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**All about Aston University**  
**Information for candidates**

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# 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.

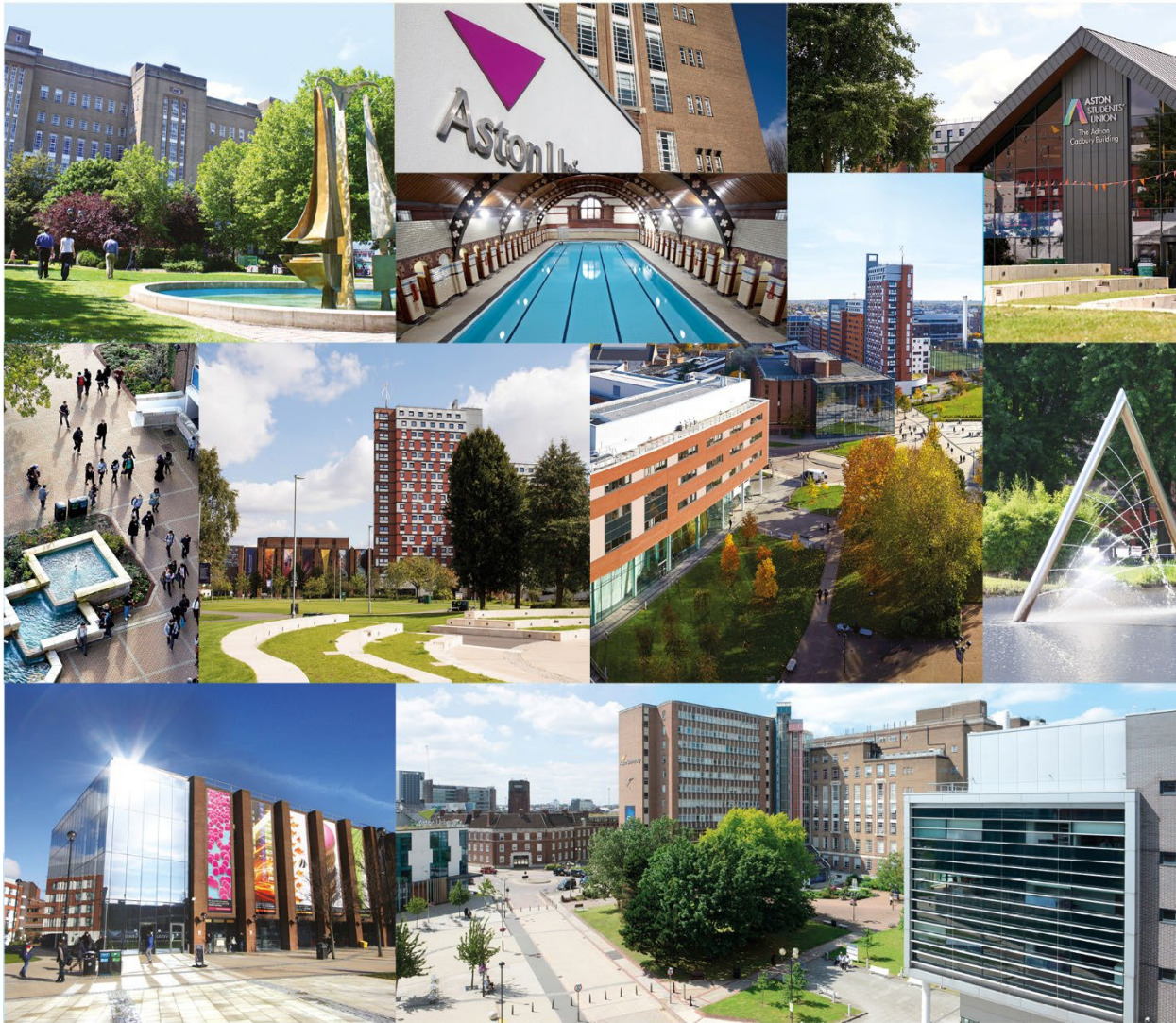
The 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) results recognised the quality and impact of Aston University's research. Almost four-fifths of our research was rated as either 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'. We have significantly grown the number of our academic staff undertaking high quality 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.

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



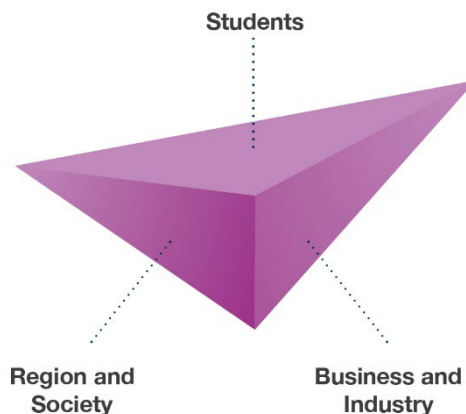
#### **College of Health and Life Sciences (HLS)**

- 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 our 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.



# College of Business and Social Sciences

The College of Business and Social Sciences comprises three Schools: Aston Business School, Aston Law School and the School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The Schools are coming together as a unified entity to realise the benefits of the new College building a great culture based on shared values and experiences, innovation and collaboration.

## College organisation

The College of Business and Social Sciences is led by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean with a senior management team led by the Deputy Dean consisting of Associate Deans, a Head of School and Department Heads for each of our subject disciplines.

The Schools are supported in their work by advisory boards, whose membership is drawn from alumni and key stakeholders from the City of Birmingham and beyond.

## Aston Business School

Aston Business School is part of an elite group of global business schools who hold the gold standard of 'triple-crown' accreditation from AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), AMBA (Association of MBAs) and EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System). We are also in the top 100 in the world for Business and Management studies (QS World University Rankings 2020).

Aston Business School has the University's highest international QS ranking, highest levels of student satisfaction, ongoing educational innovation, as well as high profile research activity through its research centres.

Our Vision - Aston Business School will be a global leader in bridging the world of intellectual discovery and the practical needs of enterprises and the professions.

Our Mission - Our goal is to enhance enterprise and enterprises. We develop individuals to perform better within enterprises and the professions, and to create successful new ventures.

We support business leaders in enhancing their organisation's performance and growth. We advise policy-makers on ways to improve society and the economy. Our research creates new knowledge that furthers these aspirations. It is our particular aim to ensure that the opportunities we create are made available to all members of our society.

## Aston Law School

Aston Law School has an established record of excellence in legal education, based on an ethos of strong student support. We are proud of the diversity of our student population and the quality of our teaching, which is reflected in our high student satisfaction scores. We support students to develop their personal approach and skills, boosting their employability and future career potential.

We prepare students for a diverse range of careers in law and other industries. From intellectual property to corporate governance and commercial law, students have a wide range of options at their fingertips from day one.



Our staff are regarded as leaders of legal education, evidenced through national teaching awards, recognition at the highest level by the Higher Education Authority and by the award of National Teaching Fellowships. Many of Aston Law School's academics are qualified lawyers, and are passionate about their subjects.

Our research is top quality and looks not only to the law as it is, but as it might be in the future. Our research into property in its widest sense is changing the law internationally: researchers from Aston advise governments and the international law community, while our work in 'New Commerce' explores the role and development of law in critically important areas such as FinTech, Techlaw, Internet law, International Business and Digital Justice. These are areas that already affect the legal profession, and our research informs and impacts the ways in which they are regulated.



## School of Social Sciences and Humanities

The School of Social Sciences and Humanities is a well-established school with a tradition of teaching modern languages at Aston dating back to the University's foundation in 1966. Aston was one of the pioneers of the integrated study of language, championing teaching in the target language.

Making a difference to society is at the heart of everything we do at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities. It's what helps us create a better world, and is also how we embrace diversity to grow understanding, and build opportunities.

We strive to offer our students a quality education that supports their graduate outcomes and their future choices. We operate at the heart of a dynamic, diverse and global city, offering our expertise to businesses and professions by shaping our placement students and graduates, and by working in partnership with organisations and authorities. In addition, our research is applied, impactful and recognised as excellent – both in national and international contexts.



The new structure allows for a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning across Aston Business School and the School of Social Sciences and Humanities. Current programmes already demonstrate the benefit of offering more integrated programmes from disciplines across the new College.

## **Research in the College**

The contribution research can make goes beyond health and medical research into areas of expertise within the College – the economic impact, public policy and supply chain management. There is huge potential for collaboration across both the College and the University to find solutions to these problems.

There are excellent and established research centres within the College: the Aston Centre for Europe, the Advanced Services Group, the Aston Centre for Growth, the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME), the Centre for Language Research at Aston and the Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Business Prosperity to name a few.

In June 2019, £5.5 million was awarded by Research England to establish the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics, led by Prof Tim Grant. It is the first institute of its kind in the world, combining leading-edge research and investigative practice with teaching and training in forensic linguistics, and is one of Aston's four flagship University Research Institutes (URIs).

We are also blending our research excellence across disciplines. Across the School of Social Sciences and Humanities and Aston Law School, the new Centre for Language and Law will be led by Professor Lauren Devine who brings with her, £800k of research funding.

Research at Aston Business School (ABS) focuses on delivering excellence, innovation and impact. Our departments and research centres work together to further our understanding of key business disciplines and issues. In the latest Research Excellence Framework, 100% of our research achieved 3\* or 4\*.

Examples of our research in practice include:

- Internationally leading research on growth, innovation and productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through our joint Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) with Warwick Business School.
- Unparalleled expertise in SME engagement through the work of the Aston Centre for Growth (ACG), which offers growth programmes and other opportunities for SME owners such as the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses and BSEEN, a start-up support programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund.
- The Advanced Services Group (ASG) specialises in the organizational transformation of manufacturing companies to compete through advanced services, and has worked with over 180 companies such as Baxi, Nederman and Thales, as well as many SMEs.
- Since 2018 ABS hosts the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME) which has transformed the perceptions of ethnic minority entrepreneurs by working with business policy-makers and influential organisations to engage collaboratively with overlooked business communities.
- Through the Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Business Prosperity (LBGCBP), we help Britain prosper by promoting a better understanding of what affects UK economic performance by conducting rigorous research in the areas of productivity, trade, skills, regional economic growth, and international trade and investment.

## Teaching

We pride ourselves on our teaching, which has been awarded Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework – the highest possible accolade and the benchmark used by government.

Our staff have established a reputation for developing innovative teaching methods to make our students' learning experience more rewarding, including pioneering the use of gamification.

Our students experience real-life business activities through placements and initiatives including a module partnership, in-house business and law clinics, and collaboration with charities such as The Prince's Trust. Moreover, our Small Business Charter accreditation recognises the support we offer to SMEs.

We also do more to boost the earnings of our graduates than nearly every other university in the UK, according to a new study by The Economist. The average salary for Aston business graduates is 39% higher than the sector average (five years after graduation). (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes 2020).

Two of Aston's core values are that we are innovative and collaborative. These values have been evident across the College over the last couple of months, and are an important basis for our emerging culture. As we go forward and embrace these values as we have done in recent weeks, we will have a strong foundation on which to build for the future.

In addition to the Guardian award of University of the Year 2020, it also awarded us the Times Higher Education Outstanding Entrepreneurial University of the Year and the 'Buildings that Inspire' Award for our new students' union building. Aston University has also been recognised as the 'Best University Careers/Employability Service' at the National Undergraduate Employability (NUE) Awards 2020.

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