

Welcome to Aston University and the College of Health and Life Sciences



Candidate brief

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. Aston University holds the award of Gold from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which found that students from all backgrounds achieve 'consistently outstanding outcomes' at Aston and confirms our outstanding teaching quality and student satisfaction.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alec Cameron." The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

About Aston University

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.

Outstanding graduate employability

Aston has been a leading university for graduate employment success. With placements integrated into our degree programmes, students develop essential work skills, build industry connections and a professional profile. The majority of Aston graduates go on to graduate level jobs or further study within six months. 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 focused programmes

Aston's close and established links with business, the public sector and the professions ensure that our career focused 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. Awarded TEF Gold in June 2017, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) found that students from all backgrounds achieve 'consistently outstanding outcomes'.



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.

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 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.

A green, sustainable campus

Located in the centre of Birmingham our green, 40 acre campus houses all the University's academic, social and accommodation facilities for our 15,783 students. All staff have the opportunity to contribute to our sustainability agenda and practices.

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

Our beneficiaries

The University's beneficiaries are identified as three groups:

Students

The first and primary beneficiary of Aston University are the individuals who form our student body and who progress to become our alumni. Aston places students at the heart of our academic and professional endeavour.

Business and Industry

Our new strategy also has an emphasis on the businesses and other external organisations who engage with the University. Aston University is a market leader in industry-engaged research, as well as graduate employability. Our industry partners benefit from Aston's work both through our leading research and knowledge exchange, and from the quality of graduates we produce. Each student at Aston is offered the opportunity for a year-long work placement; these placements not only cement our relationships with industry but ensure businesses have access to work-ready graduates.

Region and Society

We are committed to having a positive and transformative impact on Birmingham and the West Midlands. Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in Europe and Aston University plays an important civic role by educating the leaders of the future. By emphasising research that has a regional impact, engaging with local businesses to develop a strong economy and educating top graduates, we are helping to shape our society around us.

The College of Health and Life Sciences

The College of Health and Life Sciences* combines excellence in research and teaching across the health and life sciences. We deliver high quality undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and professional development programmes that equip students with the skills and knowledge for successful careers in a range of professions.

We see the diversity of our staff and student communities as one of our biggest strengths. Fostering an environment of social inclusivity for our students with participation in several widening participation programmes in the local area, and championing interdisciplinary research to take on some of the biggest challenges facing health and life sciences today.

*From the 1 August 2020, Aston University rearranged its academic Schools into three Colleges, bringing together related subject disciplines in a structure that has strategic and operational advantages for our students, staff, business and other organizations, region and society. The College of Health and Life Sciences was formed from an amalgamation of the former School of Life and Health Sciences and Aston Medical School.

Schools of study

The College comprises of five distinct Schools of study each led by a Head of School.

- **Aston Medical School**
- **Aston Pharmacy School** (includes our BSc Neuroscience programme)
- **School of Biosciences**
- **School of Optometry** (includes our Audiology department)
- **School of Psychology**

Each School offers its own unique mix of courses, facilities and related research

Organisation

There are over 300 staff in support, teaching and research roles within the College. Led by acting Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) and Executive Dean, Professor Anthony Hilton, supported by two Deputy Deans, five Heads of Schools, Directors of Operations and of Organisational Change and seven Associate Deans, the College management structure is further supported by a number of key committees including: Senior Management Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee and Research Committee.

Learning and teaching

Our aim is to produce graduates that go on to make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve and the College has an excellent record of graduate employability.

Over 68% of teaching staff have a teaching qualification and/or a HEA fellowship or above whilst 22% are HEA Senior Fellows or Principal Fellows

There are currently around 3400 undergraduate and 550 postgraduate (taught and research) / continuing professional development students enrolled with the College.

Our courses, which align to our five Schools of study, are regularly highly placed in leading rankings and we achieve strong levels of satisfaction in student surveys.

Many of our programmes are accredited, regulated, or approved by the leading accreditation / professional bodies in the fields of health, life and medical sciences including:

- British Psychological Society
- Health and Care Professions Council
- Institute of Biomedical Science
- General Medical Council**
- General Optical Council
- General Pharmaceutical Council
- National School of Healthcare Science
- Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists
- Royal Society of Biology

**We have successfully completed several stages of the rigorous General Medical Council (GMC) approval process and received approval for MBChB undergraduate recruitment from 2018.

Research

As a College, we pursue interdisciplinary research at the interface between laboratory and clinic. Our work spans across an institute, three centers of excellence and five research groups.

Institute:

- Aston Neuroscience Institute (ANI)

Centers of Excellence:

- Aston Research Centre for healthy Ageing (ARCHA)
- Aston Membrane Protein and Lipids Research (AMPL)
- Optometry and Vision Sciences Research Group

Research groups:

- Applied Health Research Group
- Bioscience Research Group
- Cognition and Neurosciences Research Group
- Pharmaceutical and Clinical Pharmacy Research Group
- Pharmacology and Translational Neuroscience Research Group

Research conducted here ranges from the molecular and cellular levels, through neural systems and human behaviour, to the restoration of health and the study of individuals in health care and societal settings. Further national and international collaborations augment this research mission.

With funding from research councils, prestigious research foundations, charities, the European Union and industry, our world-class research is supported in an excellent research environment housing state-of-the-art infrastructure for analysis from the molecular to organismal level. In the most recent 2014 Research excellence Framework (REF) 94% of our research (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy) was judged to be World Leading or Internationally Excellent (4*/3*).

Facilities

As a College we have invested across our teaching and research facilities to ensure that our staff and student communities are supported with the spaces and equipment they need to thrive.

Our on-campus facilities include:

- **Aston Brain Centre** – with MRI, MEG facilities, Dyslexia and Development Assessment Unit, and Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology Clinic.
- **Aston Medical School Clinical Training Facility** - housing state-of-the-art group work rooms, which include C-touch screens and areas for private study, in addition to a new high tech Clinical Skills Centre.
- **Aston University Day Hospital** - provides a platform, unique in the UK, for the combination of leading edge clinical research in optometry and ophthalmology.
- **Audiology Clinic** - designed for adult hearing assessments and ear-wax removal
- **Audiology clinical skills laboratory**
- **Aston Eye Clinic** - offers professional eye care and testing to approximately 6,000 patients per year and includes specialist clinics in children's and binocular vision, dry eye, and low vision.
- **ALIVE (Aston Laboratory for Immersive Virtual Environments)** – includes 4-screen Virtual Reality 'CAVE, Head mounted displays (HMDs), Omni-directional treadmill, Mocap Laboratory, and Driving simulator.
- **Bioscience laboratories** – a range of teaching and research labs with specialist equipment such as chromatographic separation equipment (HPLCs, FPLCs, amino acid analyser) which can be used for DNA, protein and carbohydrate analysis. In vivo investigations of disease process, progression and management are undertaken within the biomedical facility.
- **Neuroscience laboratory** - equipped with multiple neuroscience recording set ups, to allow intracellular and extracellular recording of brain cells in vitro, as well as receptor pharmacology experiments.
- **Nutrition and Behaviour Laboratory**
- **Pharmaceutical laboratories** – equipment and facilities including computer-aided drug design, synthetic chemistry laboratories, analytical equipment (e.g. pharmacopeial apparatus, particle sizing equipment; Differential Scanning Calorimetry; Thermogravimetric Analysis). Small molecule chemical synthesis and analysis facilities include high-field NMR, GC-MS and LC-MS.
- **Psychology laboratories** – with observation suite (with covert audio-visual recording), tools for psychophysiological measurement, eye tracking and motion-capture, and experiment rooms for cognitive experiments. Also includes, larger labs for focus groups and audience-based experiments.
- **Wilson Pharmacy Suite** - includes clinical skills room with a mock hospital bay set up, dispensing and patient counselling suites with discrete video recording capabilities.