MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

From Manchester for the world

Manchester 2035 Research Delivery Plan

PHASE ONE

CONTENTS

Research Delivery Plan: Phase one 3

Building on our strong foundations 4

Priorities at a glance 5

Priority 1:
Catalyse outstanding research and impact 6

Priority 2:
Transform our research platforms 7

Priority 3:
Ensure a successful and inclusive postgraduate researcher community 8

Priority 4:
Build the conditions to support and scale a thriving fellowship community 9

Priority 5:
Attract, retain and develop great research teams 10

Priority 6:
Enhance the quality of our research culture and environment 11

Priority 7:
Strengthen our global influence and reputation 12

Spotlight:
Transforming our research platforms 13

Useful links

Strategy to 2035

Delivery Handbook

Accountability Framework

Research leadership for the Delivery Plan



Professor Colette Fagan
Vice-President Research



Professor Richard Curry
Associate Vice-President Research and Innovation



Professor Melissa Westwood
Associate Vice-President Research and Innovation



Professor Elizabeth Cartwright
Academic Director Manchester Doctoral College



Professor Caroline Jay
Chair of Research Infrastructure Strategy Group



Professor Mahesan Nirmalan
Associate Vice-President Responsible Research Practice



Professor Angelia Wilson
Associate Vice-President International



Professor Aline Miller
Associate Vice-President Enterprise



Professor Andy Trafford
Vice-Dean Research and Innovation of the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health



Professor James Evans
Vice-Dean Research and Innovation of the Faculty of Humanities



Professor Sarah Haigh
Vice-Dean Research and Innovation of the Faculty of Science and Engineering



Dr Andrew Walsh
Executive Director of Research and Business Engagement

Research Delivery Plan: Phase one

By 2035, we will be known for accelerating outstanding research and impact; recognised as the university that turns great research into public good by integrating research, innovation and civic partnership – faster, bolder and at greater scale. We will be easy to engage with and built to deliver ambitious research. A university where academic freedom, collaboration and great ideas thrive and careers flourish. Connecting researchers, students and partners to address the world's biggest challenges, discover bold solutions and influence policy, industry and community action. We will tell Manchester's story to an external audience, amplifying our reputation around the world. We will enrich and inspire our students' experience with our research-intensive environment.

Our strategy to 2035, *From Manchester for the world,* sets our ambitions and direction. This Research Delivery Plan summarises our seven priorities and what we will achieve in phase one – years one to three – of the ten-year strategy. New investment is underway to:

- Catalyse outstanding curiosity-driven and challenge-led interdisciplinary research.
- Grow research income from government, charity and industry funding; including a new fund to support preparation of applications for the Horizon Europe funding programme.
- Transform our research platforms, working with our Research Institutes to mobilise our capabilities in new ways and delivering impact faster enabled by investment in our innovation ecosystem.
- Launch the PhD by Enterprise programme and recruit Bicentenary PhD Studentships and Fellowships.
- Scale a thriving Fellowship community.
- Attract outstanding researchers from across the world.
- Deliver research leadership development programmes at all career stages.
- Enhance the quality and resilience of our research culture and environment, including our world-class research facilities.
- Strengthen our international research collaborations, impact and reputation as the University to partner with.

The M2035 Delivery Handbook sets the framework for our approach to this Delivery Plan, defining success from the start, tracking benefits and collecting feedback that will help shape future phases.

We will track and evaluate our performance through the research dashboard of key national and international indicators. These include global standing, the UK's Research Excellence Framework, research income, citations and the progression of postgraduate researchers. We will also capture qualitative evidence, including case studies and narratives, to inform our evaluation and communications.

BUILDING ON OUR STRONG FOUNDATIONS

We have a world-class record of research excellence and impact, recognised in global rankings and the UK's Research Excellence Framework. Our researchers, in collaboration with local, national and global partners and policymakers, deliver outstanding research with purpose and societal benefit.

We will continue to provide our research community – which includes over 4,000 postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and 2,000 postdoctoral researchers – with the conditions to create ambitious research with faster impact, to build and sustain inclusive teams, and to organise beyond disciplines for curiosity-driven or challenge-led research.

Our ambition will be delivered by our exceptional academics, professional and technical teams working with world-class facilities. Our research culture and environment enables them to thrive with diverse and rewarding careers; producing open, responsible, trusted and impactful research. Our Research Institutes, centres and groups are at the forefront of our research. Their longstanding partnerships and strong track records in research and impact have contributed to our reputation as a research powerhouse. Our Research Platforms, Creative Manchester, Digital Futures, Healthier Futures and Sustainable Futures, enable us to mobilise in new ways – building new interdisciplinary collaborations between our research teams and with external partners to accelerate research excellence and impact.

Nurturing our next generation researchers remains a core focus, providing postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers with the skills, confidence and adaptability needed to navigate and shape an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

We will maintain an excellent track record in PGR training, with funding from a range of UK and international sources, including industrial partners – with Doctoral Landscape and Focal Awards among our flagship funded programmes. Our commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat ensures our postdoctoral researchers are equipped to thrive in careers within and beyond academia.

Our partnerships are a core foundation of our research strength: they connect us locally, nationally and globally with the expertise, facilities, perspectives and shared commitment needed to mobilise our research to deliver societal benefit.

PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

Accelerating outstanding research into impact: one of five 'leaps' set in our strategy to 2035, *From Manchester, for the world.*

To achieve this leap, we have set seven priorities to build on our strong foundations for phase one of our Research Delivery Plan. Taken together, these priorities will:

- Catalyse outstanding research and impact.
- Champion curiosity-driven research and focus challenge-led research on the world's most pressing global challenges.
- Transform our research platforms to mobilise new interdisciplinary research and innovation, partnerships, and new opportunities to enrich our students' learning.
- Create the conditions that enable our researchers to thrive and produce outstanding research and impact at every career stage.

PRIORITY 1: CATALYSE OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND IMPACT

PRIORITY 2: TRANSFORM OUR RESEARCH PLATFORMS

PRIORITY 3: ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL AND INCLUSIVE PGR COMMUNITY

PRIORITY 4: BUILD THE CONDITIONS TO SUPPORT AND SCALE A THRIVING FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY

PRIORITY 5: ATTRACT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP GREAT RESEARCH TEAMS

PRIORITY 6: ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF OUR RESEARCH CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

PRIORITY 7: STRENGTHEN OUR GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION

PRIORITY 1: CATALYSE OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND IMPACT

We work with partners locally, nationally and globally and use our research strengths and scale to create new knowledge that tackles world problems, delivers meaningful benefit and leads to transformative change.

In the first phase we are developing our M2035 challenges, focusing our energy where Manchester can lead at scale; to be launched in 2027 (year two of the strategy). Alongside this focus, new investments in internal pump priming competitions will enable teams to accelerate their research, including preparing applications for external research funding.

This pump priming includes the new fund to support curiosity-driven research (launched in 2026). Curiosity-driven research underpins our understanding of the world, providing the foundations for transformative applications, new discoveries and interpretations, and innovative methodologies across all disciplines. The new fund supports colleagues to connect and collaborate in new ways focused on emerging and novel research areas with the potential to advance knowledge, build deeper understanding, uncover new research directions and seed the next wave of breakthroughs.

This new investment complements other strategic internal research investments. We have refreshed our pump-priming interdisciplinary challenge-led research and launched new support for preparing applications for the Horizon Europe funding programme (launched in 2026). All investments will provide opportunities for our researchers to advance their research and connect people and disciplines in new ways to generate solutions.

This will strengthen our research quality and impact, which will be captured in our submission to the UK's Research Excellence Framework 2029 and will enhance our global reputation and standing.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE AND RESEARCH IMPACT GROUP

Colette Fagan

Richard Curry

PRIORITY 2: TRANSFORM OUR RESEARCH PLATFORMS

Through our Research Platforms we are mobilising our research capabilities in new ways, to build deeper partnerships, connect our research to the innovation ecosystem, philanthropy, international centres and teaching, and turn ideas into action locally and globally.

In the first phase platforms will:

- **Catalyse research and partnerships**: convene interdisciplinary research communities, connect researchers with external partners and seed new collaborations aligned to major societal challenges and funding opportunities.
- **Deliver impact and innovation**: work in collaboration with colleagues across the innovation ecosystem, including Unit M, to facilitate activities with industry, policy, civic and community partners to strengthen pathways from research excellence to impact.
- **Enhance curriculum and skills development**: connect research to our students' teaching and learning across career stages through challenge-led learning, placements, training and development programmes.
- **Amplify our narrative and identity:** showcase research, partnerships and impact to strengthen the visibility and awareness of our research and enhance our reputation locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

The Platforms will work with our Research Institutes and centres and help researchers form teams, secure funding and work with partners on shared goals. They will be a major draw for international talent and enhance our students' learning.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Colette Fagan

Richard Curry

Aline Miller

Platform directors:

- *Creative Manchester*
  Michelle Phillips
- *Digital Futures*
  Richard Kingston
- *Healthier Futures*
  Nicky Cullum and Sarah Marie Hall
- *Sustainable Futures*
  Alice Larkin and Helen Holmes

PRIORITY 3: ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL AND INCLUSIVE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHER COMMUNITY

We will continue to develop and support an innovative, transformative, collaborative and diverse postgraduate researcher (PGR) community who contribute critically to the University's research and innovation ecosystem.

Our PGRs are integral to our research culture and delivery of impact to the economy, environment, society, culture and health.

In the first phase, in collaboration with the Innovation Committee, we have launched the PhD by Enterprise Programme, a transformative approach to doctoral education. This PhD programme addresses the commercialisation potential of research and will develop a new generation of entrepreneurial researchers adept at navigating the innovation ecosystem. We are increasing our PGRs' capacity for interdisciplinary research through investment in Bicentenary studentships and reforming the focus of the President's Doctoral Scholar award.

At the end of phase one, we will have enhanced the experience and employability of our PGRs, with many in research and innovation functions across different sectors of the economy.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE AND MANCHESTER DOCTORAL COLLEGE STRATEGY GROUP

Melissa Westwood

Elizabeth Cartwright

Aline Miller



PRIORITY 4: BUILD THE CONDITIONS TO SUPPORT AND SCALE A THRIVING FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY

Fellowships are a critical route to attracting, developing and retaining outstanding researchers and future research leaders.

We will grow a successful community through externally funded opportunities, sustained investment in Fellowships and visible, connected, equitable support that enables Fellows to thrive, progress and contribute fully to our research ambitions.

In the first phase, the Fellowship Strategy Group will develop a clear and transparent framework to enhance support and development opportunities for award holders, while shaping propositions for new internal Fellowship opportunities.

This will improve the research environment and support for Fellows at all career stages, enhance our reputation and make us the destination of choice for researchers.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE AND FELLOWSHIP STRATEGY GROUP

Melissa Westwood



PRIORITY 5: ATTRACT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP GREAT RESEARCH TEAMS

We are increasing our investment in people, building our teams to accelerate outstanding curiosity-driven and challenge-led research and impact.

In the first phase we are investing in recruiting additional world-leading researchers to the priority areas that we want to scale; both expanding current teams and building new ones. This complements our continued investment in early career researchers and new additional focused support for our established researchers, equipping them to build and lead teams and to become world-leading in their chosen fields. This investment in established researchers includes expansion of our popular research leadership development programmes and mentoring schemes.

This targeted investment at all career stages is the foundation for achieving our M2035 leap to accelerate outstanding research and impact – it is only possible with the people who foster an ambitious, creative, energised, collaborative and inclusive research culture.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Colette Fagan

Richard Curry

Melissa Westwood



PRIORITY 6: ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF OUR RESEARCH CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Our 'one university' approach to planning and managing our facilities, infrastructure and systems will ensure a resilient and world-class environment, creating the conditions that empower researchers to conduct bold, ambitious, outstanding research.

We will continue to develop our Research Culture and Environment. We maintain our commitment to the effective implementation of sector-wide concordats. We will ensure our research is open and responsible, supports academic freedom, enables collaborations, maintains public trust and delivers benefits for society. This includes fostering a culture of security-conscious research practice. Our Statement of Social Responsibility in Research encapsulates our values and ways of working.

We are establishing our One Research Facility, ensuring efficient and equitable access to facilities and delivering research-enabling service enhancements. We will continue to drive the development of open research skills and innovation through additional investment in our Office for Open Research; including the Open Research Fellowship programme.

This continued innovation in our Research Culture and Environment will enable our researchers to aim high and to do their very best research and innovation. It will empower our community to produce excellent research, to make their discoveries and knowledge accessible and trustworthy, and to deliver public benefit through research impact. Our research-intensive culture and environment will inspire our students and enrich their learning.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE
Melissa Westwood

RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY GROUP
Caroline Jay

OPEN RESEARCH STRATEGY GROUP
Colette Fagan

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH, ETHICS AND INTEGRITY
Mahesan Nirmalan

RESEARCH AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP GROUP
Andrew Walsh

PRIORITY 7: STRENGTHEN OUR GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION

We will establish and maintain research collaborations with international partners to make our research more powerful, uncover new directions, build deeper understanding and drive impact.

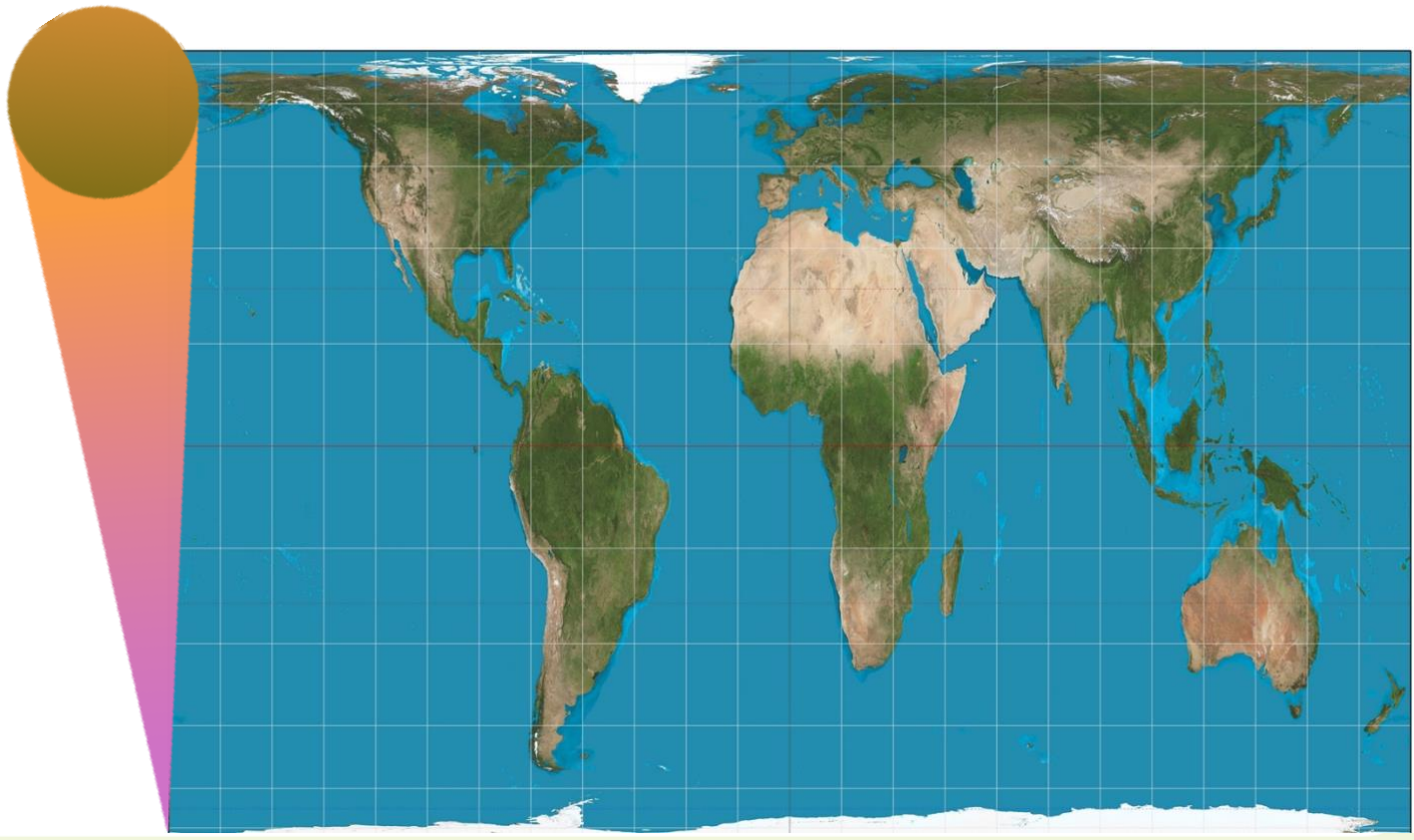
In the first phase we will deliver collaborative research with international partners, steering the focus to complement our research strengths and priorities. Together we will develop world-leading researchers and facilitate the co-production of knowledge and capacity sharing with Global Majority partners.

This will strengthen our research collaborations and our impact and global reputation, which will contribute to our performance in global rankings.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Colette Fagan

Angelia Wilson



SPOTLIGHT: TRANSFORMING OUR RESEARCH PLATFORMS

From Manchester for the world – About Research Platforms

Creative Manchester, Digital Futures, Sustainable Futures and Healthier Futures will be central to how we organise as a university, representing collaborative and interdisciplinary research across our full breadth of disciplines.

Our Research Platforms Delivery Plan is structured across four priorities:

1	2	3	4
Catalyse research and partnerships	Deliver impact and innovation	Enhance curriculum and skills development	Amplify our narrative and identity

In the first year of the strategy the platforms have:

- Assembled platform academic leadership teams and capability.
- Connected people, ideas and resources across the University – helping researchers form teams, design curricula, secure funding and work with partners on shared goals.
- Connected our research with enterprise, investment and entrepreneurship so discoveries move more quickly into ventures, services and civic solutions.
- Deepened partnerships with industry, charities and cultural organisations to accelerate impact.
- Developed initiatives to give more students the opportunity to learn through challenge-focused learning and research-led experiences.
- Launched the Interdisciplinary &: series to foster collaboration, enhance support and showcase excellence in interdisciplinary research.

Themes

CREATIVE MANCHESTER

- **Creative industries and innovation/CreaTech** – exploring innovative research that can benefit local areas, create jobs and advance the industries as a whole.
- **Creative and civic futures** – focusing on questions of place, climate change, community and civil issues, including minority groups and migrant experiences.
- **Creativity, health and social care** – exploring the tangible health benefits of the arts and creative practice.

DIGITAL FUTURES

- **AI@Manchester** – providing the access point to the University's expertise in data science and AI.
- **Digital health** – focusing on how digital technologies can help people live healthier lives, improve health and social care services, and reduce health inequities.
- **Digital worlds** – exploring how digital technologies – from sensor networks to digital twins – are transforming both real and virtual worlds, and the lives of those who inhabit them.
- **Digital society** – understanding whether and how we can trust the digital technologies and systems we use, and the people we interact with.
- **Digital economy** – exploring the evolving digital economy and how new digital technologies are reshaping global, national and regional economies and productive sectors, transforming employment patterns and redefining workplace practices.
- **Digital cultures** – understanding how digital technology is reshaping our cultural landscapes, past, present and future.
- **Digital skills** – working with students, colleagues, employers and other education providers to deliver the digital skills needed to support and responsibly transform the global workplace.

HEALTHIER FUTURES

- **Healthier lives** – identifying how the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age can create barriers to good health and wellbeing.
- **Healthier places** – understanding how our health can be impacted by the country or city we live in, the environment, the condition of our home, or where we work.
- **Healthier systems** – recognising that factors such as how we allocate resources, transform services, provide culturally sensitive care and avoid digital exclusion can remove barriers, protect vulnerable groups and reduce disparities.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

- **Energy** – creating an inclusive, clean energy transformation at unprecedented speed and scale, through bold, collaborative innovation and pioneering academic endeavour.
- **Nature** – supporting transformative change in human–nature relationships toward just and sustainable coexistence that supports the restoration and recovery of nature.
- **Equity** – delivering just and sustainable environmental futures that address existing inequities and enable communities to thrive.
- **Resilience** – providing sustainable frameworks for infrastructures and ecosystems at various scales against adverse, disruptive and long-term environmental change.
- **Materials** – enabling the sustainable and innovative design, manufacture, use and circular recovery of materials across energy systems, infrastructure, manufacturing and healthcare to support a thriving, sustainable society.
- **Skills** – inspiring students, citizens and communities to address sustainability challenges through the knowledge and skills required to understand problems and create solutions.

