

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Research Fellow (Semantic Web),  
Disaster 2.0 Project  
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**Aston Business School**

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## **ASTON UNIVERSITY**

([www.aston.ac.uk](http://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 over the definition and implementation of the [Aston 2020 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 [Aston 2020 Strategy](#) explains how Aston University proposes to be even more distinctive within a crowded, and increasingly competitive, environment.

Our mission is to be the UK's leading University for business, enterprise and the professions, where original research has a positive impact on the world around us.

Our vision is that in 2020 Aston will be a top research led international University renowned for developing future leaders of business and the professions.

### **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 a population of over one million people and 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 has now been completed, offering state-of-the art sports facilities including a beautiful grade II listed swimming pool.

These high quality facilities and amenities make Aston a great place to work and study.

### **Structure, Governance and 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 Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Higson, and four Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Dr Phil Extance, Professor Martin Griffin, Professor Gina Rippon 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 Executive 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.

***“An inspirational learning community”***

### **Our Vision**

- > *To be a world-class research-based business school and the best in Europe for employability and global mobility*
- >
- > *To be ranked consistently among the top 3 UK business schools, top twenty in Europe, and top fifty in the world.*

### **Our Balanced Mission**

Our balanced mission has three equally important and integrated elements: research, teaching and learning, and community engagement. Our mission:

**Research** - To undertake rigorous research that addresses the major issues facing business leaders, policy makers and practitioners nationally and internationally, with a particular focus on:

- > Strategic HR, high performance teamwork and authentic globally-relevant leadership
- > International innovation, finance and investment
- > Entrepreneurship and sustainability
- > The practice of strategy, change management and project management.

**Teaching and Learning** - To provide inspirational, life-long learning for all our students and alumni so that they in turn become models of effective and responsible leadership in their organisations and communities.

**Business Engagement** - To make a sustainable contribution, through knowledge transfer, collaboration and partnership, to organisations, communities and economies on a national and international scale.

**Within Aston Business School** we aim to build a community of excellent staff and students with a culture of cooperation and information sharing that is a model of the organisational cultures we advocate.

## Our Culture and Values

Our values have been honed in consultation with our staff and stakeholders:

<b>People</b>	We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere with approachable and supportive staff.
<b>Performance</b>	We endeavour to make an impact locally and globally through both our research and teaching.
<b>Innovation</b>	We seek to be the most innovative, dynamic and responsive business school in the UK.
<b>Quality</b>	We are dedicated to excellence in all areas.
<b>Processes</b>	We endeavour to be ethical, forward-thinking and socially responsible with an earnest commitment to equality and diversity.

The characteristics that define the unique culture of Aston Business School are:

## Employability with Career Development

Aston Business School consistently ranks among the best universities globally for the employability of its undergraduates, and is likewise one of the most effective in Europe for accelerating the careers of its postgraduates. Aston Business School has been ranked in the top 10 UK institutions for employability for the past 15 years (Sunday Times). The 2008 student destination survey revealed that over 77% of undergraduates were in graduate-level employment within 6 months of graduation (DLHE) and 77% of postgraduates had found permanent employment within three months of graduation (Financial Times Masters in Management 2010). In 2010 the Financial Times Global MBA ranked our MBA programme 1<sup>st</sup> in the UK and 5<sup>th</sup> in Europe for career progression. Our undergraduate placement programme safeguards the employability of our graduates, ensuring that they are highly attractive to employers both in the UK and overseas.

## Inspiration with Innovation

Our outstanding lecturers create a challenging, yet well supported, learning environment. We inspire our students to recognise their potential as effective and ethical leaders in their organisations and communities.

## Global Mobility with Diversity

Aston Business School is a centre of excellence for intercultural training, ensuring that students are well equipped to work across cultural boundaries. Aston University is located in the centre of a highly diverse ethnic and cultural population and our student population comprises nearly 50% international students (over 75% at postgraduate level). Our culture of diversity and global mobility prepares our students for international careers and careers in multinational organisations.

## Relevance with Excellence

Our teaching programmes are of a high quality (as evidenced by professional accreditations and independent assessments) and focused on the needs of business and organisations.

## Rigour with Applicability

All our programmes are underpinned by robust and relevant research into contemporary business and management issues. We aim through our research to develop interventions, tools and techniques that enhance the effectiveness of organisations, markets and economies.

## Warmth with Respect

A key feature of the school is the informality and genuine friendliness of its staff and students, and our commitment to individual and cultural diversity.

## Transformational with Social Responsibility

We welcome students from every background and offer a life transforming experience to all. We communicate a sense of social responsibility, an awareness of the natural and human environments, and an appreciation of the ethics of leadership through all our teaching.

## World Leading Research

Aston Business School is a research led business school, with 95% of our research deemed to be of international relevance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

Our academics have a strong presence in the work of research centres in Aston and beyond. Research has the highest priority in planning and resource allocation, as evidenced by our exceptional research productivity. Since 2008 our academic staff have published nearly 1,300 academic works, including 27 books, 160 contributions to edited works, 528 papers in referenced academic journals, 352 referenced conference papers and 60 working papers.

A significant number of our researches are carried out on international issues, in collaboration with international partners, and disseminated to an international audience.

## Approach to Learning and Teaching

Our reputation for excellence makes us a preferred choice for undergraduate, postgraduate, executive and research students worldwide. All programmes of study are informed by research with a strong professional dimension. Innovation in both curriculum design and delivery supports the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and is responsive to the changing needs of economies and organisations. Our programmes balance theoretical and practical perspectives to ensure relevance to the professional aspirations of our graduates.

## Corporate Activities

Aston Business School's strategic focus on relevance and rigour has led to the School's excellent reputation in the business world and has established our extensive network of corporate connections. Our strong corporate position can be attributed to:

- > Our focus on community engagement through the setting of clear objectives with policy-making and public sector bodies, companies and professional firms locally and globally.
- > The active participation of the Aston Business School Advisory Board (including international members).
- > Positive encouragement for staff to engage with organisations and communities at every level and to be active in forming links with the business community.
- > Curricula that reflect the corporate links of staff and are based on research that is relevant to the wider business world.
- > The involvement of businesses in select teaching activities in the Business School (e.g. the Business Game, to which Unilever, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte, First Water have all contributed).
- > Placement work experience which forms a compulsory part of the degree programme for the wide majority of our undergraduate students, many spending this time abroad or with multinational companies.
- > Executive and full-time MBA programmes that draw on the professional experience of students.
- > Part-time MBA and MSc programmes, and now Foundation Degrees, that enable students to study while they work, and carry out project work in their organisations.
- > Strong links with Birmingham Science Park Aston, particularly via the Business Partnership Unit (BPU).
- > Accreditation of most degree programmes by professional bodies, drawing on the links of academic staff with these organisations.
- > Executive education courses that bring many corporate clients to the Business School.

## Global Mobility

The wide range of participants on our courses exposes students to the broad spectrum of perspectives that they will encounter in the business world. Students are further encouraged to participate in study visits to partner institutions, such as ESC Toulouse, ESC Rouen and Audencia Nantes in France, SDA Bocconi Milan in Italy and Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

International student numbers are similarly buoyant on the Doctoral Programme. Currently, non-UK students constitute 56% of students enrolled for the PhD and DBA, a figure we expect will persist as the programme develops and grows.

We have continued to strengthen our links with international partners and are now focusing on developing deeper relationships with elite institutions. The school now has 53 partners, located in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Korea, Spain, Thailand, Taiwan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, China (Hong Kong SAR), New Zealand and the United States. Further to student exchanges, these partnerships enable staff exchanges, collaborative research, sharing of resources, development of joint programmes, group study visits, and work placements. The European Masters in



Management is delivered jointly by Aston, EM-Lyon in France and Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, Germany. Students graduate with a triple degree, recognised by each institution.

The global mobility that characterises our student population is reflected in the make-up of our staff. Currently 40% of academic faculty are from outside the UK. The School's international faculty are supplemented by visiting scholars who bring with them funding that enables us to continue to attract leading international researchers to Aston to work alongside colleagues in the research groups.

### **Master of Business Administration (MBA)**

The Aston MBA programme has been consistently recognised as one of the leading MBA programmes in the UK and is highly placed in key rankings. With 32 nationalities represented in the 2010/11 intake (representing 88% of the cohort), the MBA programme has a truly international dimension essential for training aspiring global managers. Aston offers excellent flexible learning options for MBA students, providing the opportunity to study full-time, part-time, by distance learning or a tailored combination of these elements.

### **Centre for Executive Development**

The Centre for Executive Development is the executive training and consultancy arm of Aston Business School, building on our world class research and expert knowledge to deliver bespoke business solutions to organisations. Our executive development programmes are designed around the critical challenges that an organisation might face and are structured to meet both individual and organisational requirements. Our model is focussed on relationship building, needs analysis and assessment, programme development, programme delivery and follow up and closure.

### **Aston Business School Life**

We recognise that our people are our biggest asset and the key to our success. That is why the right people and the right culture are crucial. We are proud of our culture, which manifests itself in a friendly and supportive working environment and a commitment to high professional standards.

Aston Business School has several procedures in place to support professional and career development. Personal appraisals, peer review and mentoring are used to help staff in planning and achieving their professional and career objectives. We also operate a procedure for assessing the contributions that each colleague makes to Aston Business School, in terms of research teaching and administration: the ABS Load Model.

Academics are free to pursue their scholarly work and are provided with every opportunity for professional career development. A key role of the Deputy Dean is to support academics in their careers. Promotion is based on individual performance against clearly defined criteria, and there are no quota restrictions on promotions.

We are committed to helping our people grow and have created a culture in which everyone is free to develop their knowledge and skills. Once you join our team we will support you all the way: from offering in-house training to sponsoring professional and vocational qualifications. We will encourage you to develop on both a personal and professional level.

## Aston Business School Management Structure

The Business School is currently home to 112 academics, 22 research and 93 support staff. The Executive Dean is aided in the management of the School by a team which consists of the Deputy Dean and Associate Deans who oversee the teaching programmes, research and administration of the School. Academic Group Heads are responsible for academic appointments, while the Director of Planning and Resources and Programme Directors are responsible for non-academic appointments.

The administrative teams aim to remove the major administrative burden from the school's academics so that they can concentrate on research and teaching. The teams are responsible for the administration of the degrees and are the first point of contact for students with concerns.

## Commitment to Quality through Accreditation

The Business School is among just 1% of business schools worldwide, and one of only 13 in the UK, to hold triple accreditation from AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS.

Accreditations from these bodies are granted only for a fixed period of time, after which schools must submit to re-accreditation. The accreditation process consists of a major inspection of all the school's activities from curriculum development to management of programmes. Staff, students and alumni are all interviewed to give their opinions. No school can afford to rest on its laurels after being granted accreditation from one of these bodies as, if standards are left to slide, AMBA, EQUIS and the AACSB can and will remove their award.

The fact that Aston continues to hold these awards is your reassurance that we continually strive to achieve excellence in all that we do.

## Heart of Birmingham

Aston Business School is located in the centre of a highly diverse ethnic and cultural population with excellent rail, road and international airport connections. The social and cultural opportunities are excellent with a range of restaurants, theatres, art galleries, museums and a world class shopping capital. The city is currently subject to a number of major regeneration projects, in which Aston Business School is playing a vital role.