MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

A Place Where You Matter

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion 2035 framework



Contents



Our North Star 3

Our EDI framework 4

How we created this framework 5

The framework 6

Building fair foundations 7

Advancing community and global justice 8

Playing our part 9

Creating the conditions for delivery and impact 10

Monitoring and measuring our success 11

Glossary 12

Manchester 2035 – Our North Star



***From Manchester for the world*, our strategy to 2035, sets out an ambitious vision to be a great civic university for the 21st century – bold, values-led, community-driven and globally connected.**

At its core are the strategy's foundations – the commitments which must be true in any future. They reflect both our enduring strengths and where we need deeper, more sustained effort to get the fundamentals right. Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a crucial element of these foundational commitments. This framework will ensure that every leap forward in research, teaching, digitisation, innovation and partnership is inclusive by design.

Our university strategy is explicit in its intention: "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. Mattering here means knowing your views help shape decisions, your work drives change, and your presence makes a difference in our shared future."

At a time of increasing fragmentation and polarisation, we see inclusion as more important than ever. For us, embedding EDI is a moral imperative, a statutory obligation and a strategic advantage.[1] Diversity and inclusion drive innovation, improve decision-making and strengthen our global reputation.

Inclusive environments attract and retain the best talent, enhance student success and belonging, and foster partnerships that create positive social impact.

EDI connects what matters to our people with what matters to the University. It is central to delivering our strategy and enabling students and colleagues to contribute and thrive. The conditions for EDI are shaped by our commitment to academic freedom and lawful freedom of expression. At The University of Manchester, we see these as deeply interconnected principles.

Open, respectful challenge is fundamental to scholarship, but for freedom of speech to be meaningful in practice, we need to pay attention to who feels safe and able to speak and whose perspectives may be marginalised or excluded. This is where EDI plays a critical role – not by narrowing debate, but by widening participation in it.

Together, EDI, academic freedom, and lawful freedom of expression foster a university where ideas flourish, and where people genuinely feel they matter.

[1] McKinsey & Company (2020) Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters. Available at: Diversity wins: How inclusion matters

From ‘doing EDI’ to being inclusive – Our EDI framework



Over the course of our previous EDI strategy, we made important progress. We became a more diverse community, expanded EDI programmes and improved inclusive practice, with national and international recognition.

Yet these achievements have not always translated into a consistent experience for students and colleagues. For some, particularly those with intersecting identities, barriers and inequities remain. Persistent gaps in representation, outcomes, trust and belonging show that there is still more to do.

Our EDI framework sets out how we will deliver our strategic commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion by weaving EDI into the fabric of our university – not as a standalone initiative, but as a principle shaping decisions, systems and spaces.

This marks a shift from ‘doing EDI’ as a series of programmes to ensuring that inclusion is built into both core activity and strategic delivery: from designing curricula, assessing learning, recruiting, developing and leading our people, to transforming our physical and digital estate, driving excellence and impact in research, and accelerating innovation.

By 2035, success will mean that inclusion is visible and lived – reflected not only in diverse representation, but in equitable outcomes, fair and accessible systems, and a university where all members of our community feel they matter.

How we created this framework



Achieving our EDI ambitions will take more than intent; it requires focus and a willingness to ask difficult questions and act on what we learn. By engaging widely across our university, we have identified the changes needed to fulfil our vision of being a great civic university for the 21st century.

To ensure the development of the framework was robust and impartial, we partnered with Pearn Kandola, a leading EDI consultancy.[2] Their independent perspective enabled us to examine ourselves with openness and rigour through the lens of Organisational Justice – a model that asks searching questions about fairness in outcomes, processes, and experiences.[3] This independence was essential to building trust and credibility, both within our university and with the communities we serve.

A group of colleagues from across the University brought together data, policies, plans, training and communications, alongside insights from surveys and engagement, to ensure the views and experiences of our students and colleagues are at the heart of what we do next.

Insight and consultation

Pearn Kandola analysed this evidence, assessing us against key indicators and recognised best practice.

This highlighted both strengths to build on and gaps we cannot ignore. But analysis and metrics alone do not tell the full story.

To understand the lived experiences behind the data, the consultants facilitated focus groups with diverse representation from colleague networks and student groups, alongside interviews with senior leaders. These sessions explored how equity shows up in our processes, practices and decision-making, as well as the conditions needed for psychological safety and a respectful, inclusive environment. All contributions were treated in confidence, with insights anonymised to enable participants to speak openly.

What emerged was an honest and sometimes challenging picture – one that helped us see not only what needs to change, but why it matters and what must be considered as we move forward.[4]

Co-creating our future

Finally, we brought together colleagues, students, experts and leaders to listen, reflect and turn what we learned into action. These group sessions were not about identifying quick fixes – they were about bold, systemic change. Together, we defined the priorities that will make equity real for all.

[2] www.pearnkandola.com
[3] Pearn Kandola independent analysis findings
[4] Pearn Kandola thematic analysis from focus groups and interviews

The framework



This year-long process shaped the three interconnected pillars of our EDI framework:

Building fair foundations

Advancing community and global justice

Playing our part

Each pillar has a distinct emphasis. Building fair foundations focuses on the systems and structures that shape everyday experience. Advancing community and global justice reflects our civic and global role. Playing our part centres the responsibility each of us has in shaping culture. Taken together, they form a coherent framework for embedding equity, diversity and inclusion into how the University operates and evolves – ensuring that our journey towards Manchester 2035 is inclusive by design, with fairness at the foundation of our future.

Importantly, the process of developing this framework has already begun to shift how we work – bringing colleagues and students together across the University, building shared understanding, and strengthening collective commitment to embedding EDI into everyday practice and our strategic endeavours.

Building fair foundations



Consultation revealed a gap between our EDI ambitions and the experiences of students and colleagues.

To close this gap, we must recognise the different and intersecting needs within our community and embed inclusion into the design of our teaching, research, systems, structures and policies. This ensures fairness is not reactive or optional, but fundamental – supporting consistency of experience. By shifting from separate initiatives to an institution-wide, integrated approach, where EDI moves from 'something we do' to 'how we do everything', we will create meaningful improvement in the experiences of our students and colleagues.

This pillar focuses on five key areas:

1. **Outstanding teaching, learning and student experience**
   We will embed inclusion in the core academic experience through evidence-led, inclusive design of curriculum, learning, assessment and feedback, scaling what works. We will ensure that student voice meaningfully shapes decisions and improvement at all levels. We will meet and build on our current commitments to close gaps in experience, progression, awarding and outcomes, and create an outstanding, inclusive international student experience. We will maintain zero tolerance for discrimination, hate and sexual harm, embedding effective prevention and response into learning environments and the student experience.

2. **Outstanding research**
   We will continue to embed our commitment to EDI in research through inclusive cultures and environments, aligned with our Research Culture and Environment framework. We will support inclusive and collaborative research teams and careers, responsible and open research practice, interdisciplinarity, and opportunities for researchers and research-enabling colleagues to contribute, develop and thrive. Our approach is founded on academic freedom and affirms research as a public good, grounded in integrity, openness and ethical collaboration.[5] We will strengthen engaged research that listens to, involves and learns from diverse communities, including those historically marginalised from research and society, and foster inclusive international partnerships built on mutual learning, cultural understanding and shared responsibility.

3. **Accessible spaces and digital campus**
   We will design and develop physical and digital environments that are accessible and inclusive by design, moving beyond compliance to enable full participation for everyone in our community.

4. **Inclusive policies, processes and practices**
   We will develop and review policies and processes, informed by voice and engagement, to reflect diverse, intersectional experiences and address existing inequalities. We will support students, colleagues, managers and leaders with the information and tools needed to ensure that practices align with policies and processes to uphold fairness. We will embed equity and inclusion into all aspects of our people experience, including student admissions and colleague recruitment, reward and recognition, work and study adjustment processes, and conduct, discipline and employee relations procedures.

5. **Fulfilling aspirations**
   We will support all students and colleagues to build meaningful experiences and careers through employability, inclusive development and progression pathways that enable everyone to thrive.

[5] Statement of Social Responsibility in Research

Advancing community and global justice



Consultation found that our student and colleague community wants to contribute meaningfully to inclusion beyond campus, and that our civic and global impact must be consistent with the fairness we commit to internally. This pillar responds to that call-to-action, recognising our responsibility as a university with both local roots and a worldwide reach.

From Manchester for the world sets out our sense of place and purpose – working with our city and region to support growth and cohesion, while contributing globally to address shared challenges. Through this, we will expand inclusive opportunities, address inequities and strengthen partnerships in ways that are collaborative, respectful and socially responsible.

This pillar focuses on three key areas:

1. **Inclusive innovation**
   We will take an inclusive approach to innovation, ensuring its benefits reach those from historically marginalised groups. This means embedding inclusion in innovation ecosystems, funding businesses owned by diverse groups, working with partners to improve EDI outcomes, and investing in innovation that reduces inequalities and drives positive societal impact.

2. **Equity through our economic choices**
   As a major employer and purchaser, we will use our influence to drive equity through our supply chains and procurement. We will work with suppliers to promote equitable practices in their own workplaces, support diverse and inclusive businesses, create opportunities for historically marginalised groups, and generate meaningful social value.

3. **Reaching out, opening up**
   Through our public, community, civic and cultural engagement, we will work proactively with diverse communities to advance societal equity. This includes ensuring appropriate representation in participatory research and other engagement activities, so that our work is informed by the experiences, perspectives and priorities of the communities we serve.

   We will continue to connect and co-create with our local communities, while contributing to a better future by responding appropriately to historic injustices. Working in partnership with local schools, community organisations and our international centres, we will expand career and employment opportunities, share knowledge, and create pathways that make higher education accessible and welcoming for all learners.

Playing our part



Consultation highlighted inconsistent approaches to EDI and the need for a shared commitment to make inclusion a lived reality across the University. While our buildings, systems and policies shape our experience, culture is created through what we each do every day – how we study, work and lead.

This means that each of us is responsible for inclusion. We all have a role in ensuring that our actions, decisions and behaviours are fair and inclusive, so that our university is a place where everyone feels they matter.

As our strategy puts it: "Every person will be a force for change… We can only succeed if our community feels able to forge our future together."

This pillar focuses not on doing more, but on doing what we already do in more inclusive ways – consistently creating environments where psychological safety, dignity and belonging are experienced in practice.

This pillar sets out three levels of responsibility:

1. All of us
An inclusive university is built by the people within it. The University will create the conditions – through clear expectations, trust and support for inclusive practice – but every colleague and student has a part to play:

- **Living our motto** – knowledge, wisdom, humanity.
- **Treating people right** – with dignity, respect and empathy, and interacting with open-mindedness.
- **Embedding equity in what you do** – whatever your job, whatever you study, whatever you research, whatever you teach.

2. Managers and supervisors
Managers and supervisors shape the experience of students and colleagues. In contributing to our shared EDI ambition, they are responsible for:

- **Delivering on EDI commitments** – not as an add-on, but as core practice within their role.
- **Managing and supervising inclusively** – through fair and consistent decision-making, equitable support and development opportunities, transparent communication, and fostering an inclusive and safe culture.
- **Creating inclusive environments** – where everyone can thrive.

3. Leaders
Leaders set direction and create the conditions for success, role-modelling the University's core expectations. They are accountable for:

- **Embedding EDI into leadership** – ensuring EDI considerations are integral to strategy, resource allocation and decision-making.
- **Creating the conditions for mattering** – role modelling fairness, creating psychologically safe environments and ensuring different perspectives inform decisions.
- **Owning outcomes** – taking accountability for outcomes, taking action where progress falls short and addressing behaviour that undermines inclusion.

Creating the conditions for delivery and impact



To turn ambition into action, we will create the conditions needed for consistent delivery and measurable impact across the University. This is essential to our success – so we've already started, working in line with the *Manchester 2035 Delivery Handbook*.

Governance and accountability[6]
Clear governance and effective accountability will build trust and enable progress at pace.

- Review and strengthen governance to align with Manchester 2035 strategic planning and accountability cycles.
- Embed accountability for EDI outcomes at every level and across the organisation, with clear roles and responsibilities.

Networks and communities
The experiences of our students and colleagues will shape what we do and how we improve.

- Recognise students and colleagues with diverse lived experiences as trusted sources of insight and challenge, and partners in shaping policy, practice and change.
- Strengthen the support, recognition and influence of networks and communities so that engagement leads to impact.

Partnership and localisation
This work will only succeed if it is shaped and delivered across the whole University.

- Collaborate with and draw on expertise across faculties, schools and directorates to translate the framework for delivery, in context.
- Connect with external communities and build partnerships to strengthen practice, ensure relevance and extend reach and impact.

Integrated implementation and monitoring
Progress depends on a coordinated approach to delivery and tracking.

- Align EDI and chartermark activity with Manchester 2035 strategic plans through a single, coherent delivery and monitoring approach, informed and evaluated by data.
- Adopt a 'One university' approach to coordinate and prioritise activity, reduce duplication, maximise impact and support both consistency and local responsiveness.

Inclusive communications and engagement
Open communication and continuous listening will inform how we deliver and adapt.

- Share progress, challenges and learning transparently, to support accountability and continuous improvement.
- Strengthen inclusive communication and dialogue by actively embracing open feedback, diverse viewpoints and respectful challenge - ensuring all parts of our community can engage, contribute and feel that they matter.

[6] Find out more about our governance structure

Monitoring and measuring our success



Serving as a strategic roadmap, this framework enables progress on EDI and underpins our Manchester 2035 ambitions. Together, we will track success through three overarching indicators that cut across all three pillars and reflect equity in representation, experience and outcomes for students and colleagues.

1. Representation of students and colleagues

- **Impact** – Increase representation of under-represented groups across our student and colleague community, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles.
- **Measure** – Annual diversity profile for students and colleagues, including leadership positions.

2. Mattering of students and colleagues

- **Impact** – Strengthen the sense of inclusion, belonging and mattering for everyone in our community.
- **Measure** – Responses to belonging, mattering and inclusion questions in colleague engagement surveys and student experience surveys.

3. Pay gaps and awarding gaps

- **Impact** – Reduce gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps across the institution and close gaps in degree awarding and progression for underrepresented student groups.
- **Measure** – Annual pay gap reporting and awarding gap analysis, with year-on-year improvement.

These indicators show whether we are making real progress in who is part of our university, how people experience it, and the outcomes they achieve.

We will listen, learn and adapt, using data and insight to refine our approach and strengthen impact over time. We will continue to benchmark our progress through national and international frameworks, strengthening both our impact and our reputation for equity and inclusion.

Glossary

Academic freedom
The right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

Awarding gap
The difference in the proportion of students from different demographic groups who achieve a particular degree classification or academic outcome, typically measured by comparing the percentage awarded a first or upper second-class (2:1) degree. Awarding gaps can indicate inequalities in student experiences and outcomes.

Belonging
A feeling of being accepted, connected, valued and included as part of a community, where individuals feel safe to be themselves.

Bias
The action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment.

Civic university
A university that is rooted in its place and actively engages with partners and communities, driving inclusive growth and delivering societal impact, locally and globally.

Culture
The shared values, behaviours, beliefs, and norms that shape how people experience an organisation or community and how they interact and work within an organisation or community.

Diversity
The presence of differences between individuals, including (but not limited to) characteristics such as age, background, disability, gender, race, and religion.

Equity
The fair distribution of resources, opportunities and support, recognising that different people may need different things to have comparable experiences or achieve comparable outcomes.

Equality
Ensuring individuals or groups are treated the same and have equal access to opportunities and resources.

Fairness
Taking transparent, balanced and unbiased approaches to decisions and actions. Considers equality and equity to ensure everyone has an equitable opportunity to succeed.

Inclusion
The active practice of creating environments that enable all individuals to feel welcomed, valued, respected and able to participate fully.

Inclusive by design
Building accessibility, equity and inclusion into systems, processes and environments from the outset.

Inclusive language
Communication in all formats and forums that is respectful, accurate and free from bias, avoiding terms or assumptions that exclude or marginalise groups of people, and contributing to an environment where all feel safe and able to participate and succeed.

Intersectionality
The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.

Justice
The pursuit of equitable and ethical outcomes by addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring fair treatment for all.

Leader
An individual who sets direction, holds accountability for outcomes, inspires others, and enables people or teams to achieve shared goals.

Manager
An individual responsible for managing teams, planning and overseeing work, and supporting people to deliver specific objectives and organisational priorities.

Mattering
A sense of being recognised, valued and able to make a meaningful contribution. In *From Manchester for the world*, mattering means "knowing your views help shape decisions, your work drives change, and your presence makes a difference in our shared future."

Organisational justice
The perceived fairness of organisational processes, decisions and interpersonal treatment, including how decisions are made, communicated, and experienced. Often linked to models and theories such as those used by Pearn Kandola, which measured three areas through the baseline analysis: 'Distributive Justice' (fairness of business decisions), 'Procedural Justice' (fairness of processes) and 'Interactional Justice' (treatment of people within the organisation).

Partnership
Collaborative working between individuals, teams or organisations based on mutual respect and shared values and goals, and characterised by joint decision-making and impact.

Pay gap
The difference in average pay between different groups (for example, gender or ethnicity), typically expressed as a percentage, and reflecting patterns of representation and progression.

Protected characteristic
A personal attribute protected from discrimination under the Equality Act (2010). The nine protected characteristics upon which discrimination is unlawful are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Psychological safety
The shared belief that a team or workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking – allowing people to speak up, share ideas, ask questions, admit mistakes, and challenge the status quo without fear of embarrassment, humiliation, or punishment.

Social value
The wider benefits that an organisation's activities create for people, communities and society.

Supervisor (academic)
An academic colleague responsible for guiding and supporting a student's learning, research and academic progress.

Underrepresented groups
Subsets of a population whose representation in a specific field, workforce, institution, or societal structure is lower than their proportion in the general population.

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

The University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9LP
United Kingdom

manchester.ac.uk

Royal Charter Number RC000797
4066 10.25

Photography used throughout this document features University of Manchester students, colleagues, and attendees at university events and activities.