Welcome to Aston University and Library and Information Services
Founded in 1895 and a University since 1966, Aston is a long established research-led University known for its world-class teaching quality and strong links to business and the professions. Professor Alec Cameron became Vice Chancellor of the University in 2016, building on a strong legacy left by the Baroness Brown of Cambridge.

Outstanding graduate employability

Aston has been a leading university for graduate employment success for over 25 years. More than 80% of Aston graduates go on to a graduate level job within six months. The majority of Aston students choose to take an integrated placement year or year abroad, making them very attractive to employers. We have strong relationships with national and international graduate employers, as well as smaller and local employers. These relationships are extremely important and make a real contribution to graduate employability.

Career focussed programmes

Aston’s close and established links with business, the public sector and the professions ensure that our career focussed degree programmes are inspiring, challenging and constantly updated to equip students with essential work-related skills and experiences.

Excellence in teaching and research

We are committed to high quality teaching and academic excellence, ensuring we provide the highest standard of education to our students. Aston has an excellent reputation for research which shapes and improves lives. We’re proud of the quality of our research and the real world applications developed as a result – it makes a substantial and beneficial difference to people, organisations and society.

Aston’s academic Schools offer a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, and also work with the public and private sectors to develop tailored Foundation Degree programmes.

International

Aston University is a popular choice for international students. We recognise and welcome the important academic contribution and cultural diversity international students bring to our university environment. Students from over 120 countries study at Aston University each year.

Birmingham – one of Europe’s liveliest cities

Birmingham has a rich history which makes the city a unique and inspiring place to visit. It is internationally recognised as a leader in leisure, entertainment, shopping and sport and is an international centre for business, commerce and industry, housing numerous UK and overseas banks and law firms. Birmingham attracts 25 million visitors each year and contributes billions to the national economy through manufacturing and engineering.

Birmingham is home to world-class companies, innovative entrepreneurs and has one of the youngest populations in Europe. It is a dynamic, thriving and business-focused region and one that is well connected and centrally located in the UK.

The University campus is located in the city centre making it very accessible to an extensive network of motorways and railways.

A green, sustainable campus

Located in the heart of a vibrant city, our 40 acre campus houses all the University’s academic, social and accommodation facilities for our 14,355 students. All staff have the opportunity to contribute to our sustainability agenda and practices.
Welcome from Professor Alec Cameron, Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive

Dear applicant

The HE sector is currently experiencing an unprecedented scale and pace of change, combined with a high degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. Those universities able to adapt swiftly to a changing and increasingly competitive market will thrive. As a mid-sized, focused university Aston has the advantages of agility, innovation and team working that some other institutions do not. Our integrated placement year, our applicable, exploitable research, and our commitment to widening participation all help to make Aston distinct.

The 2014 Research Excellence Framework results recognised the quality and impact of Aston research. This research directly influences medical breakthroughs, advancements in engineering, innovation, policy and practice in government, and the strategies and performance of local and international business. The Times Higher Education REF rankings placed Aston University 35th in the UK and 78% of our submissions were judged to be World Leading or Internationally Excellent.

Teaching quality and the student experience are an important focus at Aston. We are committed to doing all we can to address the needs of students and to assisting them to achieve their career ambitions on graduation.

We very much look forward to receiving your application and learning more about how you would contribute to Aston’s continuing success.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive
University values

All staff are expected to demonstrate / promote the University’s values and expectations, which are an integral part of our strategy and underpin the culture of the University.

In addition, our leaders are expected to be accountable, help to execute strategic visions of the University, and share and set clear expectations that inspire those around them.

Our mission is to be the UK’s leading university for students aspiring to succeed in business and the professions, where original research, enterprise and inspiring teaching deliver local and global impact.

In 2022 Aston University will have an international reputation for delivery of outstanding graduate outcomes and equipping business and communities with the skills for future success.

Staff expectations

All staff are expected to:
- Be committed to delivering high performance
- Recognise and praise the high performance of others
- Remain open to new ideas and seek to act quickly for positive change
- Develop themselves, and support the development of others
- Be ambitious, for themselves, their teams and the university
- Engage with others, listen, observe and communicate
- Focus on excellent customer service, finding solutions and saying “yes”
- Make reasoned decisions without fear of blame
- Engender trust through their own actions
- Be fair in all matters
Library and Information Services

We aim to provide an excellent service to our customers. We seek to achieve this through a number of quality-driven mechanisms, namely: a strategic plan, which is translated into an annual operational plan that is implemented by individuals, teams, project groups, and process improvement groups, in order to facilitate continuous innovation, improvement and evaluation of services, facilities and resources. We have recently been awarded the Customer Service Excellence award for a further three year period.

The budget allocated by the University to the Library & Information Services (LIS) for 20013/14 is just over £2.9 million, of which about 45% is accounted for by pay and the rest by non-pay recurrent expenditure. Of the non-pay budget, just over £1.4M is earmarked for Library Information Resources (LIR) and these funds are allocated to the Schools of Study on the basis of a model. Each School has the freedom, within the constraints of its total LIR budget, to change the distribution of expenditure between different subject areas within the School and, within each subject area, to change the distribution of funding between different types of resource, such as printed and electronic journals, books and e-books, databases, standing orders, and inter-library loans. This enables Schools to adjust the distribution of their resources at the subject level, in a transparent and dynamic way, in order to meet the demands of current teaching and research activities. We provide support and advice to Schools about this process, on a continuing basis.

The LIS staff complement currently comprises about 16.5 FTE professional staff and nearly 21 FTE support staff, organised into three teams: the Customer Services team, the Information Resources team, and the Library Office team. The Information Resources team acquires, organises and supports the delivery of our printed and electronic information resources. The Customer Services team comprises the Information Services team and the Public Services team. The Information Services team works closely with the four Schools of Study to ensure that LIS services meet the needs of their staff and students. Public Services comprises the building environment, loans, enquiries, printer/copier support, shelving and so on. The Help Desk rota, for loans and enquiries, is supported by staff drawn from all three teams.

We are fully committed to staff training and development, using the University’s Performance Development Review as an underpinning mechanism. An annual staff training and development plan is produced, there is a weekly training hour, and staff attend both internal and external events. We operate a flexi-time scheme and a performance development review and pay scheme. In July 2011, we were awarded Investors In People status for a further three years.

The four-storey Library can accommodate 1200 users, with space for individuals, groups, meetings, workshops/seminars and students with additional needs. The ground and first floors were completely refurbished during summer 2010. The ground floor is a social learning space incorporating a cafe, two PC labs, two group study rooms, two additional needs rooms, the short loan and reservations collection and a variety of furniture to facilitate group study. The first floor incorporates the library staff area, periodical stock, single study spaces and the Learning Development Centre, which brings together learning support initiatives for academic writing, mathematics, study skills, and so on. Book stock is on the second and third floors, which were completely refurbished in summer 2013. The second floor is used for group study during coursework periods and silent study during the main examination period. The third floor is a designated silent study area throughout the year.

Between October and June, the Library is open for 151 hours per week for 18 weeks and for 113 hours per week for the remaining weeks, with full services available for 45 hours each week, and self-service facilities, during the remainder of each week. During serviced hours, enquiry desks on the ground floor are staffed to provide assistance with a range of general and subject enquiries. Complex or time-consuming enquiries are referred to the Information Specialist with relevant subject responsibility. Part-time, distance-learning and placement students are encouraged to telephone or email Information Specialists for help and advice. Additional needs students are encouraged to contact the Public Services Co-ordinator (Customer Service) about their special needs.

All students are timetabled to visit the library for an induction at the beginning of their first year. Most undergraduate students also have the opportunity to attend subject-based information skills sessions later in their courses. Similar sessions are offered to postgraduate taught-course and research students and these are generally tailored more specifically to the needs of individual students. Information Specialists participate in lecture programmes run in conjunction with the Schools, including sessions for students with special
learning requirements, such as part-time and distance-learning students. This may take the form of an evening seminar or contribution to a study weekend. Online tutorials on information skills are mounted on the Library Matters module on the Blackboard VLE. There is a well-equipped pair of Workshops in the library which Information Specialists use to provide seminars and workshops for students and academic staff.

We recognise the value and importance of good communications with academic staff and students. Formal communication with Schools is effected through a variety of channels, including LIS representation at School Committees and Boards and at School Staff Student Consultative Committees. Information Specialists liaise closely with individual members of academic staff in Schools to aid them with course planning and the targeting of information resources for teaching, learning and research. Academic staff and students are kept up-to-date with recent developments by email, the website, the blog and twitter, and more formally via Blackboard, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Informal feedback is encouraged via printed and web-based feedback forms and the library mailbox. Students attending induction sessions, and the subsequent information skills sessions, are asked to complete evaluation forms; these are analysed and the results used to inform future sessions. Formal feedback from staff and students is also obtained from regular surveys by the University.

We place great emphasis on promoting our services and information resources to our customers, on helping them to use the services and resources, and on training them in their use. The LIS webpages, the Blackboard VLE and the MAP student portal are important mechanisms for delivering information about the library’s services, facilities and resources to our customers. Information is provided about specific services, facilities and resources, but is also provided in a way that is directed to specific customer segments, such as undergraduates, postgraduates, staff, and so on. In particular, the requirements of part-time, distance learning and placement students are addressed, as well as those of customers with additional needs.

For information, visit our website
http://www.aston.ac.uk/library