



Aston University

Languages & Social Sciences

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Post: Teaching Assistants, Languages for All

School of Languages & Social Sciences

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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.

THE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (LSS) IN 2011-12

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 six:

- Executive Dean, Professor Pamela Moores OBE
- Deputy Dean, Professor Simon Green AcSS
- Associate Dean (Research), Professor Gertrud Reershemius
- Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programmes), Dr Carole Marley
- Associate Dean (Postgraduate Programmes), Dr Lucian Leustean
- Associate Dean (Student Experience / Learning & Teaching), Dr Chris Bolsmann

We are organised into four Academic Subject Areas:

- English, headed by Dr Judith Baxter
- Languages and Translation Studies (LTS) (incorporating French, German, Spanish and Translation Studies), headed by Dr Raquel Medina
- Politics and International Relations (PIR), headed by Dr Nat Copsey
- Sociology and Policy, headed by Dr Pam Lowe

The School is also home to the Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA), which provides a range of English-language programmes for overseas students. CELCA is headed by Mrs Claire Richardson.

The Academic Subject Groups are supported by a central administrative team, which manages a range of aspects of the School's work, including research, admissions, marketing, open days, student support, exams and timetabling. The Head of Administration is Mrs Elaena Wells.

Together, the Deans, Heads of Subject Groups, the Head of CELCA and the Head of Administration constitute the School's Management Committee.

Research

Research in the School ranges across the four core subject areas, with increasing engagement in multi- and interdisciplinary projects. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the School made a single submission across all its subject groups to the European Studies panel, and was thus the third-largest submitting unit. It came 5th in this panel in terms of research power.

Since 2008, the School has moved forward significantly. In particular, the University has made recent major strategic investments, the total value of which exceeds £1 million, to set up three of the School's research centres (see below): ACE, CFL and InterLanD. This has helped to generate considerable new momentum in research, as exemplified by a steep increase in research grants won by the School, including major awards from the Volkswagen Foundation, the EU, the ESRC, the DAAD and the AHRC. Researchers in the School are internationally-recognised leaders in their respective fields, notably in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Language Education, Translation Studies, French / German / EU politics and the Sociology of Diversity; they regularly appear in the national and international media. Our impact is therefore also strong. Our doctoral community has grown too, and we now have 38 FTE registered PhD students across the four subject areas. Overall, the School is in a good position for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), to which it expects to make a number of separate submissions.

The breadth and depth of the School's research is reflected in the range of research centres which are based in LSS:

The **Aston Centre for Europe (ACE)** brings together the University's and School's strengths in European Studies (broadly defined). 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 innovative MA programmes, and facilitates new research across the University. Its co-directors are Dr Nat Copsey, Professor John Gaffney and Professor Simon Green.

The **Aston Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Language and Diversity (InterLand)**, 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 Dr Urszula Clark and Dr Steve Garner.

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 **Centre for Language Education Research at Aston (CLERA)** was launched in 2011 and draws on over two decades of research into language education to investigate communication, discourse and culture and their impact on language education. It focuses on the following main areas: first and second language learning and teaching, particularly in relation to classroom-based research, immigrant and workplace-related education; Language teacher education; European languages and cultures, including English; English as a global language; Language contact, regionally and internationally; Language education for professional and intercultural communication in organisations, language teaching, and translation and interpreting. Its co-directors are Professor Anne Burns, Professor Gertrud Reershemius and Dr Sue Garton.

The **Centre for Social and Political Science (CRSPS)** 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 have expertise in key areas of 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 directed by colleagues in Sociology and Policy.

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.

Teaching

The School offers a focused set of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, which are structured around the four Academic Subject Groups. 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

Undergraduate provision remains at the heart of the School's teaching provision and we have grown strongly in this area over recent years: our intake will have more than doubled between 2009-10 and 2012-13. But this has not come at the expense of quality, and our typical offer ranges from 300-340 UCAS points (BBB-AAB), and this creates a solid foundation from which the School can move forward. In the context of the new fees environment, the School aims to offer a dynamic, responsive and intellectually demanding learning experience, which will help to prepare our students for their future careers, whatever form these might take.

We offer a range of four-year BSc Honours degrees in each of the Academic Subject Groups; we also offer a variety of combinations both within the School and between LSS and other areas of the University, notably Aston Business School. Each programme incorporates an integrated placement year/Year Abroad; this is one of Aston's most distinctive features and a key driver behind the University's high rates of employability.

Full details of the School's provision at undergraduate level are available at: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lss/undergraduate/>

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. From 2012-13, the University is offering all first year students a free year of language learning as part of our goal of creating 'global citizens', under the auspices of the 'Languages for All' programme. The Director of UWLP is Dr Emmanuelle Labeau.

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. These programmes are delivered by CELCA.

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, in some cases, by distance learning. Our MA/ MSc programmes are growing in reach and reputation (see <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lss/postgraduate/> for details):

- English runs a range of MA programmes in the area of Applied Linguistics, TESOL and Forensic Linguistics. Its distance learning courses are over 25 years old at Aston, making

the Subject Group one of the most experienced providers of off-campus learning programmes in the UK.

- 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.
- PIR has also expanded its portfolio of programmes, to include stand-alone MAs on the EU and on International Relations. The group also runs an innovative Double MA Europe and the World (run jointly with IEP Lille), and is planning to launch new partnerships with IEP Rennes and the University of Bamberg in the next couple of years.
- Sociology and Policy has recently introduced new MA programmes on Social Research and Social Change as well on Public Policy in a European Context

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 a wide range of 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. For language tuition, 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.

The School is in the process of developing 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).