Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in a University
A case-study of evaluation and foresight applied in a strategic context

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* With important acknowledgements to Julian Skyrme and Matt Atkin
A case study of strategy and transformation at the University of Manchester

1. From social responsibility to SDGs
2. Measured and ranked
3. Tsunami of disruption
4. Foresight for strategy beyond the pandemic
5. Reflections
A few points from our history
Social responsibility is *both*

- a distinct orientation of activities in our university (public and civic engagement, equality and diversity, environmental sustainability, cultural engagement, staff/student/alumni volunteering, university HR and procurement processes, widening participation etc)

- a unifying theme that runs through our core research and teaching goals, helping to give purpose and meaning to activities that generate societal impact
We are committed to becoming a zero carbon university by 2038.

We are divesting from fossil fuel and other carbon-intensive investments.

We are an accredited Living Wage Employer.

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

SOCIAL INCLUSION
As a global centre of research and teaching, and one of our city-region’s largest employers, we’re challenging the inequalities and injustices that affect people’s lives locally, nationally and globally.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION
We invest more than £15 million annually in financial support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS
We’re part of more than 50 healthcare partnerships in the Global South in support of UN SDGs.

SCHOOL GOVERNOR INITIATIVE
We’ve helped more than 1,000 staff and alumni to contribute to education leadership.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE REGISTER
We created the UK International Emergency Trauma Register and deployed medical experts during overseas disasters.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
We’ve supported more than 4,000 local people into work using The Works, our unique employment partnership.

HEALTH INNOVATION MANCHESTER
Our unique civic and academic collaboration to transform the health and wellbeing of Greater Manchester’s 2.6 million citizens.

EQUITY AND MERIT PROGRAMME
With support from our donors, we’ve helped more than 300 postgraduate students to lead on sustainable development in their own countries.

HUMANITARIAN AND CONFLICT RESPONSE
We partner with the NHS, Medicins Sans Frontières and the British Red Cross in our humanitarian and conflict response work.

GREEN CAMPUS
We’ve planted more than 300 trees on campus and launched an interactive tree trail.

CARBON LITERATE MUSEUM
Ours was the world’s first museum to receive a Carbon Literate Museum Award for cultivating a low carbon culture.

CULTURAL PARK KEEPER
Our Whitworth gallery employs the UK’s first Cultural Park Keeper responsible for outdoor activities focused on wellbeing.

ETCETERA

BETTER HEALTH
We’re collaborating with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, NHR trusts and Health Innovation Manchester to tackle local and global health challenges through research, teaching and social responsibility initiatives.

DECLARATION ON IMMUNITY
Our science has helped to create a pathway for Greater Manchester to reach a zero carbon status by 2038.

GREATER INCLUSIVITY
We’re investing in our Manchester Museum to create a more inclusive, caring and imaginative destination for all our visitors.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC
Our biennial festival brings together music, science and culture at Jodrell Bank Observatory, a UNESCO world heritage site.

RENEWABLE ENERGY
We lead the biggest research project into sustainable development of the world’s dams.

PLASTIC POLLUTION
We’ve eliminated more than 250,000 pieces of avoidable single-use plastic, with more to come.

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT
Our unique cultural institutions – the Whitworth, the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Manchester Museum and Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre – are engaging audiences through their diverse collections, events, exhibitions, partnerships and inspirational spaces.

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Universities challenged to demonstrate their purpose and public benefit.

UN SDGs offered opportunity to communicate and align impact work against world’s democratically-agreed priorities in internationally consistent language.

17 SDGs apply to global North and South, to local and to global action.

Cover sustainable development – not just environmental sustainability.

UoM’s strategy, called Our Future, committed to addressing the UN SDGs in four ways: research; teaching/learning; public engagement; operations.
Reporting for External and Internal Audience

WHAT NEXT?

This report is part of a much wider strategy to play our full part in meeting the SDGs. Here's what else we’re doing:

- University College for International Development (UCID) - a global platform for sharing, networking and learning to advance the SDGs
- Innovation and engagement - we will continue to make a priority of social responsibility among its programmes to ensure every aspect of the University’s activities, including teaching, research, conferences, exhibitions and events
- Cultural engagement - our University's Manchester Museum, Whitworth gallery, IOE and Art and Architecture departments are among the many across the University that work with communities and partners across the globe to deliver the SDGs
- Financial support - we have >605000 students and staff across our University and our community, who together will take action against the SDGs
- University engagement - will allow for greater public engagement through our University's many partnerships with local, regional and national organisations and will allow us to take action against the SDGs
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KEY FACTS

• Launched in 2019 THE Impact Ranking is the only ranking in the world measuring HE action towards the 17 UN SDGs
• It covers social, economic and environmental impact, not a narrow definition of environmental sustainability.
• With 1,240 entrants in 2021 it’s predicted to overtake the traditional THE World University Ranking (1,527 entrants) very soon
• The ranking is based on performance across all key functions of a University using 105 metrics and 220 measurements across:
  • Research impact
  • Teaching, learning and student impact
  • Public engagement and other knowledge exchange activities, including the work of university-owned cultural institutions
  • Operations activities e.g. finance, HR, estates, campus operations
Alignment with the UN SDGs

17 SDGs → 169 Targets → 223 Indicators

The University of Manchester
INDIVIDUAL SDG RANKINGS
17 individual SDG rankings based on

- **Research (27%)** Scopus-generated publication data mined for impact using Elsevier keywords, sitescore, FWPI etc
- **Teaching, Public engagement, Operations/PS (73%)** Submission of 220 pieces of evidence and 105 metrics (policies, commitments, partnerships, student data, expenditure) compiled by Office for Social Responsibility

OVERALL GLOBAL RANKING
- THE produces an overall ranking
- Ranking calculated from
  - SDG 17 = Partnerships for the goals (22%)
  - Top 3 other SDGs (26% + 26% + 26%)

**Weightings**

- Research 27%
- Teaching, Public Engagement, Operations 73%

**Methodology defined in 190 page document**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022 scores / 100</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Uni of Auckland, NZ</td>
<td>Uni of Auckland, NZ</td>
<td><strong>UNI OF MCR, UK</strong></td>
<td>Western Sydney Uni, Australia 99.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>McMaster Uni, Canada</td>
<td>Uni of Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>Uni of Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Western Sydney Uni, Australia</td>
<td>RMIT, Australia</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>UBC, Canada</td>
<td>La Trobe Uni, Australia</td>
<td>La Trobe Uni, Australia</td>
<td>King Abdulaziz Uni, Saudi 97.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>King’s College, UK</td>
<td>Arizona State Uni, US</td>
<td>Queen’s Uni, Canada</td>
<td>Universiti Sains Malaysia 97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Uni Gothenburg, Sweden</td>
<td>Uni of Bologna, Italy</td>
<td>Uni Wollongong, Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>KTH Royal Inst Tech, Sweden</td>
<td>UBC, Canada</td>
<td>Aalborg, Denmark</td>
<td>Queens Uni, Canada 96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Uni of Montreal, Canada</td>
<td><strong>UNI OF MCR, UK</strong></td>
<td>Uni College Cork, Ireland</td>
<td>Newcastle Uni, UK 96.5</td>
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<td>RMIT, Australia</td>
<td>Uni of Auckland, NZ</td>
<td>Hokkaido Uni, Japan 96.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Ranked: 450  768  1,117  1,406
Countries: 76  85  98  106
University operations
- Creation of SDG directory microsite
- New 2021/22 SDG report

Research
- Enhancing awareness of SDG bibliometrics
- Automated profiles for staff in updated PURE system
- Developing key research platforms related to SDGs, particularly Sustainable Futures

Students
- Taster module on SDGs for prospective students
- Use SDGs in course recruitment information
- SDG-focused projects for students
- Expand UCIL modules on SDGs and selectively available to developing country scholars

Public, civic and global engagement
- Link SDGs to civic work
- Partnerships with networks USR, Talloires, ACU, SDSN
- SDG MOOC for HE professionals
A few challenges to face…

Cartoon by G.MacKay adapted by G.Hughes
Context for University in 2020

**Covid 19**
- Pandemic saw universities worldwide pivot rapidly to online teaching and restricted research activities when in lockdown
- UK universities work in market model in which majority of government funding of research is at a maximum of 80% of full economic cost and domestic undergraduate students also capped and funded at break-even or less
- In consequence, international student fees, which are not regulated, effectively subsidise research
- Restrictions on international travel of incoming students, with potential loss of revenues, posed an existential threat which was partly mitigated by government loan facilities

**Sustainability**
- City of Manchester has science-based carbon budget and associated zero carbon date of 2038
- University as signatory to Race to Zero

**Brexit**
- Culture wars, Levelling-up of left behind regions,…
In addition to immediate crisis management, the University of Manchester decided to undertake a foresight exercise to look beyond the pandemic at medium-term strategy and to consider the implications for its pre-pandemic strategic plan, ‘Our Future’.

What can this case-study foresight do to help consider more general implications for the role of universities after the pandemic?
Basic Parameters of the Foresight Exercise

**Timeframe**
- Options for medium-term horizon (5 to 10 years) post-Covid

**Participation**
- Group of 10 area leaders/experts with 132 other staff in workshops, 2,077 in What Works? Survey and 108 students in survey & workshop activities plus wider student survey
- Open to all for comment before presentation to Senate and Board

**Scenarios**
- 10-year reference assumptions underpinned central BAU scenario and groups asked also to formulate adverse and financially unconstrained alternatives

**Seven themes:**
1. The future of the research system
2. The future of teaching, learning & student experience
3. Redefining the international university
4. Regional innovation and levelling up
5. Reimagining the way we work
6. Future campus footprint/role
7. University size and shape/business model
Some key findings: Teaching and Research

- Flexibility at core for **teaching**, increasingly ‘blended’ combining best aspects of online & on-campus
- ‘Digital first’ to support
  - increased choice of pace, place, time and mode of study
  - kind of qualifications offered e.g. accommodating modular degrees or apprenticeships

- **Research** increasingly challenge-based demanding multidisciplinary cross-faculty approaches
- UK funding model for research not sustainable, meaning need to prioritise which areas for investment
Some key findings: Work & Campus

- **Work** will be more blended and flexible than pre-pandemic but no one-size-fits-all solution
  - where roles and circumstances allow, mixture of on-campus work for interaction and access to facilities & home-working to reduce commuting & allow focus
- Imperative for **net zero carbon** by 2038 challenging for both investment and behaviour
- Changing patterns of teaching, research & work demanding **more agile and flexible spaces**. Cultural as well as technical change needed
  - premium on collaboration space & hot-desking replacing cellular offices
  - repurposing existing spaces or re-providing where affordable
  - flexibility in use of working week to ensure efficient occupancy.
Some key findings: At Home and Abroad

- International strategy stressing ‘triple diversification’ of student population & experience – by country, by course and by social origin
- Low-travel learning means need to create a global multicultural experience on campus & to deliver courses online and via international centres and partnerships
- National political drivers and our own SR commitments emphasising regional role in innovation, ‘levelling-up’ and raising the civic engagement agenda

Cartogram of UoM international students’ country of origin
Alternative Models of Size & Shape of University

• Future size and shape of University defined by student numbers, financial turnover and mix of activities
• Of the World’s top-25 ranked (ARWU 2019) universities, 15 receive more than 50% of their income from gifts, investments, or attached businesses e.g. healthcare, publishing (19>30%)
• Major challenge to finance a transition and reach a financially sustainable model
Some implications

- Most foreseen changes already exist at fringes of system but now becoming mainstream
- Blend of on and off campus experience is now a reality for both students and colleagues with almost all universities having this capability
  - Currently a reaction in progress as all enjoy the benefits of social and intellectual face-to-face interaction on campus
  - Likely stabilization around a blended model with far higher digital content but clearly defined role for on-campus experience
- Substantial implications for campus estate strengthened by parallel pressure for de-carbonisation
  - More demand for interaction space and less for large lecture theatres
  - Limitations of retrofit for both carbon reduction and move to interactive space, especially in traditional/heritage buildings
  - Flexible working for staff likely to persist, again with implications for estate with more hot-desking etc
- Future of internationalisation will increasingly be challenged by carbon agenda as pandemic subsides, with lower travel alternatives
  - May drive increase of partnerships to allow partial study in home country or mix of online and shorter international stays
- It is very difficult for a university to shift its underlying business model as most are adapted to circumstances but most will change their operating models
Conclusions

- Key words across all functions of university are agility and flexibility in a sector not renowned for either
- Distinctiveness is important – no shortcuts in research or student experience but for us social responsibility and place are foundational
  - The SDGs are a useful framework for the medium-term
- High levels of uncertainty & risk in political & economic environment make it unwise to overcommit to a single solution
- Organisational foresight cannot reduce uncertainty but it can increase readiness for change
- Our aim is not to chase external metrics such as the Times Higher Impact Rankings but we will happily accept a positive result!
- An adaptive, evolutionary model that values resilience provides a stronger foundation for change to maintain and improve a university’s position