability challenges through knowledge and skills and using our research to deliver practical solutions to sustainability key challenges.



Priorities

Cultural and digital engagement

The challenge

Our University has world-class cultural institutions and burgeoning digital capabilities, yet too many people remain excluded from these opportunities. Barriers to cultural access, digital divides, and underrepresentation limit participation and prevent communities from realising the benefits that cultural and digital engagement can bring — from sparking creativity and lifelong learning to strengthening social cohesion and driving growth.

Our response

Through our world-leading cultural institutions — Manchester Museum, the Whitworth, John Rylands Library, and Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement — and our Creative Manchester platform, we will use our collections, exhibitions, and convening power to foster greater inclusion, care, and creativity. We will ensure our digital knowledge, skills, and resources enhance our reach, engaging people from the widest range of backgrounds, particularly through the work of our Digital Futures platform. Together, this work will support our creative and digital economies, expand our engagement and amplify our impact.



Governance and work plans

Our Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) plays a crucial role in the governance of social responsibility at The University of Manchester and is responsible for setting strategic priorities, monitoring progress, and ensuring alignment with the University's broader goals. It is chaired by the Vice-President for Social Responsibility and is one of six Executive Committees of the University Executive.

In addition, three Assurance Committees focus on specific areas: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC); Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC); Cultural Institutions Governance Committee (CIGC). A Public, Civic and Community Engagement (PCCE) Group also operates as a sub-committee of SRC. An important principle is that each of these committees have student representation. These groups are each responsible for developing work plans and reporting progress quarterly through to the Social Responsibility Committee.



Performance measures and actions



There are eight overall measures in Manchester 2035 covering a range of performance measures.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Positive responses from the National Student Survey (NSS) place us in the upper quartile of the Sector for all themes.

RESEARCH

More subjects recognised as globally leading in research, with Ten in the top 10 and 25 in the top 25 of the QS subject rankings.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Top 1% globally for THE Impact Rankings and achieving Zero Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2038.

INNOVATION

Increased staff and student meaningful engagement with, and income from, innovation.

ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY

The proportion of UK graduates progressing to high skilled employment or further is in the top quartile of the sector and we improve graduate engagement rates across all domiciles.

COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT

Year on year increase in colleague engagement and response rate in Your Voice Matters Survey.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Generating sufficient operating cash to invest in our priorities.

BRAND AND REPUTATION

Rising in key global rankings year on year (QS/ARWU/THE WUR).

One of the eight Manchester 2035 measures focuses on our performance in social responsibility. This indicator has two elements:

- To perform in the top 1% of universities in the world for impact towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as measured by the Times Higher Education's Impact Ratings.
- To achieve Zero Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2038.

In addition to these two *Manchester 2035* measures, a small number of University Executive Measures and Actions for Social Responsibility will form part of a balanced scorecard report by the Vice-President for Social Responsibility. These measures are as follows, on pages 15 and 16.





Manchester 2035 Measures

- 1 Feature in the top 1% of universities in the world for impact towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as measured by the Times Higher Education's Impact Ratings
- 2 Work towards achieving Zero Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2038

University Executive Measures

- 3 Perform in the top quintile for public and community engagement in the UK as measured by the government's Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)
- 4 Increase representation of underrepresented groups across our colleague and student body, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles, measured through annual diversity profile for colleagues and students.
- 5 Strengthen the sense of inclusion, belonging and mattering for everyone in our community measured by responses to belonging, mattering and inclusion questions in colleague engagement surveys and student experience surveys.
- 6 Pay gaps and awarding gaps: reduce gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps across the institution and close gaps in degree awarding and progression for underrepresented groups, measured by annual pay gap reporting and awarding gap analysis, with year-on-year improvement.
- 7 Measure of annual teaching modules (internal and external) that are delivered through our four Cultural Institutions.
- 8 At least 1.25 million footfall per annum to our Cultural Institutions.
- 9 Measure and enhance philanthropic income to our four Cultural Institutions.
- 10 Measures of annual visits to our four Cultural Institutions' collections for research (internal and external).
- 11 Peer reviewed publications referencing our Cultural Institution collections.

Manchester 2035 Priority Actions

- 12 Contribute to and shape the priorities for partner-enabled learning
 - 13 Strengthen social responsibility and civic engagement partnership processes to drive engagement and impact.
 - 14 Draft a 5-year roadmap for reducing Scope 3 emissions with SMART targets for each top 10 priority category.
 - 15 Develop a waste and circular economy plan.
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