



OPPORTUNITY

Where change gets real.



Reference: 0415-25

Grade: 10

Salary: £57,422 to £66,537, per annum, depending on experience

Contract Type: Fixed Term till April 2028

Basis: Full Time (36.5 Hours) – Aston University base with offices available in Nottingham, Leicester and Loughborough)

Job description

Job Purpose:

The East Midlands Director – SPARK UK will lead the development and delivery of the new East Midlands branch of the SPARK Innovation Accelerator, part of the broader SPARK Global network.

The postholder will be responsible for establishing and growing the East Midlands programme, building a strong cohort of translational research projects, managing key stakeholder relationships across academia, healthcare, and industry, and ensuring delivery of the programme's ambitious objectives for innovation and impact.

The Director will report to the SPARK UK Director and will work closely with the wider SPARK Europe leadership team and SPARK Global. They will play a vital role in achieving the long-term sustainability of the East Midlands branch beyond the initial three-year grant.

Of Note this role, although contractually based at Aston University will be expected to primarily work in the East Midlands.

Main Duties/Responsibilities

Evaluating performance

- ▶ **Provide strategic and operational leadership** for the SPARK UK East Midlands branch, including programme setup, delivery, and long-term growth.
- ▶ **Establish and manage key partnerships** with East Midlands universities, NHS Trusts, industry partners, investors, and regional innovation bodies.
- ▶ **Lead the regional SPARK East Midlands team**, recruiting and managing staff as appropriate, and fostering a high-performance culture.
- ▶ **Develop and deliver a comprehensive engagement strategy** to identify, recruit, and support a high-quality pipeline of translational research projects aligned with SPARK UK and SPARK Global standards.
- ▶ **Support individual project teams** to build industry-standard preclinical development plans, leveraging SPARK mentorship and external expertise.
- ▶ **Lead regional events and activities**, including SPARK workshops, training sessions, and networking opportunities.
- ▶ **Monitor and report on performance** against key deliverables, KPIs, and impact metrics to the SPARK UK Director and external funders.
- ▶ **Work closely with the SPARK UK Director** to develop and implement a sustainability plan, securing new funding sources and partnerships.
- ▶ **Represent SPARK UK East Midlands** at regional, national, and international meetings and forums.
- ▶ **Promote a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusion, and collaboration** across the regional SPARK community.
- ▶ **Ensure compliance** with grant conditions, University policies, and financial procedures, in liaison with finance and contracts teams.

Person specification

	Essential	Method of assessment
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A Postgraduate qualification (MSc, MBA, PhD or equivalent) in a relevant field (Life Sciences, Medicine, Biomedical Engineering). 	Application form
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Proven leadership experience in innovation, entrepreneurship, translational research, or knowledge exchange roles. ▶ Experience of establishing and growing programmes or initiatives. ▶ Strong track record of building partnerships across universities, healthcare, and industry. ▶ Experience managing budgets, staff, and external stakeholders. 	
Aptitude and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strategic thinker with excellent planning and organisational skills. ▶ High-level interpersonal, influencing and negotiation skills. ▶ Strong business planning, financial oversight and reporting skills. ▶ Ability to work independently, exercise judgment and lead a team. 	Application form and interview

	Essential	Method of assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Outstanding written and verbal communication skills. 	

	Desirable	Method of assessment
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Experience of accelerator programme leadership or cohort management. ▶ Previous engagement with SPARK Global or similar translational networks. 	Application form and interview
Aptitude and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding of the UK innovation and funding landscape (e.g., Innovate UK, NHS Innovation Accelerator). ▶ Knowledge of regulatory pathways for medical innovation (e.g., MHRA). 	Application form and interview

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.

Values + Behaviours

				
Innovation	Collaboration	Ambition	Inclusion	Integrity
<p>We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.</p>	<p>We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Aston community.</p>	<p>We strive together for improvement and innovation looking ahead to see the bigger picture.</p>	<p>We treat everyone in our community equally and how they would like to be treated.</p>	<p>We are open, honest and fair. We take ownership of the way we work and how we treat each other.</p>

How to apply

You can apply for this role online via our website <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/jobs>.

Applications should be submitted by 23.59pm on the advertised closing date.
All applicants must complete an application form, along with your CV.

Any CV sent direct to the Recruitment Team and Recruiting Manager will not be accepted.

If you require a manual application form, then please contact the Recruitment Team via recruitment@aston.ac.uk.

Contact information

Enquiries about the vacancy:

Name: Luke Southan

Job Title: Head of Research Commercialisation/Director of SPARK UK

Email: L.Southan@Aston.ac.uk

Enquiries about the application process, shortlisting or interviews:

Recruitment Team via recruitment@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4500.

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: [Benefits and Rewards | Aston University](#)

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: You should ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements, including meeting the [English language standards](#). If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, any application for a work visa would be unsuccessful. Please see UKVI guidance for further information on eligibility, knowledge of English requirements and approved test centres <https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-general>

With the end of free movement for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals from 1 January 2021, the UK's new immigration system applies to all non-UK/Irish nationals who require a visa.

Where an individual is subject to UK immigration control, they will require a visa to work in the UK.

The following individuals do not need a visa for the UK, but do still have to prove their right to work before employment can commence:

- **British Citizens or Irish Nationals**
- **EU/EEA/Swiss nationals with Settled or Pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme**
- **Non-EEA nationals with Indefinite Leave to Remain/Settlement in the UK**

The main routes available for those who need a visa to work in the UK are **Skilled Worker**, **Global Talent** and the **Graduate Route**.

You can find further information about each of these visa routes on our candidate immigration page.

If you will conduct research in your role, you may need to apply for and obtain ATAS clearance before Aston can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship for your visa application. Please see below for further details.

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS):

If you will conduct research in your role and you apply for a Skilled Worker or Temporary

Worker GAE visa, you may need to apply for and obtain ATAS clearance before Aston can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship for your visa application.

This process can take at least 6 weeks to process, and Aston will consider this when confirming your expected start date. Processing times will increase between April and September and can longer to complete.

There is no fast-track option available. ATAS certificates will be processed in order of receipt.

You can find more information about ATAS on our candidate immigration page.

Before you start and Right to Work

90-day entry vignette

If you have applied for your visa outside of the UK, you will receive a vignette in your passport which is usually valid for 90 days. Please make sure to travel to the UK within the 'valid from' and 'valid to' dates on this visa. If you entered the UK before or after these dates, you would not 'activate' the visa and you would need to leave and re-enter the country.

You will also receive a decision letter confirming details about your immigration permission and where to collect your Biometric Residence Permit.

Cost of Living - Estate and Letting Agents

There are numerous Estate and Letting Agents in and around Birmingham that can help you find suitable accommodation. The Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme provides a list of professional agencies and landlords who have applied with them for accreditation. Whilst accreditation is not a guarantee of quality, it provides some reassurance about the standard of the service they provide.

You can also use property search websites such as Rightmove or Zoopla.

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.

An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form is included within the application form. 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) (“GDPR”). The University’s Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices, including the Job Applicant 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 manual and/or 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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