

OPPORTUNITY

Where change
gets real.



General Counsel

Salary: Competitive

Contract Type: Continuing

Basis: Full Time

Welcome

from Saskia Loer Hansen

Interim 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.

In November 2020, Aston University was delighted to be announced as the Guardian's University of the Year 2020. The Guardian's decision to award this prestigious accolade to Aston University is based on their objective assessment of the 121 UK universities against numerous criteria. These include graduate employability and earnings, student retention, closing attainment gaps and embedding sustainability.

Aston University was announced as the winner of the Times Higher Education's (THE) 2020 Outstanding Entrepreneurial University in recognition of our support for student entrepreneurship, small businesses, and the West Midlands region. In 2021 Aston was also shortlisted for the THE University of Year award.

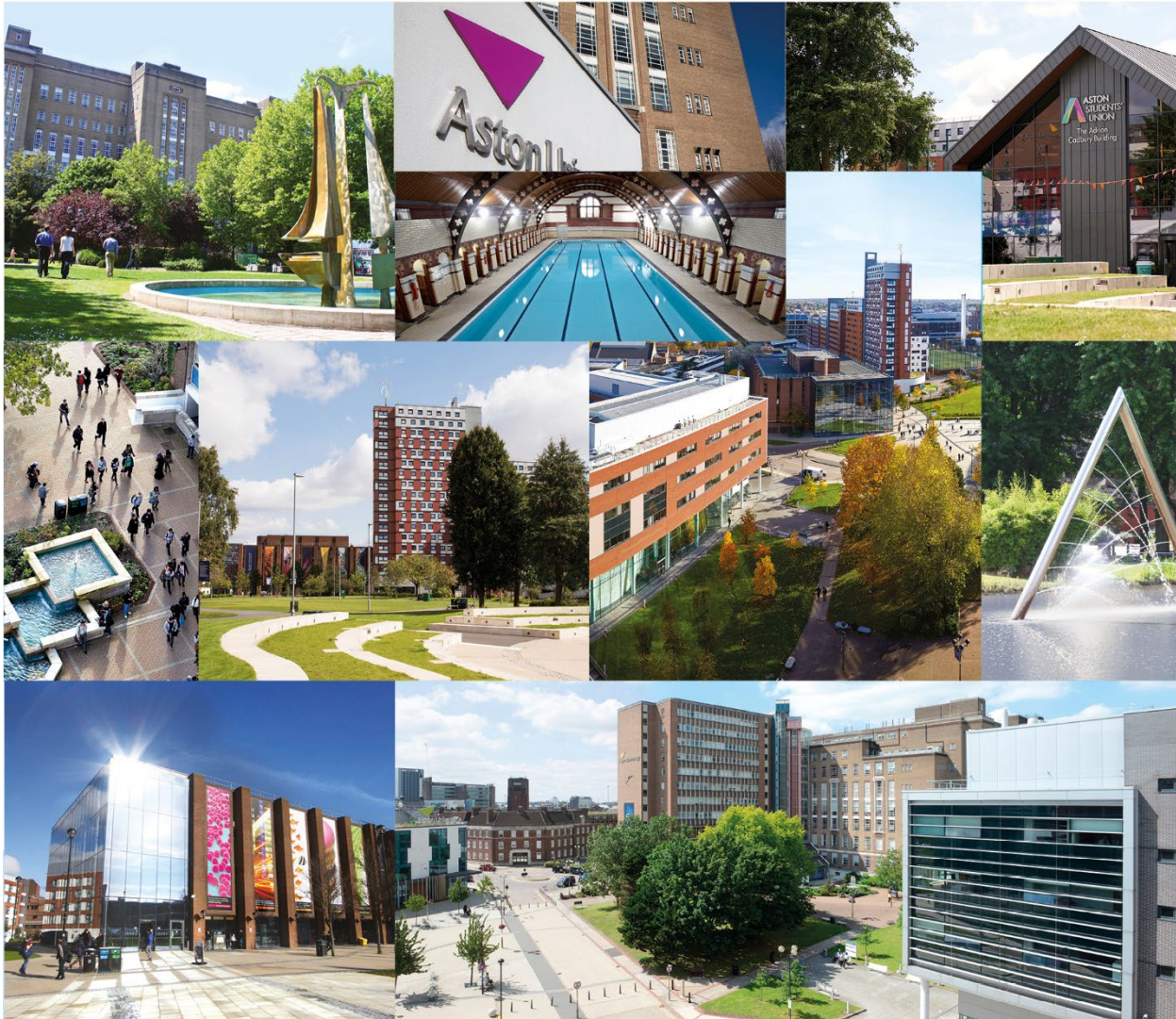
The 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) results recognised the quality and impact of Aston University's research. Almost four-fifths of our research was rated as either 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'. We have significantly grown the number of our academic staff undertaking high quality research since the last REF. While increasing the number of research outputs, the quality has also increased. We submitted double the number of research outputs than in 2014, while our percentage of 4* outputs grew by eight percentage points.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saskia Hansen".

Saskia Loer Hansen
Interim Vice-Chancellor & 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 University 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. 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

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. Aston University 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 choose to 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 recognised as a leader in leisure, entertainment, shopping and sport and is an international centre for business, commerce and industry. Birmingham is home to world-class companies, innovative entrepreneurs and has one of the youngest populations in Europe. It is a dynamic, business-focused region 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 15,000 students. All staff have the opportunity to contribute to our sustainability agenda and practices.

Academic colleges and schools



College of Business and Social Sciences (BSS)

- Aston Business School
- Aston Law School
- School of Social Sciences and Humanities



College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS)

- School of Informatics and Digital Engineering
- School of Infrastructure and Sustainable Engineering
- School of Engineering and Technology

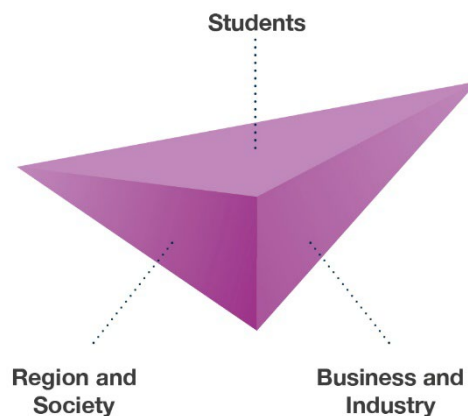


College of Health and Life Sciences (HLS)

- Aston Medical School
- Aston Pharmacy School
- School of Biosciences
- School of Optometry
- School of Psychology

Our beneficiary groups

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 University places students at the heart of our academic and professional endeavour. Through our industry placements, students are at the coalface of our interaction with industry.



Business and Industry

Our strategy has an emphasis on the businesses and other external organisations who engage with us. Aston University is a market leader in industry-engaged research, as well as graduate employability. Our industry partners benefit from Aston's work through our leading research and knowledge exchange, and from the quality of graduates we produce. Each student at Aston University 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.

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.

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.



Job description

Reporting to the Chief Operating Officer, the General Counsel is an important strategic position for an experienced practising lawyer who will advise the University on all matters of legal significance, compliance, and policy.

Job Purpose

The post holder will be:

- ▶ responsible for the ongoing implementation of the Legal and Compliance Strategy and Delivery Plan incorporating strategic legal risk management, policy infrastructure and regulatory compliance
- ▶ be the Data Protection Officer and a member of the Senior Management Team.
- ▶ provide in-house legal support and manage the arrangements with external lawyers where specific expertise is required.
- ▶ undertake the role of Company Secretary and / or Director as required for companies within the Aston University group and, as needed, for spin out companies from Aston University.
- ▶ responsible for effective and efficient management of the budget for the Office of the General Counsel.

It is expected that the post holder's core skills will be in commercial contracts and/or commercial projects with a working knowledge of data protection / privacy law.

Main duties and responsibilities

Legal advisory

The post holder will:

- ▶ Provide overall leadership for all legal activities across the University and manage a full and diverse number of legal matters always taking a risk-based approach – i.e. ensuring that the University is “risk informed” in the context of its strategy, values, policy, measures and controls.
- ▶ Certain matters will be handled internally according to the expertise of the post holder. Others will be managed via external lawyers in accordance with the University's documented legal risk appetite, standard contractual terms and procedures in relation to the instruction of external lawyers.
- ▶ Apply appropriate judgement to decide which matters require legal input and whether this should be provided internally or externally.
- ▶ Manage a team and direct and prioritise its work, to ensure that all deadlines agreed with stakeholders are achieved.
- ▶ Provide legal advice to the Executive to enable it to discharge its responsibilities legally and effectively.
- ▶ Provide legal advice to the University's subsidiary and associated companies as required.
- ▶ Effectively manage the University's sole supplier arrangement with Pinsent Masons ensuring that all external legal advice is properly instructed, managed and represents value for money. As and when required award work to any successor or alternative supplier in accordance with University policy and procedure.
- ▶ Have a continuous improvement mentality and assist in the review of University policy, procedures and authorities to ensure that appropriate legal review is completed before contractual commitments are made.
- ▶ To keep up to date with relevant strategic, policy and service innovations in order to inform best practice and continually drive excellence.

- ▶ To pro-actively identify legal and practical problems associated with the business of the University and establish methods to reduce potential risk or liability and facilitate communications, systems (formal and informal), measures and controls to ensure that the University fulfils its duty.

Compliance

The post holder will undertake the role of the Data Protection Officer for the purposes of the GDPR Art 37-39 and is responsible for delivering the data protection and information law compliance assurance framework.

The post holder is responsible for the maintenance of the Publication Scheme.

The post holder is required to provide training to the University on legal initiatives and statutory compliance including training specifically on data protection and privacy law.

The post holder will:

- ▶ Monitor compliance and data practices internally to ensure the University and its functions comply with the applicable requirements under privacy law and report on such compliance.
- ▶ Be responsible for staff training, data protection impact assessments and internal audits.
- ▶ Serve as the primary contact for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and individuals whose data is processed by the University.
- ▶ Develop and monitor policies, procedures and standards applicable to the University that meet the requirement of data protection law.
- ▶ Implement measures and an information governance framework to manage data use in compliance with the data protection law, including developing templates for data collection and assisting with data mapping.
- ▶ Work with key internal stakeholders in the review of projects and related data to ensure compliance with data and privacy law, and where necessary, complete and advise on data protection impact assessments.
- ▶ Serve as the primary point of contact and liaison for the ICO and other EEA Data Protection Authorities on all data protection related matters under the GDPR.
- ▶ Serve as the primary point of contact for enquiries in the University in relation to data protection and privacy law.
- ▶ Review contracts (including Model Clauses) and consents needed to transfer personal data.
- ▶ monitor changes to data and privacy law and making recommendations to the Executive when appropriate.
- ▶ Develop and deliver bespoke data and privacy law training.
- ▶ Develop strategies and initiatives to ensure engagement with key internal and external stakeholders.
- ▶ Coordinate and conduct data privacy audits.
- ▶ Collaborate with Digital Services to raise employee awareness of data privacy and security issues, and providing training on the subject matter.
- ▶ Collaborate with the Digital Services to maintain records of all data assets and exports, and maintaining a data security incident management plan to ensure timely remediation of incidents including impact assessments, security breach response, complaints, claims or notifications, and responding to subject access requests (SARs).
- ▶ Ensure that the University's IT systems and procedures comply with all relevant data privacy and protection law, regulation and policy (including in relation to the retention and destruction of data).
- ▶ Design and maintain the University's privacy notices.

Responsibility for policy

The post holder is responsible for:

- ▶ Maintenance and oversight of the University's policy infrastructure.
- ▶ Liaise across the University to help ensure that policies, procedures and guidelines applicable across the University are robust and consistent with legal requirements.
- ▶ Effective maintenance of the policies owned by the General Counsel. ensuring the correct policies are published on the University website.

General

This job description summarises the main duties and accountabilities of the post and is not comprehensive.

The post holder will undertake other such activities as the COO or members of the Executive may require from time to time.

Key contacts for the post holders are members of the Executive and wider Senior Management.

The postholder will:

- ▶ Give clear and concise explanations of legal issues to non-qualified members of the University at all levels, understanding the multi-cultural context of the University and the differing roles and ways of working across the University.
- ▶ Represent the University at Court or Tribunal as required.
- ▶ Create effective internal partnerships with key stakeholders
- ▶ Produce his/her own documents emails and letters, supported by a part-time PA.
- ▶ Identify the need for and put in place new processes and procedures to ensure best practice.
- ▶ Maintain awareness of current and forthcoming University projects to ensure that requirements for legal advice can be met in a timely manner.
- ▶ Develop his/her professional contacts and ensure compliance with best practice within the in-house sector and the Higher Education sector.

Additional responsibilities

- ▶ Engage in continuous personal and professional development in line with the demands of the role, including undertaking relevant training and development activities to develop themselves and support the development of others.
- ▶ Ensure and promote the personal health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students.
- ▶ Carry out duties in a way which promotes fairness in all matters and which engenders trust.
- ▶ Promote equality of opportunity and support diversity and inclusion as well as working to support the University's environmental sustainability agenda and practices.
- ▶ Represent the University on internal, regional, national and international bodies as appropriate.
- ▶ Carry out such duties as may be required and which are commensurate with the grade of the post and its senior management role within the University.

Person Specification

	Essential
Experience	<p>As the University's most senior practising lawyer, you will need to be comfortable with maintaining existing and establishing new function processes and manage the in-house legal capability.</p> <p>10 years post-qualification with in-house experience as a practising lawyer ideally working in the commercial /education sector, in a complex organisation.</p> <p>Leadership and management experience including budget management experience.</p>
Aptitude and skills	<p>Commercial approach to solving legal problems and providing best-in-class service.</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal skills, including diplomacy, confidentiality and the ability to inspire the confidence of others. Resilient, and effective under pressure.</p> <p>Strong collaboration, communication, organisational, and project management skills will be critical as you will be required to engage directly with colleagues.</p> <p>Balance attention to detail with swift execution - we need to do things quickly and thoroughly to meet deadlines.</p> <p>The ability to identify relevant business and legal issues proactively, evaluate risks and find creative solutions or mitigations to commercial and legal risk.</p> <p>First-class communication skills and an ability to explain complex legal concepts and requirements to a range of audiences.</p> <p>Ideally someone mission focused, robust, resilient, able to drive outcomes, capable of board discussions.</p> <p>Able to naturally navigate / work with stakeholders and be able to contribute strongly on business and community engagement.</p> <p>Comfortable with having a view outside the "sphere" of the legal discipline.</p>
Other	Satisfactory Basic DBS disclosure will be required.

How to apply

For further information and details of how to apply please contact Vin Murria at vinmurria@taylorroot.com.

Additional information

Visit our website <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr> for full details of our salary scales and benefits Aston University staff enjoy

Salary scales: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/payroll-and-pensions/salary-scales/index>

Benefits: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/Benefits-and-Rewards/index>

Working in Birmingham: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/birmingham>

Employment of Ex-Offenders: Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, a person with a criminal record is not required to disclose any spent convictions unless the positions they applying for is listed an exception under the act.

Eligibility to work in the UK:

Candidates should check their eligibility to enter or remain in the UK in advance of making any job application via the UKVI website <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>. Before applying you should ensure that you meet the requirements, including meeting the English Language requirements. If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, any application for a work visa would be unsuccessful. If you require a visa to work in the UK the most common types of visa are:

Skilled Worker Visa

<https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa>

Global Talent Visa

If you are a leader or potential leader in one of the following fields you may be eligible to apply for a Global Talent Visa:

- Academia or Research
- Arts and Culture
- Digital Technology

Please click the following link for further information and to check your eligibility for this visa.
<https://www.gov.uk/global-talent>

Equal Opportunities: Aston University promotes equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. We aim to ensure, through our admissions policies for students, and our staff recruitment and selection processes that we encourage applications from all groups represented in the wider community at a local, national and international level.

The University will endeavour not to discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly or indirectly, against student or potential students, staff or potential staff. This commitment applies to all functions of the University and to any stage of an individual's career.

You will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form as part of your application. Data you provide on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will be included in a general database, for statistical monitoring purposes, enabling the University to monitor the effectiveness of its Policy, Codes of Practice and Guidelines on Equal Opportunities in Employment. Individuals will not be identified by name.

Data Protection: Your personal data will be processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 as retained in UK law by the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 ("the UK GDPR"). The University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Notices, including the Working At Aston Privacy Notice can be found at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/data-protection>. Your application will only be used to inform the selection process, unless you are successful, in which case it will form the basis of your personal record with the University which will be stored in electronic files. Information in statistical form on present and former employees is given to appropriate outside bodies.

Full details of our terms and conditions of service and associated policies and procedures are available online at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies>.

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[aston.ac.uk](https://www2.aston.ac.uk)



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