



OPPORTUNITY

Where change
gets real.



The Sir Peter Rigby Digital Futures Institute

Reference: 0549B-25

Grade: 8/9

Salary: £38,784 to £56,535 per annum, depending on experience

Contact Type: Fixed Term

Basis: Full Time/Part time

Job description

Background Information

As part of our commitment to AI research, aligned with our in our Aston 2030 Strategy, we are investing in four new postdoctoral posts in our areas of research strength in AI as follows:

2 posts will work with The Sir Peter Rigby Digital Futures Institute

1 post will work with our School of Computing, EPS

1 post will work with ABS

Aston AI Fellowships will make a key contribution in delivering Aston's commitment to excellent, transformative research outlined in our 2030 strategy, by recruiting and nurturing the research innovation and change-makers of tomorrow. Fellowships will provide successful candidates with the opportunity to excel as an excellent self-directed researcher, develop innovative and distinctive research projects, foster collaboration within their research teams and across the institution, and establish themselves as a respected figure in their fields.

Up to four Aston AI Fellowships are offered at either Grade 8 or Grade 9, depending on experience and track record. This is an exciting opportunity to build your research profile and establish your autonomy as part of an internationally respected research team.

The posts are available for a fixed term of 3 years.

Successful Fellows will be recruited on the basis of:

- excellence as appropriate to supporting Aston's aim to be at the forefront of research in science, technology, and enterprise;
- alignment with our areas of excellence in AI as outlined above;
- potential to deliver research of world-leading quality consistent with Aston's goals for REF2029.

Aston AI Fellows will have a strong research track record and reputation relative to their career stage and discipline and have the drive to represent their research at national and international levels.

Aston AI Fellows (Early Career) will have a PhD in a subject aligned to Aston's research strengths. A higher-level appointment is also available for candidates with the appropriate qualifications, achievements and experience (cross-reference Aston AI Fellow (Grade 9)).

The Aston AI Fellow will work closely with members of the Research Institute or Centre in which they are based and is expected to contribute to, develop and enhance the research, scholarship and teaching activities of that area either independently or as part of the team, through professional practice and expertise. In addition, the post holder will develop external links with regional UK and international bodies such as government agencies, schools, colleges, professional bodies, business and industry as appropriate to the Institute or Centre's strategy. The Fellow will have the opportunity to carry out teaching duties, up to 0.4FTE in support of their career development.

Job Purpose

This post will be based in The Sir Peter Rigby Digital Futures institute.

The Sir Peter Rigby Digital Futures Institute positions:

To contribute to, develop and lead research activities of The Sir Peter Rigby Digital Future Institute (SPR-DFI) either independently or as part of a team, through professional practice and expertise. In addition, to exploit external links with regional, UK and international bodies such as government agencies, schools, colleges, professional bodies, business and industry as appropriate to the subject discipline and SPR-DFI and/or University strategy.

Research Fellows will have an established research profile at least at a national level with evidence of a growing track record in internationally excellent and leading research publications as well as attracting research grant income appropriate to the discipline. The postholder(s) will be expected to conduct research – and demonstrate a track record of research achievements - in at least one of the following AI research focus areas:

- Generative agent-based AI
- Generative AI in system design and digital twins creation
- Generative AI with enhanced cognitive/reasoning capability
- eXplainable AI (XAI) for HCI design
- AI in arts and design

Main Duties/Responsibilities:

Grade 8 – Aston AI Fellow (Early Career) Research

- Develop research objectives, projects, and proposals in line with the Research Institute or Centre's priorities.
- Write up and publish research in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals.
- Present research at national and international conferences.
- Contribute to funding applications and identify future funding opportunities.
- Participate in relevant external academic and professional networks.
- Supervise and manage research projects.
- Supervise postgraduate students at Master's and doctoral levels, and support a research-active student environment.
- Collaborate with colleagues on research initiatives within and beyond the SPR-DFI Institute, as appropriate.

Teaching (up to 0.4 FTE)

- Deliver teaching to students at various levels, maintaining strong student feedback through reflective practice.
- Assess student learning and supervise undergraduate and postgraduate student projects.
- Support students in developing research skills.

External Engagement

- Represent the interest of digital futures challenge areas The SPR-DFI Institute in activities that raise its profile locally, nationally, and internationally, particularly with the public sector, industry, and the wider community.
- Build links and forge relationships with the professional bodies and other relevant professional and external bodies.

Citizenship and Additional Responsibilities

- Take on appropriate Institute roles and contribute to academic committees.
 - Demonstrate leadership values in daily conduct.
 - Engage in a programme of professional development and relevant training tailored to the Fellowship .
 - Promote wellbeing, fairness, equality, diversity, and sustainability in line with University values.
 - Carry out specific SPR-DFI roles and functions as may be reasonably required.
 - Take part in the meetings and activities of the SPR-DFI and, on occasion, act as Chair of one or more of the SPR-DFI committees, these responsibilities being equitably distributed across the academic and research staff.
 - Demonstrate the University's leadership values through own actions and behaviour.
 - Undertake such other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.
 - 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.
-

Grade 9 – Aston AI Fellow Includes all duties listed under Grade 8, plus:

Research Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership in shaping research directions within the SPR-DFI Institute.
- Lead the development of research funding applications as Principal Investigator.
- Secure significant external research income aligned with the SPR-DFI Institute's priority challenge areas in AI & data analytics, Digital Health, and Gamification & immersive technologies.
- Establish and maintain a strong national and international research reputation.

Mentorship and Academic Contribution

- Act as a mentor for early career researchers and academic colleagues.
- Contribute to the development and innovation of research themes and academic programmes.
- Take a leading role in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and research culture.

Strategic External Engagement

- Represent Aston University in senior academic, professional, or policy networks.
- Strengthen the University's external partnerships and strategic engagement activities.

Person specification

	Essential Grade 8	Essential Grade 9	Method of assessment
Education and qualifications	➤ A good first degree in computer science, electronic and/or electrical engineering, AI & data science or related discipline ➤ A doctorate in a Computer Science/Machine Learning/Data Analytics/Artificial Intelligence or related academic discipline	➤ A good first degree in computer science, electronic and/or electrical engineering, AI & data science or related discipline ➤ A doctorate in a Computer Science/Machine Learning/Data Analytics/Artificial Intelligence or related academic discipline.	Application form.
Experience	➤ Experience of contributing to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge, for example through initiating and conducting research up to doctoral level, publishing research, or presenting research findings. ➤ Experience of making a positive contribution to effective working relationships, and where appropriate the development of others. ➤ Experience of contributing to the wider research and innovation community. ➤ Experience in machine learning, deep learning, generative AI and/or Agentic AI. ➤ Demonstrable research experience with significant personal contributions to Computer vision, multimodal data analytics including images and videos and other forms of digital media modalities. ➤ Strong coding skills in Python, C, C++, Java and R,. ➤ Digital media processing tools and techniques.	➤ Application form, interview and presentation.	

	Essential Grade 8	Essential Grade 9	Method of assessment
Aptitude and skills	➤ Ability to build and develop links with industry and the professions and to secure research funds from external sources ➤ Ability to present data in both a clear and concise manner that is visually appealing. ➤ Ability to prepare written communications to a high standard. ➤ Ability to maintain an ongoing research programme in an area strategically aligned to Aston's research priorities, and to publish in high quality publications. ➤ Ability to contribute to broader research and innovation users and audiences, towards wider societal benefit. ➤ Ability to teach in disciplinary areas relevant to Aston's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught provision. ➤ Ability to harness IT as a research and teaching tool. ➤ A willingness to undertake further training as appropriate and to adopt new procedures as and when required. ➤ Team work skills and experience ➤ Strong communication and presentation skills ➤ Ability to explain complex matter to non-specialist audience ➤ Demonstrable networking skills, especially in interdisciplinary settings ➤ Willingness to engage in multiple projects and activities	➤ All Grade 8 skills plus: ➤ Evidence of national and international research collaboration. ➤ Proven ability to influence research impact beyond academia.	Interview and presentation.

	Desirable Grade 8	Desirable Grade 9	Method of assessment
Aptitude and skills	➤ Text analysis and NLP ➤ Teaching in the area of computer science, AI and digital technologies	➤ Demonstrable aptitude of securing research funds from external sources.	Application form.

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

We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.



Collaboration

We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Aston community.



Ambition

We strive together for improvement and innovation looking ahead to see the bigger picture.



Inclusion

We treat everyone in our community equally and how they would like to be treated.



Integrity

We are open, honest and fair. We take ownership of the way we work and how we treat each other.

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: Abdul Sadka
Job Title: Professor and Director of Aston Digital Futures
Email: a.sadka@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>

Aston University
Birmingham
B4 7ET, UK.
+44 (0)121 204 3000

www.aston.ac.uk