



REFRESHED GREATER MANCHESTER CIVIC UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT PRIORITIES & ACTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2025 | FINAL

INTRODUCTION

This refreshed set of priorities marks the next phase of the Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement (CUA), setting out a clear and collective commitment from the city region's universities to play an active civic role in improving the lives of Greater Manchester's people and communities.

Our universities are vital regional assets, serving as educators, employers, innovators and cultural anchors, with a role that reaches far beyond our campuses. They are at the heart of Greater Manchester's success and ambition: creating ideas that drive the industries of the future, supporting employers to access the skills and talent they need, attracting global investment, and providing opportunities for local people to learn and grow. As institutions rooted in place, they are part of the fabric of everyday life in our city-region – from training the next generation of nurses, teachers and social workers to enriching our cultural identity and community life. Uniquely positioned to connect education, research and civic responsibility, they ensure progress in our city-region is inclusive, sustainable and aligned with both national and regional priorities.

Recent years have shown how powerful our universities can be when they act together. They have helped to grow our region's innovation economy, developed lifelong learning pathways, partnered with the NHS and local authorities to improve health and wellbeing, and worked alongside residents through the Greater Manchester Citizens' Panel to ensure their civic action reflects the voices of local people. Our universities have a proven and distinctive role to play in the years ahead – enabling economic growth and social progress to go hand in hand, helping to make Greater Manchester a thriving city region where everyone can live a good life.

Developed with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), these priorities align with the [Greater Manchester Strategy](#) (GMS), and reflect national priorities outlined by the [Secretary of State for Education](#). The refreshed priorities outline how Greater Manchester's universities will contribute to the Greater Manchester Strategy's ambitious 10-year vision for a fairer, greener, healthier, and more prosperous city region.

Our partnership with GMCA will be central to these ambitions, providing a framework through which universities can connect their civic mission with the wider ambitions of our city-region. The strength and impact of this partnership will be a key measure of Greater Manchester's universities' collective success, reflecting the benefits it brings to both our universities and the communities we serve.

Agreed by the Civic University Board, which has two senior representatives from GMCA and each of the five universities, this framework brings a focused approach to how universities work



together across four agreed themes: opportunity and prosperity, health and wellbeing, culture and environment. It draws on contributions from both the Civic University Board (CUB) and the Greater Manchester Citizens' Panel, ensuring that the priorities reflect local ambitions and the voices of our communities.

Taken together, these priorities highlight the important civic role of our universities as institutions deeply rooted in place, working in genuine and mutually beneficial partnership, and dedicated to driving positive change for all who live, learn and work in Greater Manchester.

PRIORITY THEMES

OPPORTUNITY & PROSPERITY

Objective: Drive inclusive economic growth by supporting education, skills development, lifelong learning and innovation and ensuring good jobs. Increasing access and opportunities for all people to learn, progress, and develop, fostering a thriving, inclusive and productive economy in all parts of Greater Manchester.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Objective: Promote healthy lives, with quality care available for those that need it by supporting health, mental health, and social care initiatives.

CULTURE

Objective: Enhance Greater Manchester's global reputation as a vibrant cultural city region by leveraging creative and cultural assets to ensure access to high quality culture and leisure for all, drive economic growth, skills development and strengthen local community identity.

ENVIRONMENT

Objective: Align research, innovation, education and operations activity to promote sustainability, reduce carbon usage and build resilience to environmental challenges, thereby contributing to Greater Manchester's transformation into a green-city region.

KEY ACTIONS

The actions in this section demonstrate how Greater Manchester's universities will work collectively to deliver the refreshed Civic University Agreement (CUA) priorities. Each institution already makes a significant contribution through its education, research, innovation and civic engagement activities. The role of the Civic University Board (CUB) is not to duplicate this work, but to determine where acting together adds value – by supporting, connecting and communicating our universities' collective impact.

These actions will be formally ratified by the Civic University Board in November, and are being shared with GMCA, university leaders and local authority leaders at this stage to illustrate how the agreed priorities will be delivered. A more detailed five-year implementation plan identifying key priorities including green skills will be agreed and monitored by the Civic University Board, shaped in partnership with the GMCA, university leaders and the Greater Manchester Citizens' Panel.

OPPORTUNITY & PROSPERITY

We will drive regional innovation by working with Innovation GM to strengthen the technical and innovative skills and knowledge needed for Greater Manchester to grow sustainably and productively. Alongside this, we will expand opportunities for all learners to access higher education and lifelong learning, advancing widening participation through university-led initiatives and collaborations with partners such as GM Higher and FE Colleges. We will work alongside the GMCA, as well as business and education partners, to map and strengthen the city-region's tertiary education landscape, while also supporting our students through collaboration on housing, democratic participation and inclusive employment. We will also use our research expertise to contribute to economic growth in key sectors, including those identified in the industrial strategy, ensuring that students, staff and communities across Greater Manchester, regardless of background, have access to the opportunities they need to thrive.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

We will define and strengthen universities' role as anchor institutions that support the health and wellbeing of staff, students and local communities, ensuring that Greater Manchester's universities are also great places to work with inclusive opportunities for all colleagues. By collaborating with partners across the health and care system, including Health Innovation Manchester, we will address clinical skills gaps and support the development of new technologies and approaches to prevent and reduce health inequalities, such as the Prevent Demonstrator, and enable people to live well in Greater Manchester. We will build on existing partnerships such as #BeeWell and the GM Universities Student Mental Health Service to ensure students have timely access to mental health and wellbeing support, while also developing creative health collaborations that use arts-based approaches to enhance wellbeing.

CULTURE

We will work collectively to strengthen Greater Manchester's creative and cultural sector, growing its global reputation and supporting inclusive participation. This will include developing innovative teaching partnerships and responding to the evolving skills needs of the creative economy through our taught programmes and research, as well as supporting start-ups through collaboration with the GM Business Board, the Creative Industries Sector Panel and



Innovation GM. We will continue to create and promote opportunities for communities to engage with our cultural institutions and research.

ENVIRONMENT

We will play our full part in supporting Greater Manchester's 2038 net zero target by advancing decarbonisation of our estates and operations, embedding sustainability across our education and skills provision, and directing research and innovation towards green transformation. Working with industry, government and communities, we will help deliver a just transition to a sustainable future and build the skills needed for the green economy. We will also use our campuses as catalysts for biodiversity, improving green space, reducing pollution, and enhancing wellbeing.