

## OPPORTUNITY

Where change  
gets real.



**Member of Council and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee**

# Welcome

from Professor Alec Cameron  
Vice-Chancellor and  
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.

The 2014 Research Excellence Framework results recognised the quality and impact of Aston research. This research directly influences medical breakthroughs, advancements in engineering, innovation, policy and practice in government, and the strategies and performance of local and international business. The Times Higher Education REF rankings placed Aston University 35th in the UK and 78% of our submissions were judged to be World Leading or Internationally Excellent.

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. Aston University holds the award of Gold from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which found that students from all backgrounds achieve 'consistently outstanding outcomes' at Aston and confirms our outstanding teaching quality and student satisfaction

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 "Alec Cameron." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

*Professor Alec Cameron*





## 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 is 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

Aston's 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. Awarded TEF Gold in June 2017, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) found that students from all backgrounds achieve ‘consistently outstanding outcomes’. Aston 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

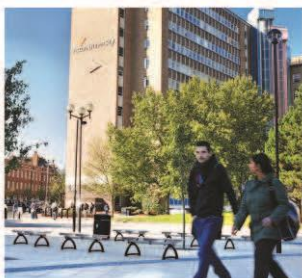
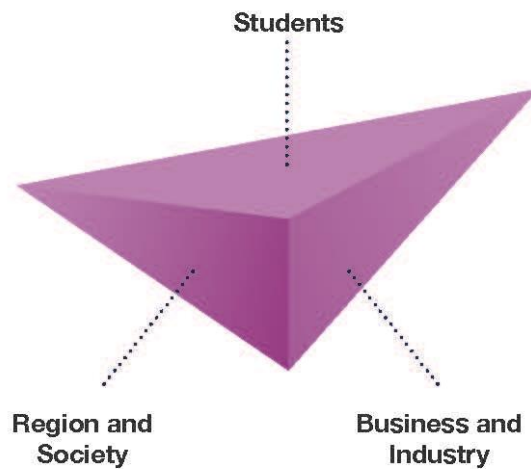


#### College of Health and Life Sciences (HLS)

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



# The Role

**TERM OF OFFICE:** 3 years

**TIME COMMITMENT:** Estimated to average 6-9 days per year including involvement as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee. This will primarily involve daytime engagements, although there may be some evening commitments. Council members will also be invited to attend Degree and Awards Ceremonies and other University events such as the annual Charter Dinner.

**REMUNERATION:** The role is not remunerated; travel and subsistence expenses are paid.

**METHOD OF APPOINTMENT:** Ex Officio, Appointed, Elected

## ROLE PURPOSE

The Council is the governing body of the University and its power are enshrined in the University's Charter, Statutes and Ordinances. Council comprises 15 voting members and meets five times each year. A majority (at least eight and no more than eleven) of Council's members are from outside the University (the independent members), contributing a wide range of experience and expertise from the public and private sectors. Up to five Council members are University staff and one is a student (the President of the Students' Union).

Independent members of Council bring a wide range of knowledge and expertise to the role purpose is summarised as follows:

- ensure that issues are considered from a wide range of perspectives
- act as a "critical friend" through independent scrutiny of strategic and financial issues
- ensure the financial and environmental sustainability of the institution
- actively seek and receive assurance that the delivery of the strategic plan is in line with legislative and regulatory requirements
- ensure that there are effective systems of control and risk management in place
- ensure that the governance structures and processes are robust, effective and agile
- provide an external view on the work of the Council and the University
- offer specialist skills, experience and expertise
- give an independent view on governance and possible internal conflicts of interest
- provide useful contacts and access to external networks
- advise on the image and public presentation of the University
- act as an ambassador for the University, promoting its activities externally and assisting with philanthropic activity and University fund raising

The role purpose of Chair of Audit and Risk Committee is summarised as follows:

- Lead the Audit and Risk Committee in the oversight, adequacy and assurance of effective systems of the control and risk management environment at the University which will include assurance relating to the accuracy of the statement of internal control included with the annual statement of accounts.
- Ensure the delivery of an annual report setting out the Committee's opinion of the adequacy and assurance of the systems of control and the risk management environment at the University addressed to the Council and Vice-Chancellor, summarising the activity for the year and covering the University's financial year, any significant issues up to the date of preparing the report and incorporate, where appropriate, confirmations and comments from the internal and/or external auditors in relation to the effectiveness of the internal control system.
- Lead investigation into any activity within the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee and authorise the solicitation of any information required from any employee.
- Ensure that the Audit and Risk Committee approves all audit planning documents on behalf of the Council in a timely manner.
- Ensure that the Audit and Risk Committee reviews the audit of the draft annual financial statements including the external audit opinion, the statement of members' responsibilities, the statement of internal control and any relevant issue raised in the external auditors' management letter.
- Insofar as is authorised by the Audit and Risk Committee and in accordance with the Financial and Contracting Policy and the Procurement Policy, obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of non-members with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary, normally in consultation with the Accountable Officer (as designated by OfS) and/or the Chair of Council (up to expenditure of £24,999 ex VAT).
- Insofar as is authorised by the Audit and Risk Committee and in accordance with the Financial and Contracting Policy and the Procurement Policy, request prior approval of expenditure in excess of £24,999 ex VAT in relation to obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of non-members with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary, normally in consultation with the Accountable Officer (as designated by OfS) and/or the Chair of Council.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Aston University adopts The Higher Education Code of Governance and the University Council was subject to an Effectiveness Review in 2019.

Council members are expected to exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the University.

### **Standards**

It is the responsibility for all Council members to ensure that the Council conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Furthermore, it is essential that the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee ensures that such standards of behaviour are strictly adhered by members of Council, the Audit and Risk Committee and the University's executive leadership. This will include assurance that Council members act, and be perceived to act, impartially, and not be influenced in their Council role by social or business relationships and make full and timely disclosure of all and any personal interests, in accordance with procedures approved by the Council.



## **The Business of the University**

Council members undertake the following duties:

- review and approval of the strategic direction of the University
- appropriate assessment of the performance of the University against agreed objectives
- ensure the maintenance the long-term financial and environmental sustainability of the University including the safeguarding of its assets and the operation of proper mechanisms to ensure financial control and the prevention of fraud;
- ensure an effective system of controls and that the University operates an effective risk management environment.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee will focus particularly on the maintenance of long-term financial and environmental sustainability, ensure an effective system of controls and that the University operates and effective risk management environment.

## **The External Role**

Council members may represent the Council and the University, with Aston's key external corporate and individual stakeholders. Council members may be asked, from time to time, to undertake specific 'ambassadorial' roles in support of the University. Such roles should be co-ordinated with the senior officers and relevant staff of the University. Council members will always be fully briefed by the University to enable them to undertake such roles effectively.

## **Personal Commitment**

Council members are required to act fairly and impartially, at all times, in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate. Council members should debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately. They should be open to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the Council. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee is required to facilitate and such debate and appropriate challenge within the Committee.

## **Role of Trustee and Personal Liability**

As Aston University is an educational charitable and chartered corporation, Council members are "trustees" and have the responsibilities and potential liabilities that go with trustee status. They must apply the University's charitable assets for its charitable purposes and not put them at undue risk. Members who act prudently, lawfully and in accordance with the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances will not find themselves liable for their actions. Provided that they do so, as individuals, members will be indemnified by the University against the results of their actions or decisions.

Members of Council will not be held personally liable for debt in the unlikely event of the University's becoming financially insolvent. In exceptional cases, however, the Office for Students (OfS) will use its role as principal regulator to refer an issue to the Charity Commission, which may then investigate and take action against trustees who have not fulfilled their roles. Trustees need to be particularly careful to ensure that the charity has the means to meet its obligations when the HEI is entering into substantial contracts or financial commitments.

The University maintains a register of interests of Council members which is available for public scrutiny.

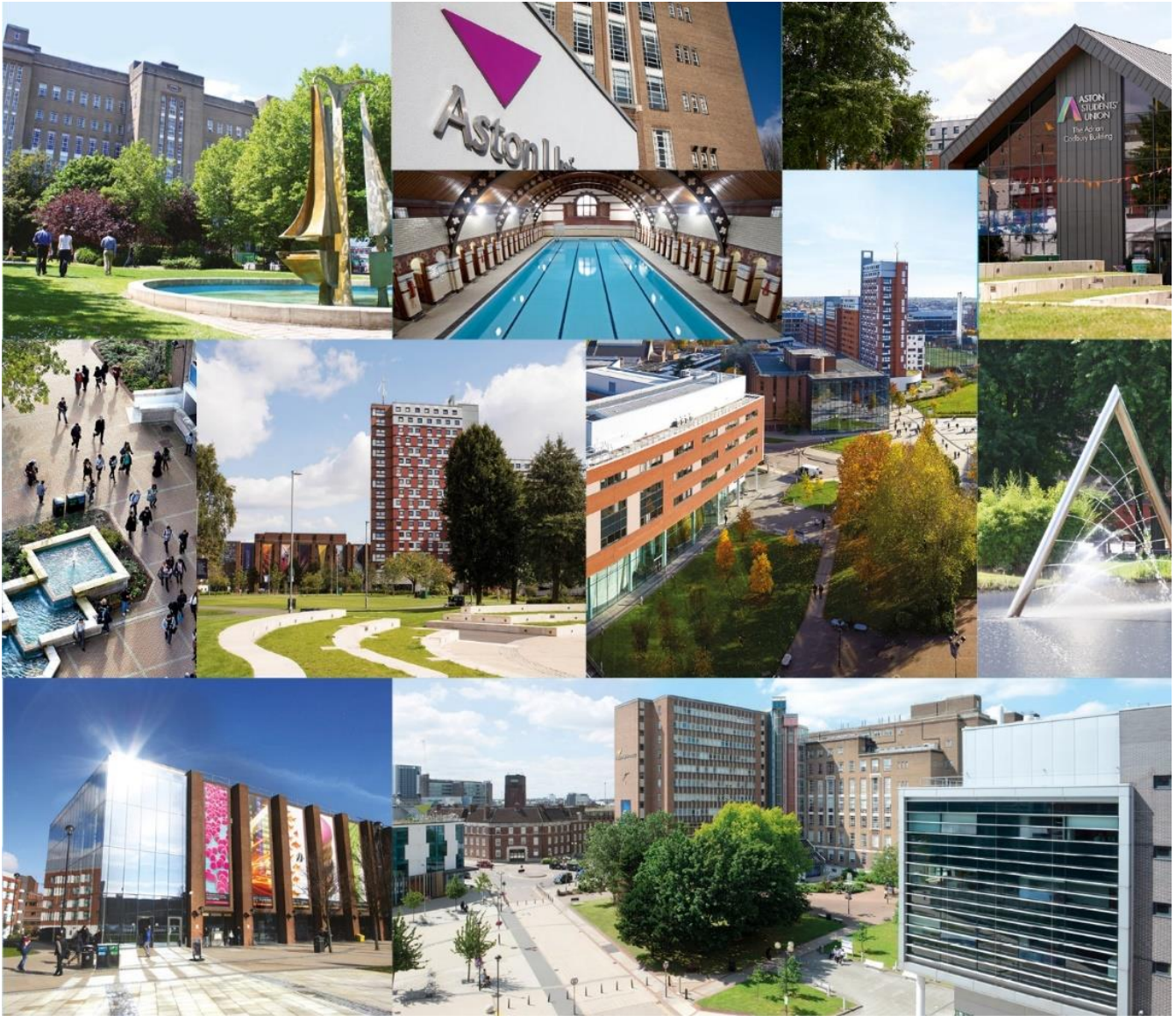
## PERSON SPECIFICATION

**ROLE TITLE:** Member of Council and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee

The Person Specification focuses on the knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications required to undertake the role effectively. All Council members are offered induction, training and development in accordance with The Higher Education Code of Governance.

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b> The role holder must be able to demonstrate:	<b>ESSENTIAL (E)</b>  <b>DESIRABLE (D)</b>	<b>MEASURED BY:</b> <b>A Application form</b> <b>I Interview</b> <b>T/P Test/Presentation</b>
<b>KNOWLEDGE &amp; EXPERIENCE</b>		
A successful track record of providing strategic oversight and/or leadership in a large and complex organisation	E	A/I
Detailed knowledge and experience of at least one area of expertise pertinent to the remit of the Audit and Risk Committee for example, risk, internal audit, external audit	E	A/I
Working with Chair and governing bodies in large and complex organisations either as a trustee and/or as a member of the executive team	E	A/I
<b>SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES</b>		
Proven ability to effectively chair meetings with a range of complex and challenging topics through the demonstration of excellent leadership skills with the ability to motivate and inspire others	E	A/I
Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to influence and establish mutually beneficial relationships	E	A/I
Excellent oral and written communication skills, able to appreciate detailed complex information and concepts	E	A/I
Strong perception skills with the ability to exercise tact and diplomacy, take a methodical approach and demonstrate an appreciation for detail	E	A/I
Proven ability to establish constructive, supportive, and challenging relationships with leadership teams in a manner that recognises the proper separation between governance and executive management	E	A/I





## How to apply

Applications should be made via email to [alan@dixonwalter.co.uk](mailto:alan@dixonwalter.co.uk) by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and must include on separate documents:

- a letter of application setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the criteria (no more than two pages of A4).
- a comprehensive curriculum vitae (CV).
- a completed Equal Opportunities form.

Full details on the role and how to apply etc can be found at:

<https://www.dixonwalter.co.uk/opportunities/aston-chair-of-audit-and-risk-committee>.

To explore the post further or for any queries you may have, please contact Alan Walter at Dixon Walter on 07876 766972 or email: [alan@dixonwalter.co.uk](mailto:alan@dixonwalter.co.uk)

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 Privacy 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.

**Aston University**  
**Birmingham**  
**B4 7ET, UK.**

**+44 (0)121 204 3000**

**aston.ac.uk**



**Where change  
gets real.**