

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

**Post: Teaching Associate on Sociology & Public
Policy (Maternity Cover)**

School of Languages & Social Sciences

Reference Number: R110309

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ASTON UNIVERSITY

(www.aston.ac.uk)

Founded in 1895, Aston is a long-established research-led University known for its world-class teaching quality and strong links to industry, government and commerce. At Aston we focus on academic excellence, delivering high quality teaching and research in an inspiring and creative environment.

Aston University gained its charter in 1966, and has come a long way in broadening its educational excellence and student appeal across Schools in Business, Engineering and Applied Science, Life and Health Sciences, and Languages and Social Sciences. Professor Julia King became Vice-Chancellor of the University in 2006, and presided in 2007 over the definition and implementation of the [Aston 2012 Strategy](#) which has helped define Aston's positioning, and the advantages which will help sustain its further development and 'edge' in an increasingly international competitive context.

The existing [Aston 2012 Strategy](#) aimed at establishing Aston as a top 10 University whilst retaining the core value: delivering accessible academic excellence. The development of the Aston 2020 Strategy is now well underway, and we intend to be ambitious and global in our aspirations. We will be focusing our Research Strategy on world-leading and internationally excellent areas, and will be using Learning & Teaching to build on our research strengths, whilst continuing to capitalise on our strengths in access, employability, and professional relevance of our programmes of study. Business and community engagement will exploit our research strengths, whilst acknowledging our role within the local community more broadly.

Implementation of Aston 2012, and recent significant investment in developing our staff, has also highlighted core values which make Aston an outstanding place to work. These values are encapsulated in Aston First, a culture transformation programme, and we expect clear direction and inspiration from leaders; better teamwork and inter-departmental communication; excellent customer service with a 'can-do' attitude; fairness, equality, respect and well-being for all; and everyone taking responsibility for innovation, cost saving and income generation. Aston is an exciting and vibrant place to work and study.

Students and programmes of study

Aston University justifiably prides itself in the diversity of its population of 10,500 students, of whom approximately 8,000 are undergraduates, about 2,100 are taught postgraduate students, and 400 are postgraduate research students. Over 35% of students come from outside the UK, and over 50% of those are from outside the European Union.

Our range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes are designed to be vocationally relevant, and Aston has an outstanding graduate employment record with 82% finding graduate-level employment within six months of graduation, compared to a national average of less than 70% (relating to 2008-2010 graduates). We work with employers to design programmes that fit the needs of industry, commerce and the public sector, and to ensure that our graduates have the skills future employers require.

Research

Aston has world-class strengths in research in every School of Study, and academics and research staff joining Aston will become part of a dynamic and successful research community. Many academics work on research in partnership with business, through such schemes as Knowledge transfer partnerships (KTPs), CASE awards and other industrial collaborations. Aston's Business Partnership unit (BPU) operates at the commercial edge of university research and teaching, linking businesses to the university's academic expertise.

Location and environment

Aston University is based in the centre of Birmingham, one of Europe's liveliest and most welcoming cities, with superb cultural, retail and recreational facilities within walking distance of the campus. The 40-acre sustainable green campus houses all of the University's academic, social and accommodation facilities; the campus was ranked 5th in the People and Planet survey. The £215m Aston Student Village project is currently transforming the student accommodation on campus, providing 2400 new en suite rooms. A stunning state-of-the art Library was completed in 2010, with the ground floor configured as social learning space. A multi-million pound redevelopment of the Woodcock Sports Centre, due for completion in September 2011, will offer state-of-the art sports facilities including a beautiful grade 11 listed swimming pool. These high quality facilities and amenities make Aston a great place to work and study.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, FINANCES

Aston's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Julia King, is the principal Academic and Executive Officer of the University, with overall responsibility for Aston's strategic direction, executive management and day-to-day operation. The Vice-Chancellor is supported by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Higson, and three Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Dr Phil Extance, Professor Martin Griffin, and Professor Alison Halstead.

Alastair Hewgill, Chief Financial Officer, Adèle MacKinlay, Chief Operating Officer and University secretary, and David Farrow, Director of Marketing Strategy and Communications, head up the support functions of the University. Sheila O'Neal is the Director of Development and Alumni Relations, and Alan Charters is Director of Capital Development.

Schools of Study

As indicated above, Aston's academic activity is divided into four Schools of Study, each of which is managed by an Executive Dean:

Executive Dean, Aston Business School:	Professor John Edwards
Executive Dean, Engineering and Applied Science:	Professor Robert Berry
Executive Dean, Life and Health Sciences:	Professor Helen Griffiths
Executive Dean, Languages and Social Sciences:	Professor Pam Moores

Honorary positions and governance

Aston's governing body, the University Council, comprises 10 staff members from within the Executive and Schools leadership, 2 student members, and 14 appointed lay members who are business and community leaders from the Midlands and beyond – 20% are Aston alumni. The University Senate is Aston's supreme academic authority. Aston's Chancellor, Sir John Sunderland, is the honorary and ceremonial head of the University.

Financial Performance

Total income for the last full year 2010 was £110.5m, representing a 5% increase over the previous year, with 33% of income from the Funding Council, teaching fees and support grants accounting for 43%, research grants accounting for 8%, and other operating income of 16% arising from residential and rental revenues and intellectual property rights.

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THE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (LSS)

Multidisciplinary and multilingual, LSS is a forward-looking School that has expanded significantly over recent years and has an ambitious vision for future development. The School is managed by a team of five:

- Executive Dean, Professor Pamela Moores
- Deputy Dean, Dr Beverly Adab
- Associate Dean (Research), Professor Gertrud Reershemius
- Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programmes), Dr Jörg Mathias
- Associate Dean (Postgraduate Programmes), Dr Urszula Clark

We are organised into four core subject areas: English; Languages and Translation Studies; Politics and International Relations; and Sociology and Public Policy. Our academic groups deliver taught programmes which include degree qualifications in English Language, Applied Linguistics and TESOL; French, German, Spanish and Translation Studies (with initial learning opportunities also on offer in Arabic and Mandarin); European Studies, Politics and International Relations; Sociology and Public Policy.

Research

Research in the School is broad-ranging across the four core subject areas, with increasing engagement in multi and interdisciplinary projects. Our research was awarded a 5c rating in the Research Assessment Exercise in 2001 and improved to the equivalent of an excellent 5a rating in RAE 2008. Over this period the number of researchers in the School whose work was submitted to the RAE rose to 94% of academic staff, 24% of them Early Career Researchers. In terms of research power in European Studies (the subject panel to which we submitted our work in 2008), we were rated 5th in the UK. In view of our expanding academic portfolio and the increase in volume of our research over recent years, we expect to be making submissions to more than one panel in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework.

At the centre of the School's work in languages and social sciences is our long established research institute, the Institute for the Study of Language and Society (ISLS):

The Institute for the Study of Language and Society (ISLS) aims to broaden and deepen understanding of the relationship between language and society, including intercultural communication through translation. The focus of its research is the study of language and discourse with respect to social processes and structures. ISLS seeks to accomplish its mission through research projects, publications, conference, lectures, seminars and visits by distinguished visitors. ISLS is led by Professor Christina Schaeffner.

ISLS stands alongside a more recently created **Centre for Social and Political Science (CRSPS)**, which promotes research particularly from the areas of Sociology and Public Policy, but also collaborates with colleagues in related areas, organising seminar series and public conferences. Members of CRSPS represent world-class expertise in key areas of politics, sociology and policy studies, including globalisation; gender, sexuality and the body; social movements; public services and social change; race, ethnicity and diverse societies; Birmingham and the world. CRSPS is led by colleagues in Sociology and Public Policy.

The **Centre for Forensic Linguistics (CFL)** at Aston is the first of its type in the world. It combines leading-edge research and investigative forensic practice with postgraduate teaching and

professional courses. Research within the Centre involves all aspects of forensic linguistics, from how the police and the courts can best work with interpreters to the development and refinement of methods for identifying the writer of disputed forensic texts. Members of the Centre have published widely and lectured about their research in some 30 countries. Their high-quality research ensures that both postgraduate and professional courses and their investigative work have a solid academic foundation. CFL is led by Dr Tim Grant.

The **Aston Centre for Europe (ACE)** brings together the University's and School's strengths in European Studies. Based primarily within the School's Politics and International Relations (PIR) subject group, ACE's purpose is to raise the University's profile on Europe at local, national and international level. To this end, it hosts high-profile visiting speakers, offers practitioner training, as well as running an innovative and vocationally-oriented double MA programme with IEP Lille, and facilitates new research across the University. Its co-directors are Professor John Gaffney and Professor Simon Green.

Aston Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Language and Diversity (InterLand): This innovative centre, established in 2009, builds on the extensive expertise of Aston researchers by bringing together linguistic, social, cultural, economic, environmental and political perspectives. It is a cross-School venture, located within both the School of Languages and Social Sciences and the Aston Business School. InterLand emphasises interaction, partnership and engagement with policymakers, businesses and local communities as both co-producers and users of knowledge. The Centre is a launch-pad for 'new frontier' research into diversity, and its researchers are engaged in work that will shape future thinking and pioneer practices that will have a significant impact on diverse societies. InterLand is led by Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya and Dr Urszula Clark.

Teaching

The School offers a focused set of closely interrelated undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in Languages and Translation Studies; English Language and Applied Linguistics; Politics, International Relations, Sociology and Policy Studies. Our aim is to provide intellectually challenging and professionally relevant education, informing, inspiring, and innovating in our responses to social and cultural change.

Undergraduate programmes

We offer a range of four-year BSc Honours degrees, each incorporating an integrated placement year/Year Abroad, in the following areas:

Modern Languages and Translation Studies

For Modern Languages we are ranked 9th overall (Guardian University Guide 2010); for job prospects, we are ranked 3rd in the 2009 Guardian Good University Guide and joint 1st by Unistats.com. Our distinctive language programmes emphasize the integrated in-depth study of language and society. The aim is to give students a detailed appreciation of the socio-political, cultural and economic environments of the languages and countries they study, in the context of the European Union and wider global frameworks. We are proud of our reputation for enabling students to achieve excellent linguistic competence through our portfolio of degrees in French, German and Spanish. These high levels of achievement are based on the policy that the majority of modules are delivered in the target language, thus providing students with the fullest understanding of the society concerned, and developing a high level of confidence and competence in use of the language. All language students also complete a compulsory year abroad which is fully integrated into their programme of learning and assessment.

Language provision is structured around a number of key areas:

- **Single/Joint/Combined language courses**
- Established in 1984, our distinctive **International Business and Modern Languages (IBML)** degree remains a market leader for students wanting to study business and languages.
- **Translation Studies French and/or German, and/or Spanish degrees**
Our pioneering undergraduate translation programme was the first dedicated translation programme in England (established 1997).

English Language

Our undergraduate programmes emphasise the practical application of English Language studies to the real world through our optional placement year and through professionally relevant modules in areas such as Teaching and Learning English, Language in a Legal context or Language in the News Media. Aston is one of only a few UK universities to offer English Language Programmes with a fully integrated placement year.

Politics, International Relations and European Studies are characterised by a solid disciplinary approach. The curriculum covers all main elements of the three subjects, with a core emphasis on Western Europe, including historical background, political institutions, theories and policy areas, as well as the European Union.

Sociology

In addition to foundation courses in social history, theory and research, modules are offered in a range of specialisations, including 'race' and racism; gender, feminism and the body; social movements and social change; knowledge and science; globalization; culture and the media; risk and climate change; health and illness; and work. Our Sociology programmes rank consistently well for Student Satisfaction, receiving the highest score for Sociology student satisfaction in the 2008 National Student Survey.

Public Policy

Our Public Policy and Management programmes are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills of professionals working in the public and private sectors. Our teaching covers both the processes of policy making and implementation at global, regional, national and sub-national levels of government and governance, and looks at the organisations that deliver policy.

Subject combinations: The majority of undergraduates within the School are studying in more than one subject area. They may combine two or three LSS subjects or may be enrolled on the University's wide-ranging interschool programme covered by the generic title **Interdisciplinary Studies**. This permits the study of two subjects from departments across the University to be combined and studied on an equal basis. English Language, French, German, Spanish, International Relations, Public Policy and Management, Sociology and Politics are all options within this framework.

University-wide Language Programme: Language modules are offered across the University to non-specialists, whether staff or students, as accredited electives or open learning opportunities. The language may be studied at ab initio or at Intermediate or Post 'A' level standard. Students may take these modules on a self-financing basis in cases where their specific degree programme does not include this opportunity. Languages on offer include: Arabic, French, German, Mandarin and Spanish.

Junior Year Abroad (JYA) and Pre-Masters Programme: On-campus, the School offers a one year certificated course to international students as a JYA for undergraduate students (Cert HE),

and as a Pre-Masters for graduates who wish to enhance not only their level of English, but also their understanding of British culture and society, prior to applying for Masters degrees in the UK.

Postgraduate programmes:

MA/MSc Taught Programmes

Following a period of significant growth, the School now offers a total of 17 taught postgraduate programmes, with delivery either on campus or by distance learning. Well established programmes in TESOL and in Translation studies offer opportunities for students wishing to develop or enhance specific professional practice. Other Masters programmes, such as the MA in Applied Linguistics, the MA in the European Union and International Relations or the [MA in Social Research and Social Change](#) concentrate on developing linguistic or cultural competence. Our distance learning courses are over 25 years old at Aston, making us one of the most experienced providers of off-campus learning programmes in the UK.

LSS Masters provision is growing in reach and reputation: The MA Translation in a European Context is one of 34 programmes across Europe (and one of only five in the UK) to be officially recognised as a member of the European Masters in Translation (EMT) network set up by the European Commission. We have also recently developed a new MA in Applied Translation Studies run jointly with KAUIR University in Almaty, Kazakhstan and an innovative Double MA Europe and the World (run jointly with IEP Lille.)

Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA)

The centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA) provides English Language support for students across the university, through the delivery of pre-sessional courses, General English courses and English Language tutorials for international students. We also run a highly successful IELTS examination testing centre.

Facilities

The University Library and Information Services offer good book and journal collections for all subject areas, and excellent access to a wide range of electronic sources, study facilities and learning support. The School also provides local study facilities for students in the form of a study area with reference works, laptop access, space for group work and also extensive multimedia facilities. A learning support team, comprising a Learning Support Manager, a Learning Technologist and a Resources Coordinator, is on hand to support and advise staff and students, to manage specialist equipment and materials, and provide a loans service. University teaching rooms are equipped with facilities to access the network and internet, broadcast recorded material, show and record presentations etc.

All LSS computer laboratories have been upgraded and refurbished over recent years to provide a technically advanced, supportive learning environment. We use the latest Sanako software to manage face to face learning in the labs, including Interpreting. Our specific translation software includes the translation memory system TRADOS. There is also a separate group viewing room for films and broadcasts. New digital satellite receivers allow for recording of programmes from French, German, Spanish and UK television (in accordance with copyright) in addition to general access to learning materials via website links for independent study and development.

The School aims to develop an extensive archive of learning materials. Staff and students can also borrow equipment (e.g. video camera, MP3 players, language-specific DVDs). Much learning material is made available through the Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard). This is also used to make administrative information available to staff.

Colleagues have the opportunity to work with experts in the Aston University Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP), making use of CLIPP expertise in the use of centrally-managed, technology-enhanced learning resources, curriculum design and pedagogical research. School Teaching Fellows, working in conjunction with CLIPP, develop specific projects of benefit for the wider School, in the areas of:

- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Curriculum Design and Development
- Research into Pedagogy

All technology is supported by Information Systems Aston (ISA).