

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

A Powerhouse of Innovation

DELIVERY PLAN
2026/27 to 2029/30

From Manchester for the World, our ten-year strategy, sets out an ambitious vision for The University of Manchester to become Europe's most impactful and inclusive innovation ecosystem by 2035.

The University has all the capabilities needed to deliver this vision, but it requires us to evolve how we think about innovation in three important directions:

1. Innovation should no longer be seen as something that only relates to the research process or as the responsibility of a small number of specialist teams. It is something to which every member of our University community can contribute. Innovation means different things to different people, but at Manchester its meaning is clear: turning our research, ideas and talent into real-world impact at scale to improve lives and strengthen society.
2. We must become an ecosystem leader, bringing together the people, organisations and ideas that drive innovation. This will require deeper partnerships with businesses, investors, entrepreneurs, public services, the voluntary sector, local communities and civic leaders. Our global competitiveness and impact will depend on how effectively we connect our strengths with those of our partners, both within and beyond our campus.
3. Innovation should be seen as a route to social as well as economic progress. Building an inclusive innovation ecosystem means creating opportunities for more people to innovate, supporting ideas with the greatest potential for impact, and ensuring the benefits of innovation are shared widely.



This Delivery Plan translates our vision into action. It sets out the steps we will take over the next three years to create opportunities for our colleagues, students and partners to deliver impact through their research, teaching, innovation and social responsibility work. These actions will deliver benefits today while laying the foundations for even greater impact over the decade ahead.

The spotlight is increasingly on Manchester as one of Europe's leading innovation cities. This is our opportunity to cement The University of Manchester's role as the driving force behind innovation-led growth in our city, our region and the UK, while strengthening our position as a globally recognised innovation leader.

We are excited about what lies ahead and look forward to working with our colleagues, students and partners to deliver it together.

What is innovation?

Innovation is the implementation of new ideas that create value for people, businesses and society. At The University of Manchester, innovation is not just about new technologies, but new ways of doing things that enable people to flourish and society to progress.

— THE INNOVATION COMMITTEE

DELIVERY
PLAN

2026
/27

to

2029
/30

About Manchester

The University of Manchester is established as one of the UK's leading universities for innovation. Research England provides the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), a public tool for evaluating how universities collaborate with businesses, communities and public services. In 2025, it awarded the University the highest performance ratings for research partnerships, intellectual property and commercialisation, and public and community engagement, alongside above-average performance across all other domains.

This strength is reflected in the scale and breadth of our innovation activity. In 2024/25, we generated £118 million in innovation income and ranked fourth nationally for our cumulative number of university spinout companies. Student entrepreneurship has more than doubled over the past five years, while philanthropic investment in innovation has reached record levels. We also have an exceptional concentration of research, innovation and enterprise assets, supported by a large and diverse student and alumni community and deep relationships with businesses, investors, public sector organisations and communities.

The University's innovation leadership sits within a city-region where the innovation potential is also growing rapidly. Manchester has become one of the UK's leading innovation city-regions and was the fastest-growing city in the UK over the past decade. Across Greater Manchester, there is rising strength in advanced manufacturing and materials, health innovation, digital and AI, clean growth and creative industries, alongside major innovation assets, investment programmes and increasingly ambitious public-private partnerships.

Together, the University and the wider Manchester ecosystem provide an unusually strong platform for innovation. The opportunity is not simply to increase the scale of individual activities, but to connect these assets more effectively, build stronger pathways that accelerate ideas to impact, and use the University's convening power to help shape the innovation ecosystem around us.

While both the University and Manchester have all the ingredients for innovation success, we have yet to fully translate our strengths into the scale of impact, investment and global recognition achieved by the leading innovation centres across the UK and Europe.

The opportunity, therefore, is substantial. We start from a position of considerable strength: a globally recognised university, an increasingly dynamic city-region, world-class research, students and innovation assets, and deep and growing relationships across business, government, investors and communities. The focus for the years ahead is to harness these strengths as a more connected and coordinated whole – increasing their scale, connectivity and impact, and ensuring that more of the ideas, talent and research generated in Manchester translate into lasting benefits for the city, for the UK and for the world.

£118m

INNOVATION INCOME

#4

NATIONALLY: UNIVERSITY
SPINOUTS

2x

GROWTH: STUDENT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Our innovation vision and strategy

Our ten-year vision is to become Europe's most inclusive and impactful innovation ecosystem, recognised globally for getting our research and teaching out into the world faster, in collaboration with our partners.

The scope of innovation set out in *From Manchester for the world* is broad. It is not only about commercialising new technologies, but also about developing and putting new ways of working into practice that enable people to flourish and society to progress. It includes building opportunities for working with business, government, investors, public services, communities and the third sector where together we develop, test and adopt new products, services and processes based on our research and teaching capabilities.

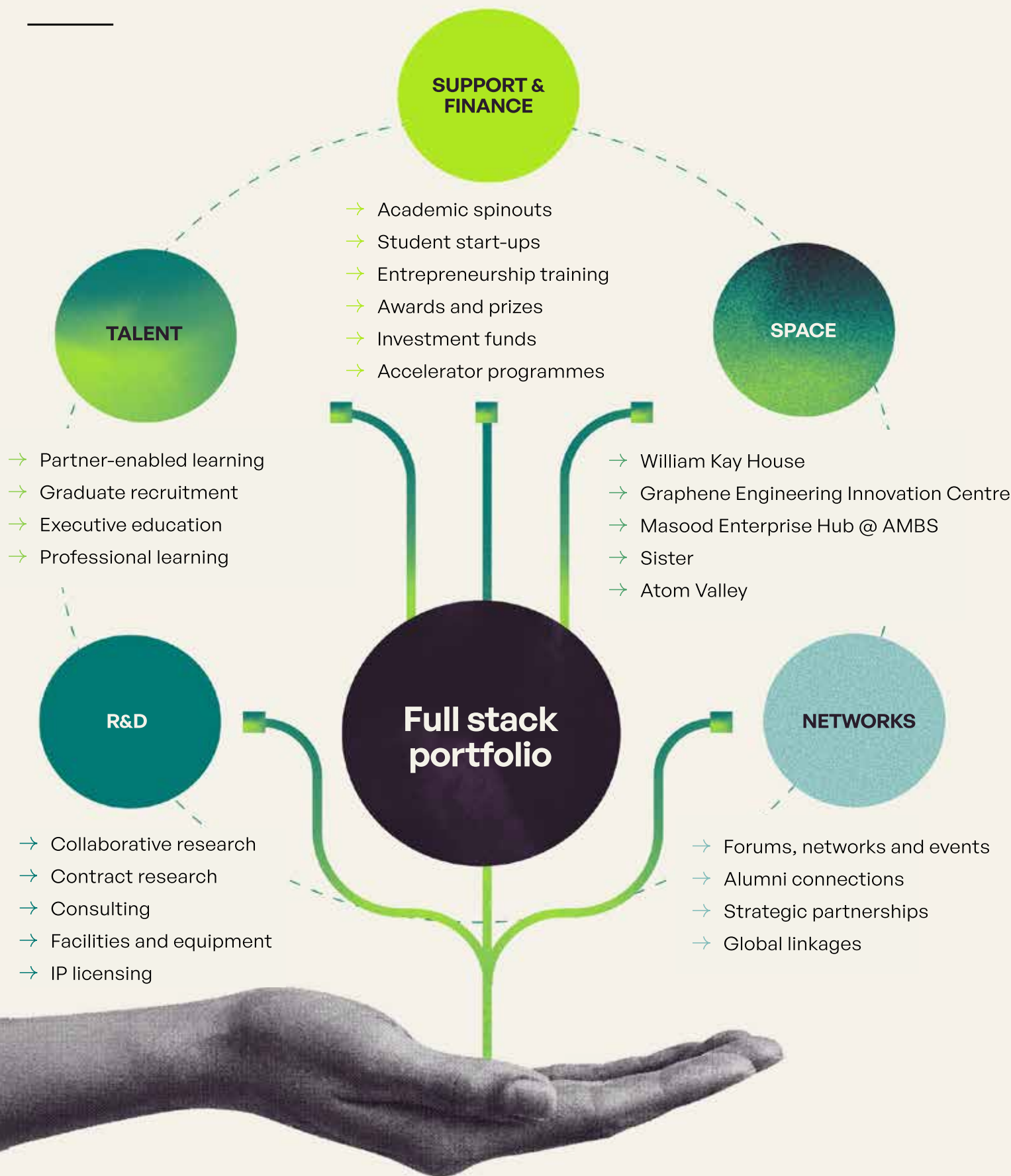
Innovation is therefore not a niche activity undertaken by a small part of the institution. It cuts across our research, teaching, social responsibility and civic missions, and our operations, and is something everyone can contribute to.

Critically, Manchester 2035 sets out that innovation is central to our student experience: we aim to be the university of choice for those who want to develop entrepreneurial skills, start companies or social enterprises, or work closely with community and industry partners.

Delivering our innovation ambition requires a step change in how the University approaches innovation – moving from strong but often fragmented activity to a more joined-up, user-focused model shaped around the evolving needs of students, staff, partners and communities. Our future competitive edge will lie in our ability to join up, mobilise and continuously develop our 'full stack' portfolio of innovation capabilities, working seamlessly across the University and with partners.

What we mean by innovation:

The University's 'full stack' portfolio of innovation capability



Our strategy is focused on

01

Providing clearer, faster pathways to collaborate and grow ideas.

We will expand and develop new approaches for academic and student engagement in innovation. We will simplify access to the University's expertise, research and talent for businesses, investors, communities and public sector partners. We will strengthen connections with international commercial and strategic partners to expand our global reach and impact.

02

Building a thriving innovation community across the University.

We will make entrepreneurship and innovation part of everyday life – creating the skills, culture and support that help students, staff and partners turn ideas into real-world impact. This will include improving the venture building support we provide for our students and colleagues, drawing on our partners, alumni and funders to help us do so.

03

Growing our innovation ecosystem through our regional partnerships.

We will play a leading role in partnerships to strengthen the region's innovation ecosystem – including accelerating the next phases of Sister – while deepening our engagement with leading global innovation ecosystems to attract talent and investment and create new opportunities.

TALENT

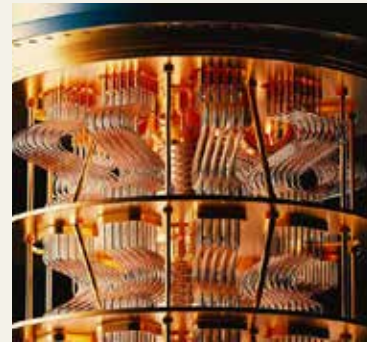
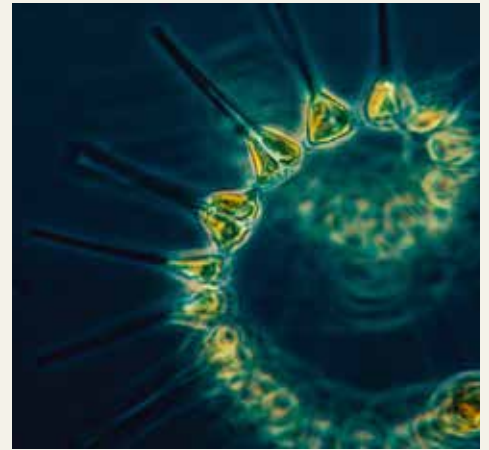


COLLABORATION



ENGAGEMENT

SCALE



IMPACT

INCLUSION



PARTNERSHIP

Making it happen

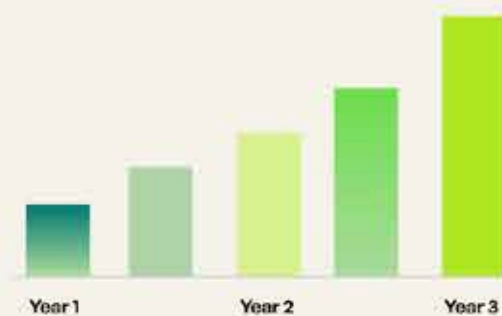
Our table of actions



Our delivery plan outlines the essential interventions and investments needed to deliver our innovation strategy over the next three years. These have been developed with our colleagues, students and partners – taking into account lessons from leading innovation ecosystems around the world.

OUR VISION

- Provide clearer, faster pathways to collaborate and grow ideas.
- Building a thriving innovation community across the University.
- Grow our innovation ecosystem through our regional, national and global partnerships.



IDEAS
PEOPLE
PROGRESS

**Making it
happen**

Making it happen

Our table of actions



Provide clearer, faster pathways to collaborate and grow ideas

Integrate our innovation assets and better communicate our offer.

- 01 - Review and optimise delivery structures to ensure our innovation assets are aligned and integrated.
- 02 - Create a single web portal for innovation.
- 03 - Strengthen internal and external communications and marketing.

Update key University policies and processes to support innovation.

- 01 - Intellectual property policy review.
- 02 - Industry pricing policy review.
- 03 - Industry contracting processes review.
- 04 - Inclusive innovation monitoring plan.

Improve funding and support for academic and student founders.

- 01 - Build and support a pipeline of high-potential University-owned IP assets.
- 02 - Build and support a pipeline of impactful student start-ups.
- 03 - Launch a donor-supported pre-seed fund to invest in early-stage staff and student ventures.
- 04 - Create a single accelerator platform to support companies to scale.
- 05 - Build a mentoring network linking founders with alumni and partners.

Introduce new models of industry engagement.

- 01 - Pilot and roll out new engagement models and new products targeted at growth sectors, international growth markets and large companies.
- 02 - Identify, test and scale novel engagement mechanisms for civic and innovation-focused partnerships.
- 03 - Establish a scalable model for industry access to equipment and facilities.
- 04 - Design and deliver a new University-wide operating model for continuing professional education.

Build a thriving innovation community across the University

Increase student engagement in innovation.

- 01 - Develop and implement a model to expand curricular and extra-curricular entrepreneurship programmes.
- 02 - Scale partner-enabled learning through deeper collaboration with industry, civic and regional partners.
- 03 - Expand the PhD by Enterprise programme.

Introduce new programmes to support academic involvement in innovation.

- 01 - Develop targeted Enterprise Fellowship opportunities.
- 02 - Create programmes that enable academics to engage with commercialisation, entrepreneurship and external collaboration.
- 03 - Support cross-disciplinary participation in challenge-led innovation activity through the Platforms.

Build a culture where innovation is a core pathway to academic career success.

- 01 - Update career and promotion pathways to strengthen incentives to engage with innovation.
- 02 - Update the external secondments policy to promote engagement with spinouts and partners.
- 03 - Celebrate external partnerships, staff entrepreneurship and commercialisation success stories to increase visibility, recognition and engagement.

Develop spaces to innovate and collaborate on campus.

- 01 - Open William Kay House as a new innovation hub.
- 02 - Develop a business case for new lab-based incubation to support staff and student deep tech ventures involving cutting-edge innovations.

Grow our innovation ecosystem through our regional, national and global partnerships

Strengthen our leadership role in innovation-focused regional partnerships.

- 01 - Co-develop regional innovation and skills policies, programmes and funding opportunities with partners including the Civic University Board, Innovation GM, Health Innovation Manchester and NHS Trusts.
- 02 - Work with Invest Manchester to attract R&D-intensive companies to Sister and the wider region.
- 03 - Collaborate with Greater Manchester universities and further education colleges to develop a more connected regional innovation and skills system.

Accelerate the next phase of the Sister innovation district.

- 01 - Develop the innovation ecosystem in the Renold and Pariser buildings.
- 02 - Review and update the Sister development model to reflect changes in the commercial property market.
- 03 - Strengthen the pipeline of innovation activity linked to the district.

Play a key role in the acceleration of the Atom Valley Innovation District.

- 01 - Lead the delivery of the Sustainable Materials and Manufacturing Centre as the first phase of the Atom Valley Innovation District.
- 02 - Support the growth and development of the wider Atom Valley innovation ecosystem.
- 03 - Strengthen partnerships focused on advanced materials, manufacturing and skills.

Build city-to-city partnerships.

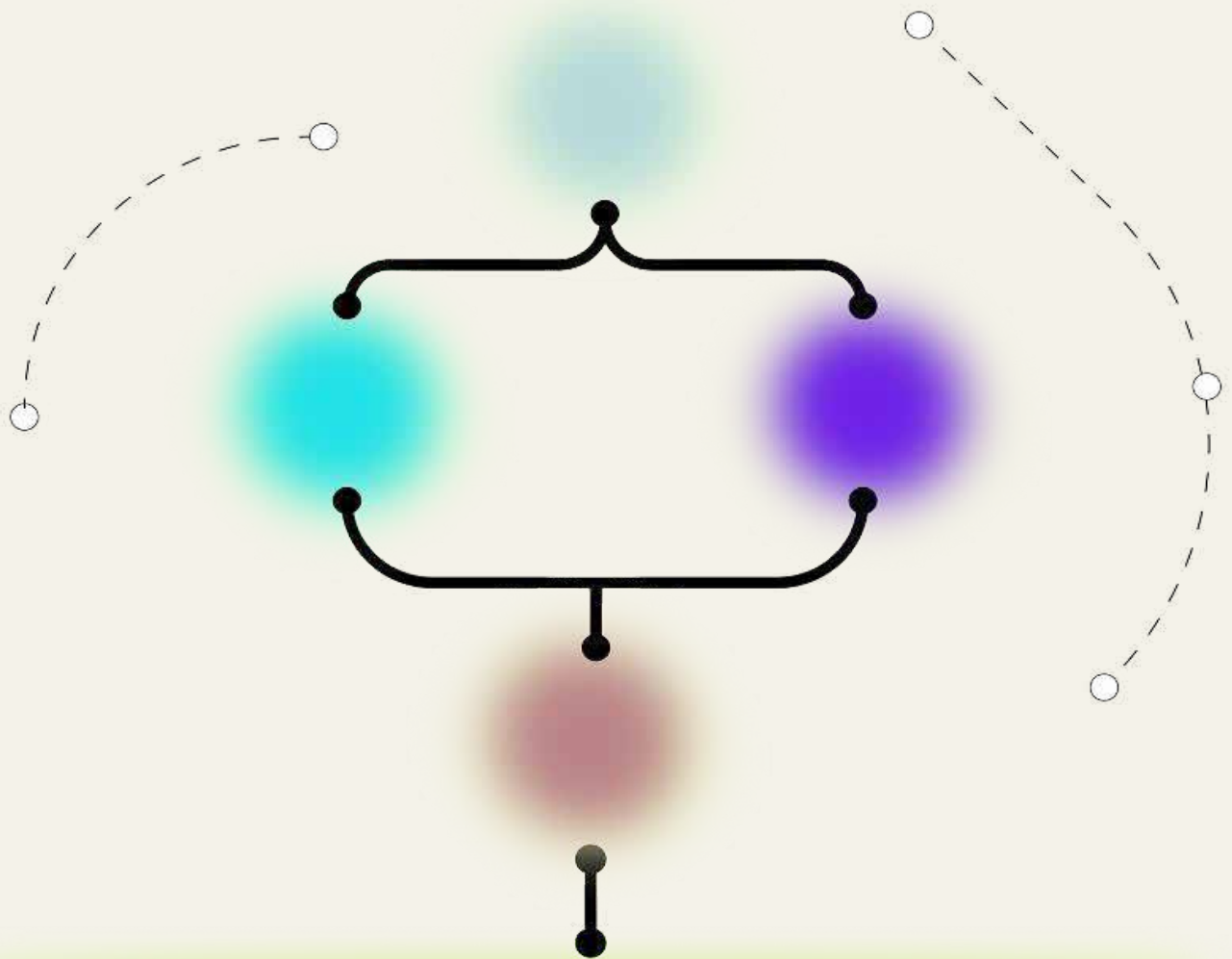
- 01 - Strengthen collaboration through The Cambridge x Manchester Partnership.
- 02 - Develop The Liverpool x Manchester Partnership.
- 03 - Expand opportunities created through our global centres and international innovation relationships.

How we will deliver

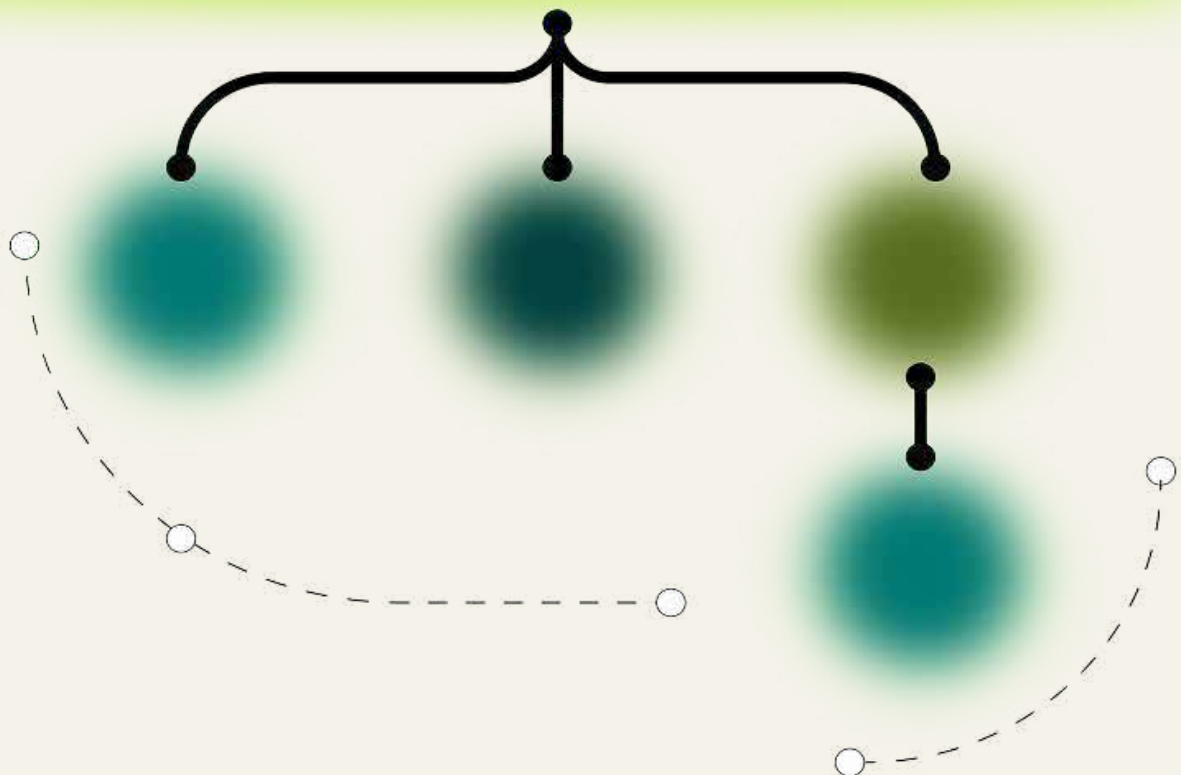
We are taking a ‘One University’ approach to innovation, aligning governance, incentives and decision-making behind a common set of priorities. This allows us to act with greater clarity, speed and coherence, and present a more joined-up offer to partners and stakeholders.

The University’s **Innovation Committee**, a sub-committee of the University Executive, provides strategic oversight and direction, driving alignment across innovation activity in central teams and Faculties, and across teaching, research and social responsibility activity. It is supported by several focused sub-groups that enable operational delivery, coordination and academic engagement across our innovation ecosystem.

The Innovation Committee works closely with all our other executive committees to develop and deliver its work programme. This includes the Research; Teaching, Learning and Students; Social Responsibility; International; and Infrastructure Committees.



The University has a broad range of innovation delivery organisations spanning its innovation activity that are increasingly coming together to work as an integrated system.



How we will deliver

Unit M

Unit M is a gateway to innovation, with a mission to unleash the University's full potential as the region's largest innovation asset.

Our ambition is to make The University of Manchester one of Europe's leading innovation institutions, recognised globally for building an inclusive and impactful innovation ecosystem.

We make it easier to access the University's innovation strengths, while creating new opportunities and capabilities that respond to the changing needs of the world around us. We do this by working with businesses, government, staff, students, alumni, local communities and partners across the region and beyond.

Across Unit M we...

- connect staff and students with opportunities.
- deliver entrepreneurship and start-up support.
- help companies to scale and grow.
- create new partnerships and ways of working that unlock greater impact and value.
- develop innovation districts and clusters.
- work with staff, students and partners to build Manchester's inclusive innovation ecosystem.

Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange (BEKE)

The Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange (BEKE) team develops and manages partnerships with business and the third sector, from global corporates to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It enables collaboration through interdisciplinary research, knowledge exchange, consultancy, facilities services, strategic institutional partnerships and SME engagement, while helping businesses navigate the University's wider innovation and research capabilities. BEKE combines central expertise with Faculty-embedded teams to work closely with the academic community and sits within the Research and Business Engagement Directorate.

The University of Manchester Innovation Factory (UoMIF)

The University of Manchester Innovation Factory (UoMIF) is the University's technology transfer office. A wholly owned subsidiary of the University, its role is to identify, protect and commercialise intellectual property generated by colleagues and students. Through licensing, spinout formation and investment support, it backs academics, researchers and postgraduates to develop promising ideas towards commercialisation. UoMIF also manages and develops the University's portfolio of spinout companies and intellectual property.

We know that the University cannot deliver its innovation ambitions alone. We therefore work through partnerships that bring together complementary strengths, capabilities and resources at both regional and national levels.

Sister

Sister is a 20-acre mixed-use innovation district being developed over a 15 to 20-year horizon through a joint venture between the University and Bruntwood SciTech. The first phase, opened in September 2024, comprises the 100,000 sq ft Renold Innovation Hub, providing co-working, office and events space for start-ups, and the Pariser Building, which provides light industrial and maker space. Planning is underway for the next phase, Plot C, a 220,000 sq ft new build targeting large-scale occupiers, with occupation expected from 2030/31.

Place-based regional partnerships

Through place-based regional partnerships including the Oxford Road Corridor Partnership, Greater Manchester Civic University Board and Innovation GM, we work with local authorities, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Mayor's Office, business, community and civic partners to strengthen Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem, inform policy and drive positive growth across the region.

This innovation system will continue to evolve over the next three years as our ecosystem matures and we test and learn, reflecting the greater agility and responsiveness that we are embedding across our approach to innovation.

Northern Gritstone

Northern Gritstone is a university-backed investment company established by the universities of Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield to support the commercialisation of research and the growth of early-stage science and technology businesses across the North of England. It provides patient capital to spinouts and deep tech ventures, helping bridge the gap between discovery and scale-up, and strengthening the region's innovation ecosystem.

The Cambridge x Manchester Partnership

At a national level, The Cambridge x Manchester Partnership is a significant strategic collaboration between two of the UK's leading and complementary innovation ecosystems. It is building connections between world-class research, deep tech capabilities, businesses, investors and civic partners to accelerate innovation-led growth and strengthen the UK's wider innovation system.

The Liverpool x Manchester Partnership

Our emerging Liverpool x Manchester University Partnership is exploring opportunities for joint innovation activity across connected industrial clusters, drawing on the proximity of our universities to bring together complementary expertise, capabilities and investment across the two city-regions.

Measuring progress and impact

Our innovation strategy and accompanying delivery plan are designed to support the University in achieving its outcome measures.: improving the student experience and National Student Survey performance; enhancing graduate employability; strengthening research performance and QS World University Rankings; contributing to improvements in the *Times Higher Education's* Sustainability Impact Ratings; supporting financial sustainability and colleague engagement; and strengthening our reputation.





We will track delivery through five headline key performance indicators.

**BY
2035**

WE ARE AIMING TO:

- 01 - Move from sixth to second nationally for total income from innovation.
- 02 - Create 15 high-quality spinouts each year.
- 03 - Engage with 150 firms on the Sister innovation district, up from 25 today.
- 04 - Give every student the opportunity to engage in innovation through entrepreneurship or partner-enabled learning.
- 05 - Rank in the top 1% globally for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) in the *Times Higher Education's* Sustainability Impact Ratings.

ALONGSIDE THESE MEASURES, WE WILL:

- 01 - Capture evidence of wider economic and social impact.
- 02 - Develop measures of inclusive innovation and equality, diversity and inclusion performance.
- 03 - Work towards a new international benchmark to track progress towards becoming Europe's most impactful and inclusive innovation ecosystem.

Building a thriving innovation ecosystem is a shared endeavour.

Everyone has a role to play and there are many ways to contribute.

Next steps

Develop an idea

Turn your research, teaching or expertise into real-world impact through our innovation programmes.

Find a partner

Work with businesses, investors, public services or communities to tackle real-world challenges.

Support others

Mentor students, champion innovation in your team or help colleagues navigate the University's innovation support.



**INNOVATION
FOR
EVERYONE**

A detailed historical map of Manchester from 1824, showing a dense grid of streets and building footprints. The map is rendered in a dark, textured style with white lines for street names and building outlines. Visible street names include 'WILTON STREET', 'BRUNSWICK STREET', 'DOVER STREET', and 'The Old Quadrangle'.

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

Get in touch

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Or visit William Kay House to speak
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