



Aston University

Birmingham

2020
Forward

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Background and Overview

With its focus on the application of knowledge for economic and social benefit, Aston University has a distinct mission that sets it apart. From our foundation as the Birmingham Municipal Technical School in 1895, through the granting of University status in 1966, to the present day we have retained our focus on this core purpose.

The 1889 Technical Instruction Act sought to enable great industrial centres, like Birmingham, to set up colleges:

‘for instruction in the principles of science that are applicable to industries and employers’

In 1966 Aston University’s Royal Charter brought that purpose into the modern era in establishing Aston as a University:

‘to advance and apply learning for the benefit of industry and commerce’

The 2012 Sunday Times University Guide summarised Aston’s position:

“You will struggle to find a university in Britain more keenly attuned to the needs of business and industry”

Going Forward to 2020, Aston will maintain its responsiveness to the needs of a changing world whilst remaining true to the distinctive, original purpose.

Our focus brings real benefits - delivering social mobility by helping students acquire the skills, confidence and knowledge they need to make a successful career in business, industry and the professions, enabling them to explore and fulfil individual potential; fostering their initiative and creativity as responsible global citizens, imaginative thinkers and researchers and successful entrepreneurs. We thrive on close collaboration and partnership with businesses, large and small at local, national and global levels.

Our employability track record is second to none, summed up in the 2012 Sunday Times University Guide:

“Not even Oxbridge can boast a higher proportion of students gaining graduate level jobs than Aston”

Our scholarship is focussed on translating world-class research into benefits for the economy and society, and for the local and global communities to which we belong. We capture our ethos in the statement:

‘Employable Graduates; Exploitable Research’

At Aston we are dedicated to developing the people and the ideas that will shape the businesses and communities of tomorrow.



Mission, Vision and Aims

Our Mission

To be the UK's leading University for business and the professions, where original research, enterprise and inspiring teaching deliver global impact

Our Vision

In 2020 Aston will have an international reputation as the source of the people and the ideas that will shape the businesses and the communities of tomorrow

We will be:

- > ranked within the top 1% of universities in the world
- > exceptional in terms of our worldwide reputation for graduate employability – as a result of innovative teaching and placement opportunities
- > recognised for excellence in research that delivers real solutions for local and global challenges, develops research leaders and provides the foundations for new businesses
- > focussed on the needs of business and the professions, with courses and research that build on our strengths
- > transforming lives: developing sought-after, entrepreneurial graduates – from a wide range of backgrounds – with global citizenship skills
- > delivering our research and teaching in collaboration with international partners and innovative businesses
- > a University with sustainability at the core of all we do, meeting world-class standards for environmental performance
- > a welcoming community that is a great place to work and study.

Our Aims

Our Mission and Vision focus on two 'core aims':



01. Developing internationally sought after **Aston Graduates**

02. Delivering world-leading **Aston Research**

These are supported by strategies for developing:



03. Partnerships and Business Engagement

04. International Relations and Networks

To be a successful University where excellent research and scholarship thrive, Aston must also be a great place to work and study, and a successful and responsible business.



05. People and Values

06. Finance and Infrastructure

This is addressed by our aims and objectives in:

07. Sustainability and Social Responsibility

The quality of our graduates and our research are central in framing our:



08. Reputation and Influence



The following eight sections outline the key actions, ambitions and strengths that underpin our mission, vision and aims.

Aston Graduates

01.01

Access

Widening participation – ensuring high potential students from all backgrounds can gain the benefits of university education and the social mobility that comes with professional careers.

Achieved through: an outstanding Schools and Colleges Liaison team, working with partner schools locally and supporting schools and colleges more widely; Masterclasses; student mentoring and volunteering in schools; the Aimhigher collaboration; school visit programmes; competitions; collaborations with organisations and initiatives with similar goals such as Pure Potential, the Aston University Engineering Academy and the UTC programme; scholarships and bursaries; support for care leavers; use of contextual information and interviewing in admissions.

01.02

Success

Success – for all our students and alumni.

Achieved through: innovative learning and teaching; high levels of support in key areas such as learner development, maths, computing, writing and english; academic tutor system; peer and alumni mentoring; placements: work-based and international learning opportunities; developing employability skills and international competences; entrepreneurship programmes; a sector leading careers service.

01.03

Global citizenship

An innovative, international outlook – a differentiator for employers in a competitive graduate marketplace.

Achieved through: a diverse student environment and an international faculty: mixing with colleagues from many different countries and backgrounds; developing the ability to work in and lead diverse teams, recognising that diversity drives innovation; language provision for all students; intercultural awareness programmes; international exchanges; overseas placements in companies; year abroad placements; global citizenship education; international activities led by the Students' Guild.

01.04

Employability and entrepreneurship

Sought-after graduates – world leading employability combined with confidence and business drive.

Achieved through: professionally accredited degrees; business engagement in teaching and the curriculum; international skills; employability skills; placements; high levels of achievement (1st and 2.1); work experience, Graduate Advantage for graduate internships, Job Shop opportunities; leadership development through clubs, societies and other Students' Guild activities; entrepreneurship development: SPEED*, BSEEN**, Aston Entrepreneurs; business competitions; alumni mentoring; a sector-leading careers service.

*Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education (SPEED)

**The Birmingham Skills for Enterprise and Employability Network (BSEEN)

01.05

Quality learning

Developing independent critical thinkers – through research-informed, professionally-focussed courses at undergraduate, Masters and research degree levels.

Achieved through: inspiring teaching; excellent supervision; innovative project and problem-based learning approaches such as 'Active Engineering'; a student and course-appropriate range of modes and channels; professionally qualified teaching staff and active researchers; professional accreditation; research-based project work; a strong Graduate School; teaching and support for dissertations.



01.06

A great student experience

An inspirational and supportive experience – delivering high student satisfaction and excellent performance.

Achieved through: outstanding and enthusiastic lecturers, including world-leading researchers; a strong partnership between students and staff; a dynamic and committed Students' Guild; a jointly developed and owned Student Charter; collaborative activities such as the Welcome Week; effective feedback mechanisms at all levels translated into improvements; high performing student services such as the Hub, the ARC and the Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Centre; intercultural activities to bring the diverse student body together, cross boundaries and expand horizons; support from our alumni.

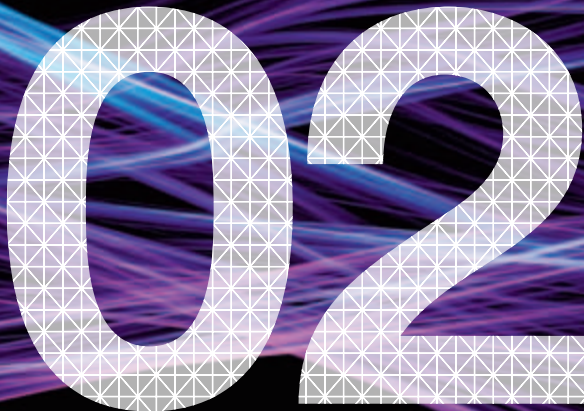
Aston Research

02.01

Translational research with impact

Ranging from discovery of new knowledge to application and exploitation – with an emphasis on translation and impact.

Research teams working closely with business, government, services and communities to provide innovative practical answers to real problems.



02.02

Collaborative and interdisciplinary

Exploiting our compact campus and location to develop exciting interdisciplinary collaborations, and working with national and international partners to increase the impact and reach of our work.

02.03

Building our areas of strength

Investing in developing world-leading research centres with interdisciplinary academic communities, welcoming visitors, building outstanding teams of researchers with real critical mass.

Existing centres include: Aston Brain Centre; Photonics Institute; European Bioenergy Research Institute; Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing; Aston Centre for Interdisciplinary Research into Language and Diversity; Aston Centre for Critical Infrastructure and Services; Aston Centre for Research in International Business; Aston Centre for Europe; Centre for Forensic Linguistics.

02.04

Developing people

Outstanding research supervision combined with support and courses offered by the cross-university Graduate School, encouraging research students and research fellows to participate in additional training and gain academic teaching qualifications, as well as applying for prestigious Research Council and National Academy fellowships and grants.

02.05

Research-informed teaching

Giving all students the opportunity to participate in research projects and introducing the latest research developments into lecture courses and practical activities.



02.06

A great research environment and culture

Investing in facilities and infrastructure; active programmes of well attended colloquia across the University; overseas visitors and industry partners working in our teams; research conversations everywhere.

02.07

Diversity of funding

A diverse mix of funding streams including industry, Research Councils, charities, European Research Council and European Union; a research active staff where the majority bring in significant research income and are recognised as leaders in their fields.

02.08

Current research strengths

- > Strategic HR, Teamwork and Leadership
- > Strategy as Practice
- > Global Business
- > Islamic Finance
- > Entrepreneurship and Business Growth
- > Marketing Science
- > European Languages and Applied Linguistics
- > Forensic Linguistics
- > Diversity and Gender
- > European Politics and Political Science
- > Healthy Ageing
- > Child Health and Development
- > Vision Sciences
- > Neuroimaging
- > Drug Delivery
- > Bioenergy
- > Sustainability and Low Carbon Technologies
- > Photonics and Sensors
- > Information Sciences

Partnerships and Business Engagement

03.01

Building strong relationships with business, professional and public sector organisations

Including student support and placements, professional and executive development, collaborative research and consultancy. Making full use of collaborative funding schemes (such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering, Technology Strategy Board programmes) and European Commission funding.



03.02

Contributing to the innovation and economic development landscape of Birmingham and the region

Leading partnership activity to deliver real benefits to SMEs in the West Midlands, eg graduate placements (Graduate Advantage), new university-business collaborations (Innovation Vouchers) and graduate entrepreneurship (BSEEN).

03.03

Providing executive and professional development programmes

To individuals and corporate teams.



03.04

Delivering innovative support
for SMEs and new business

Including encouraging exploitation of intellectual property emanating from our research; supporting new businesses developed by our students, researchers and academic staff; collaborating with Birmingham Science Park Aston; developing new ways to support early business growth.

International Relations and Networks

04.01

Promoting our reputation and visibility internationally

Through our alumni, through agents and ministries, through our research. Improving the scope and reach of a limited number of partnerships, such as that with IIT Delhi and IIT Ropar in India, to form a network of key university partners with whom we have deep relationships including staff and student exchange. Developing high profile cultural collaborations such as the Confucius Institute.

04.02

Building our international reputation for research excellence

Increasing the number and intensity of our international research collaborations; strengthening our research links with international companies; increasing our visibility at key international meetings and conferences; attracting international conferences to Aston; establishing joint international research centres.

04.03

Building a diverse international community

Continuing to increase the numbers of leading international researchers on the faculty, as well as visiting academics; increased recruitment of outstanding international students at undergraduate, graduate and PhD level.

04.04

Developing global citizens

Through language skills and international placements for UK and overseas students.

04.05

Developing joint courses with high quality institutions overseas

Delivering both joint and Aston degrees with universities and colleges.



People and Values

05.01

Aston's culture is built
on six key values

Trust, learning and scholarship,
empowerment, engagement,
innovation and ambition.



05.02

Culture transformation,
articulated through 'Aston First'

Developing a more united,
more innovative and more
dynamic organisation, able
to excel in an ever more
competitive world.

05.03

A consistently high
performance culture

Delivered through:
the best people; reward,
recognition and appreciation;
staff development; leadership;
community; communication and
engagement; the environment;
operational excellence.

Finance and Infrastructure

06.01

A predictable, stable
financial platform

To support the University strategy, achieving an annual surplus of 3–5% on turnover; generating the cash flow to support investment in academic and physical infrastructure, and to improve the student experience.

06.02

A high quality, sustainable, visually appealing and integrated University estate

To improve the student and staff experience and enhance our research.

06.03

An information and ICT environment to support world class research and teaching

Developing the Library, and the ICT infrastructure to support the changing needs of students, new delivery modes for teaching, research and management.



Sustainability and Social Responsibility

07.01

Commitment to the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME)

Improving the integration of sustainability and social responsibility by embedding our activities in this area into all aspects of University life.



07

07.02

Sustainable campus and infrastructure

A sustainability strategy ensuring that Aston is recognised as a top 10 UK University for sustainability performance. Including developments such as: wind turbines; grass roofs to encourage biodiversity; rainwater collection units in new halls of residences; a combined heat and power plant reducing CO₂ emissions.

07.03

Social responsibility and sustainability literacy

Extending across the University curriculum changes aimed at enabling all graduates to be 'literate in social responsibility and sustainability.'



07.04

Community engagement and involvement

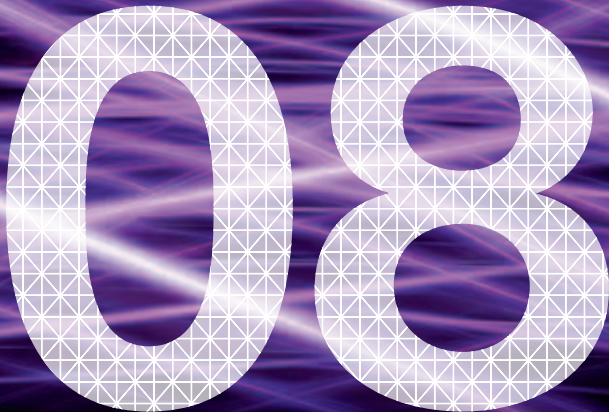
Contributing to the development and regeneration of the region, organisations and communities. Opportunities for students and staff to be involved with the local community at both an academic and extra-curricular level.

Reputation and Influence

08.01

Creating global awareness
of Aston's strengths

Highlighting our distinctiveness,
our positioning as a brand,
and our rankings in league
tables. Ensuring that the
quality of our degrees and of
our research is communicated
clearly to both local and
international audiences.





08.02

Shaping Higher Education
for the future

Ensuring that our distinctive
approach to learning and
research plays a strong role.

2020

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