Academic partner brochure: 2027 Greater Manchester Policy Fellowship Scheme

We have a number of academics at The University of Manchester who are enthusiastic to partner with fellows throughout the Scheme. These academics are world-class researchers and experts in their field who can support your Fellowship through access to their research expertise and academic networks.

A short biography of each academic is provided in this document, outlining their research interests, current projects, and policy experience where relevant. Please read this brochure carefully to identify which academic would be most beneficial for you to partner with.

Please indicate on your application form which academic partner you would like to work with and provide information about your selection choice.

Nicky Cullum



Professor of Nursing

Associate Dean (Research and Innovation), School of Health Sciences

Co-Director of Healthier Futures Platform

Nicky is an applied health researcher with broad interests in health and social care and health inequalities. Since 2019, she has been Director (now Co-Director) of the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration for Greater Manchester, a multidisciplinary research collaboration spanning themes which match Greater Manchester priorities (e.g. strengthening communities, prevention and early intervention). Nicky is also the Director of Greater Manchester's Academic Health Science Partnership. She was made a Dame for services to nursing research and wound care in 2013.

Richard Curry



Professor of Advanced Electronic Materials

Associate Vice-President (Research & Innovation)

Richard’s research interests are based around the study and development of new photonic materials and devices and doped solid-state materials for quantum technologies. He maintains a strong set of national and international collaborations and contributes to policy discussion around the areas of advanced materials, semiconductors and quantum technologies. His role as Associate Vice-President Research & Innovation incorporates oversight of the University's Research Platforms and Institutes, defence and national security research and REF impact.

Jun Du



Professor of Economics

Managing Director of The Productivity Institute

Jun Du is one of the UK's leading economists on trade, productivity and competitiveness. She advises BIST, FCDO, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government on trade policy, exports and support for SMEs. Her research on the UK-EU trade, FDI, automotive transition, supply chains and economic security is informing the UK's approach to industrial strategy and resilience. She works closely with business as Vice Chair of the Trade and Investment Panel at the International Chamber of Commerce, and as a member of the British Chambers of Commerce's Economic Advisory Council and Global Britain Challenge Group. She's co-director of Trade and Public Policy network (Tapp). She is a regular commentator in national mainstream media.

Michael Fisher



Royal Academy of Engineering Chair in Emerging Technologies

Professor of Computer Science, Autonomy and Verification

Michael is a Fellow of both the British Computer Society and Institution of Engineering and Technology and is currently 40% seconded to the UK's Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, advising on Robotics and Autonomous Systems. He is academic lead for the Centre for Robotic Autonomy in Demanding and Long-lasting Environments (CRADLE), is Senior Associate Editor of the Annals of Mathematics and Artificial Intelligence journal and is involved in both national and international standards activities.

Kieron Flanagan



Professor of Science and Technology Policy

Kieron is an expert on science and innovation-based economic development and industrial policies and strategies, and a frequent commentator on UK science, innovation and industrial policies. He has a track record of high-quality and impactful social scientific research, and extensive experience of working closely with policymakers at the regional, national and international (EU, OECD, UN) levels. He has also worked extensively on regional and city-regional innovation and economic development policies, and on the international dimensions of science and technology, including international collaboration, science and technology diplomacy and research security. Finally, he has worked on the role of evidence and expertise in policymaking and regulation, including studies on the UK scientific advisory system and comparative studies across Europe and beyond.

Abi Gilmore



Professor of Cultural Policy

Abi is a collaborative researcher whose research focus concerns the relationships between culture, policy and place governance. Her research trajectory has focussed on policy-related projects, including a PhD project on urban policy and music scenes, an AHRC funded study of the Millennium Dome, an ESRC study of Local Music Industries and Economic Development in Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, and the development of local cultural strategies and creative industries mapping. Abi previously informally buddied a 2025 GM Policy Fellow Amelia Behrens from DCMS. They explored common interests in cultural policy and planning frameworks in the context of devolution, having met through Abi's UKRI Policy Fellowship with DCMS on Cultural Infrastructure and Place-based Investment.

Sarah Marie Hall



Professor of Human Geography

Co-Director of Healthier Futures Platform

Sarah is a feminist economic geographer, and her research sits in the broad field of geographical feminist political economy: understanding how socio-economic inequalities are shaped by relationships, lived experience and social difference. Her research interests and contributions cover everyday life and economic change, social reproduction, care and ethics, and feminist methods and praxis.

Neil Humphrey



Professor of Psychology of Education

Neil's main areas of interest are social and emotional learning, mental health, and special educational needs, particularly autism spectrum conditions. Current and recent research projects include #BeeWell (2021-2030), Health and Life Skills (led by University of Oslo) (2023-2027), Education for Wellbeing - AWARE and INSPIRE trials (led by Anna Freud Centre) (2017-2024). Neil is the academic lead for #BeeWell, a youth-centred programme led by The University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation and Anna Freud. Together with partners, #BeeWell listens to the voices of young people to act together for change and celebrate young people's wellbeing.

Eon Kim



Lecturer in Criminology (Digital Tech)

Eon works on police productivity and police data. Her research uses large-scale police and criminal justice data to study crime concentration, police demand and workforce, and the quality of police data. Eon held a UKRI Policy Fellowship in Crime Data Analytics on secondment to the Home Office from 2024 to 2026 and was the first Director of the N8PRP New Researchers in Policing Network.

Richard Kingston



Professor of Urban Planning and Geographic Information Science

Director of Digital Futures Platform

Director of NERC Digital Solutions Programme

Richard's research explores how geospatial technologies, data science and artificial intelligence can support more informed, inclusive and evidence-based decision-making in addressing complex societal and environmental challenges. His work spans geographic information science, spatial analysis, participatory planning and digital research infrastructure, with a particular focus on making complex data more accessible. His current research focuses on the application of emerging digital technologies, including GeoAI, to improve the discovery, integration, analysis and visualisation of environmental and spatial data. Through his leadership of the NERC Digital Solutions Hub and his work on initiatives such as Climate Just, he seeks to translate advances in data science and digital technologies into practical tools that support climate resilience, address spatial and environmental inequalities, and inform policy and practice.

Caglar Koksal



Lecturer in Urban Planning

Caglar is a Chartered Urban Planner (MRTPI) and Lecturer in Urban Planning. His research examines spatial and infrastructure planning, planning practice, housing and regeneration, urban policy and governance, and the relationship between places and health (and inequalities). Caglar uses a combination of quantitative methods, including GIS and spatial analysis, and qualitative approaches, including policy analysis and elite interviews. He has substantial experience of working with local and national public bodies and private-sector consultancies. Most recently, he completed a two-year secondment to MHCLG, contributing academic expertise to national planning reform and housing delivery programmes.

Ruth Lamont



Professor of Law and Justice Policy

Ruth's research focuses on the law and policy relating to the family and children with a particular focus on the law relating to children's rights and child welfare. Her current role in the UK Parliament as UKRI Thematic Research Lead for Crime and Justice (until December 2026) enables her to participate in the research and information teams in Parliament, working with Select Committees, the Library and the Knowledge Exchange Unit in the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. She is an interface for research across crime and justice, ensuring that the most recent research data and analysis is part of the scrutiny and policy-development work of Parliament.

Carly McLachlan



Professor of Climate and Energy Policy

Director of Tyndall Manchester

Carly is the Associate Director of the ESRC Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation. Her research interests focus on climate action and decision-making in organisations and the role of evidence and trialling. Her current research focuses on climate action at the city level and within live music and culture. She co-produced a free to use carbon and co-benefits toolkit with GMCA and GLA, and chairs Greater Manchester's 5 Year Environment Plan Challenge Group which seeks to support climate action across the city region. She is collaborating with the UN Accelerator City Programme to support cities internationally to facilitate climate action in their cultural sectors. Carly is the Academic Lead for Environmental Sustainability for the University of Manchester supporting action on all aspects of our operations.

Dave O'Brien



Professor of Creative & Cultural Industries

Dave's research focuses on inequalities in creative higher education, downward social mobility, and the meaning of 'good' work in the cultural sector. His policy work includes the ground-breaking Measuring the value of culture report, and he was a co-author on the Panic! Report and the Creative Majority and Making the Creative Majority reports. He has twice been an advisor to the Commons' Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiries and have worked with the Lords' Communications and Digital Committee on their At Risk: Our creative future report. He recently completed a UKRI funded secondment to DCMS, working on issues of skills, diversity and the creative labour market. He is currently on a follow up secondment providing research support for DCMS's ARIs and on their Freelance Champion policy.

Michelle Phillips



Professor of Music

Director of Creative Manchester Platform

Michelle's research interests include audience response to live and recorded music, neurological response to music listening and performance, music and time, perception of contemporary music, entrepreneurship, and music and Parkinson's. She has been invited to discuss her research and the role of music in everyday life on BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 5 Live, ITV News, BBC News online, ITV Granada Reports, and CBC in Canada. Michelle is a saxophonist, chartered accountant and was awarded the 2025 'I Love Manchester' Alan Turing Award.

Maria Sharmina



Professor of Energy and Sustainability

Co-Director of Policy@Manchester

Maria's research on low-carbon energy and circular economy involves interdisciplinary approaches to complex policy problems and aims to provide a conduit between academics and policymakers. She served as Senior Academic Advisor with the Government Office for Science and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), working on the Net Zero Foresight project from 2021–2023.

Cristina Temenos



Professor of Urban Geography

Cristina's research is focused on health inequalities and the politics of access to care in cities globally. She is one of the first scholars working in the field of policy mobilities, a new approach to knowledge translation, and has developed this work in relation to drug use and treatment, public health, housing, economic austerity, environmental sustainability, transport, and climate change. She is the Co-lead on Poverty and Deprivation for The University of Manchester's Healthier Futures Platform and co-leads the Cities, Politics, and Economies Research Group.

Elvira Uyarra



Professor of Innovation Studies

Director of the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research

Elvira's work sits at the intersection between innovation studies, policy studies and regional studies. Her recent research focusses on topics such as the role of universities in regional development, new generation (transformative and mission oriented) innovation policies and the innovation impacts of public procurement. She is an expert member of high level groups for the European Commission, OECD and UK government on regional innovation, missions and productivity, and has been recognised among the world's top 2% of scientists for several consecutive years.

Arpana Verma



Professor of Public Health and Epidemiology

Co-Director of Policy@Manchester

Arpana is a public health physician, epidemiologist, leads the Public Health and Community Medicine Group and co-leads on Inclusive Research in Greater Manchester across the NIHR infrastructure. She was previously Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Indicators and brings expertise in population health, health inequalities and translating evidence into policy. She was PI EURO-URHIS 2 (FP7 programme), the Well North programme, the founding president of the European Public Health Association section on Urban Health. She is lead the organising committees for the International Festival of Public Health and CPD events. She is the academic lead for NIHR HDRC: Manchester.

Cecilia Wong



Professor of Spatial Planning

Co-Director of Policy@Manchester

Cecilia is a Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences and Fellow of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Her research expertise includes strategic planning, spatial policy monitoring and analysis, urban and regional development, and housing and infrastructure planning. She has been working on a number of collaborative grants recently, including a five-year consortium project on 'Tackling root causes upstream of unhealthy urban development' funded by the UK Prevention Research Partnership and a three-year project on 'Eco-Urbanisation: Promoting Sustainable Development in Metropolitan Regions of China' funded by the ESRC-NSFC Newton Fund Collaborative Research. She received the University's Distinguished Achievement Award 'Researcher of the Year (Humanities)' in 2021.