

ASTON UNIVERSITY'S CIVIC AGREEMENT FOR BIRMINGHAM



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Aston University is one of five universities in the city of Birmingham. This Civic University agreement sets out how Aston plans to work with our peers to benefit our city and its citizens.

Aston University was set up by Birmingham's employers in 1895 as a technical college to support the needs of the city. From its establishment as a university in 1966 to the present day, Aston University has maintained its focus on meeting the commercial and technical needs of the region. In 2018, we reaffirmed this intent through publishing a beneficiary-led strategy which outlines how we will work with three groups: (i) our region and society, (ii) students (many of whom are from Birmingham and the wider West Midlands area) and (iii) business and the professions (many of which are also regional).

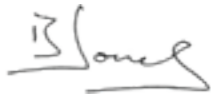
We see ourselves as one of the city's Anchor institutions with a vital role in supporting society's recovery from the legacy of COVID-19. We plan to use our influence and expertise to assist the city to:

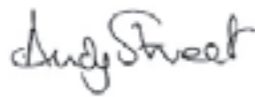
- Create opportunities for inclusive leadership; Develop research to support evidence-based policymaking and practical support for regional organisations;
- Use our economic power to support local employment and procurement.

We will use our networks and translate our internationally leading research into practical support for local and regional organisations. We intend to support our city by working collaboratively with other anchors in the city, especially the signatories, particularly with universities, colleges, schools and education organisations to ensure a seamless progression of learning for our citizens. Although we work across the wider West Midlands, the physical location of university and of the city's historic industrial base naturally encourages engagement with central, north-central and east Birmingham.

Over the following pages, we set out the foundations we are building upon, the themes that we will work within, and the projects we will plan to deliver in partnership.

'We put forward this Civic Agreement as a commitment to Birmingham and its people.'



Deputy Leader of the Council
Birmingham City Council

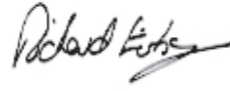

Mayor for the West Midlands,
West Midlands Combined Authority


Chief Executive,
Aston Villa Football Club


President,
Aston Students Union


Interim Vice-Chancellor
and Chief Executive,
Aston University


Chief Executive,
Greater Birmingham Chambers
of Commerce


Chief Executive,
Birmingham Community Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust


Interim Chair,
Greater Birmingham and Solihull
Local Enterprise Partnership

CONTEXT AND FOUNDATIONS

Aston University is an inclusive institution committed to a vibrant Birmingham. To ensure this, we will continue to focus on social mobility, sustainability, inclusion and entrepreneurship. The sections below give some context to underpin this agreement.

We were named Guardian University of the Year 2020.

The judges highlighted our high levels of graduate employability and high earnings achieved by those graduates, our outstanding student support, our work to close attainment gaps between students of different ethnicities and our progress in embedding sustainability to make us one of the 'greenest universities' in the UK.

The recent Times Higher 'Entrepreneurial University of the Year' award recognised our strategic and inclusive cross-institutional approach to supporting businesses, the West Midlands region and student entrepreneurship impressed the judges in this category. This will assume even more importance post-COVID-19 as many of our students come from the city.



We plan to build on these areas of strength to give an ever stronger focus on supporting our city.

- **Our student population reflects the diversity of our city:** In 2018/19, 67.5% of the total, our student population came from an ethnic minority background compared to the national average of 24.3%.¹
- **A third of our students come from Birmingham, and half come from the wider West Midlands²:** We inspire school leavers to consider a University education and support them with routes to get there, through Open Days or access to University through alternative means (Institute of Technology, a Foundation Year or Degree Apprenticeship options), while also supporting them when they are with us to graduate and secure graduate-level employment.
- **We have had a transformative effect on students' confidence, with a subsequent impact on their future:** In a survey of our alumni, 75% of those surveyed agreed that studying at Aston University gave them the confidence to succeed at work.
- **Our graduates are among the highest paid in the country:** Five years after graduating, ranking 15th in largest median earnings (£33,200) five years after graduation.³

- We **spend** and **employ locally** where we can and invest in doing more through membership of the **Birmingham Anchor Network**.
- **Over 40% of our students find work in the region upon graduation, reducing skills gaps.**



Fig 1 Aston University where our graduates are employed (Graduate Outcomes data 2017-18)

- We are **inclusive** in all we do, following Athena Swan principles and actively working towards a Race Equality Accreditation.



1 - Heidi+ based on HESA data
2 - 2018/19 Aston enrolment data
3 - The 2020 Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data

VISION

To support the city of Birmingham and all of its people to recover and thrive post-COVID-19.

AMBITION

To positively impact on the lives of everyone in Birmingham. We will work in partnership to support our City and its citizens, translating our internationally leading research into practical outcomes for our people, businesses and institutions.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Citizens at the centre
- Use our convening power to bring partners together for the benefit of the city
- Amplify impact through collaboration

OUR MISSION

To work with local citizens and regional bodies to make a transformation difference on issues that matter to them – marrying our world-leading research with the needs of local communities to co-produce effective solutions.

MEASUREMENT

We will measure our success through an annual civic agreement report comprising results from:

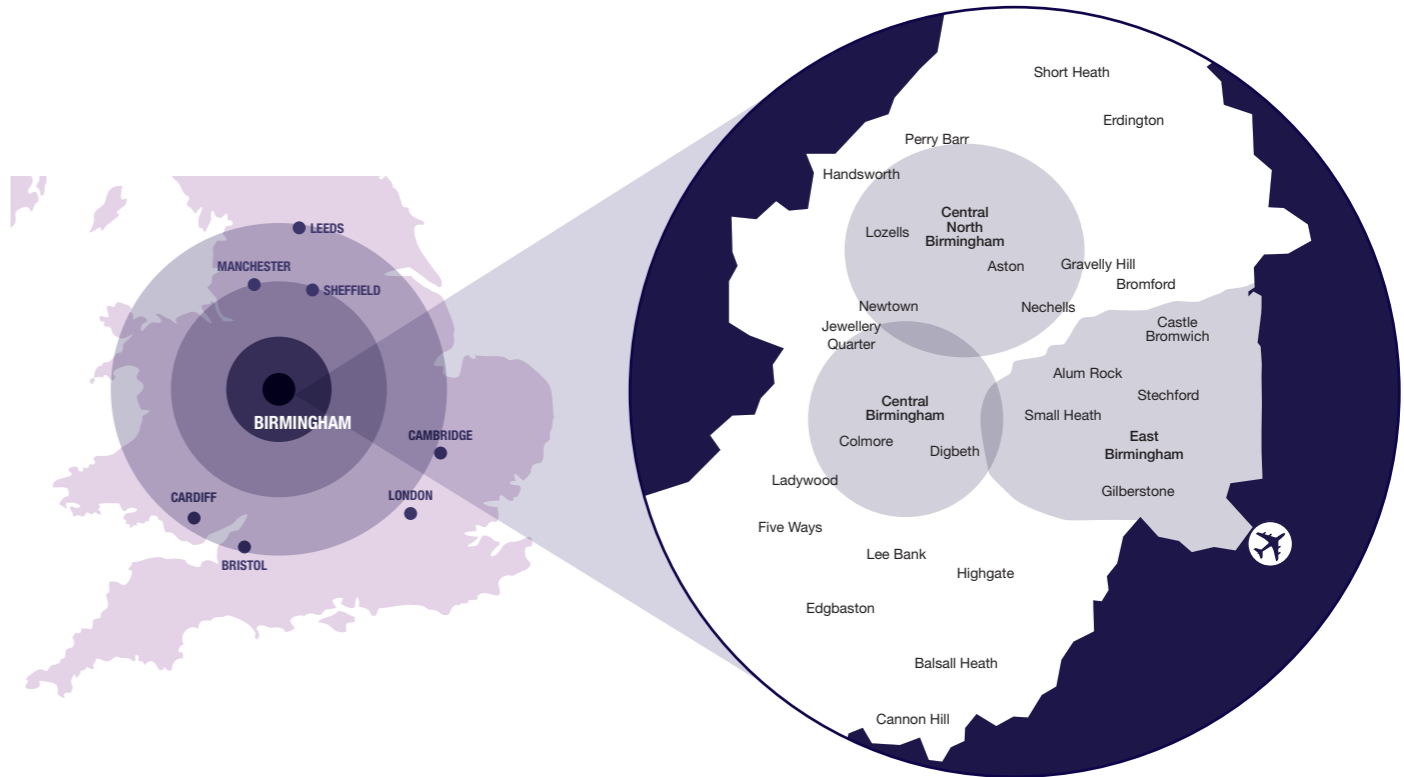
- A survey of citizens to ensure that our activities are supporting those that need it;
- Data collection of key measures such as numbers of jobs, numbers of learners, number of businesses supported and amount of carbon reduction;
- An annual University Corporate Social Responsibility impact report.

Key themes of our agreement



Geographical focus

– our agreement is focussed initially on Central, Central North and East Birmingham



KEY THEMES OF OUR AGREEMENT

Health and wellbeing

- To develop health education in areas of need and facilities to fill gaps in provision for the local community.
- To work with partners to break down barriers for local communities in accessing healthcare.
- To continue our success in creating pathways for local students to access medicine and healthcare professions, providing a pool of talent to work in local communities.

Inclusion and reducing inequality

- Take the lead on equality and diversity policies and procedures within Aston University and work collaboratively with other organisations in the city to share best practice.
- Work collaboratively with Citizens UK and listen to their members' issues and support where we can and use our convening powers to involve other partners.
- Support our students to become leaders in their communities and local organisations with diverse recruitment to make the leadership of our city representative of the citizens that live and work within it.

Support for business

- Listen to a diverse range of businesses and build evidence to support better policymaking.
- Support businesses with what they need to innovate and grow through access to funding, technical expertise and equipment.
- Support students and staff to start businesses and nurture them to grow.

Sustainability and environment

- Use our campus and the Knowledge Quarter as a testbed for carbon reduction technologies and projects.
- Include sustainability in all of our courses to build a future workforce that builds sustainability into their businesses and projects.
- Use our research to support local initiatives to improve the quality of life of Birmingham residents.

Crime and justice

- Provide advice to local businesses and communities to enable them to access the support they need.
- Work with partners to build capacity in community organisations and empower them with the skills and information they need to participate fully in society.
- Support the police with the recruitment of diverse local students to ensure their workforce is representative of the local population.

Education and employment

- Reach out and inspire school children to the range of opportunities available and to be who they want to be.
- Engage with local employers to ensure that Aston's courses develop skills required by the workforce of the future.
- Develop support for lifelong learning to enable people who lost their jobs during COVID-19 to upskill or reskill into employment.



PROJECT PROGRAMME AND IMPACTS

Theme	Projects	Impact
Health and wellbeing	We plan to develop a Health hub at Aston, support the Sandwell education campus for Midland Metropolitan and City Hospital, deliver Pathway to healthcare programmes, Villa Vision, Child feeding guide, Vegetable Maths Masters and develop public health projects particularly in East Birmingham.	Local talented people access exclusive professions enabling them to have well-paid jobs and to serve their local community. Providing healthcare services and training for our staff, students and the local community to improve health and education outcomes.
Inclusion and reducing inequality	Inclusive Aston leads on making Aston a place where everyone can thrive. We are members of Citizens UK , research into ethnic minority entrepreneurship, deliver the diverse supply chains project and support social enterprises. We collaborate through Midlands Innovation Inclusive transformation and WM-REDI to support research into COVID-19 recovery. We are engaging with Birmingham Anchor Network projects to improve community wealth building.	Increased diversity in the leadership of key organisations in the city so it is representative of the citizens living and working in Birmingham. Reduction in hate crime and improved community cohesion , diverse local businesses secure local contracts increasing local economic prosperity across all groups of society.
Support for businesses	We will refocus our business support projects towards recovery from COVID-19 and our Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME) ensures businesses from diverse communities can benefit. We continue to support our students and staff to start businesses and for local SMEs to scale . We will continue to support the Minerva Birmingham Business Angel network and the Midlands VC fundraising for all businesses. Through the Enterprise Research Centre , we provide evidence for policymakers to support SMEs effectively.	SMEs survive and adapt to the post-COVID-19 world and have access to capital to support scaling, creating new jobs and support local recruitment to counter the inevitable job losses that will occur at the end of the COVID-19 furlough scheme. Promotion of good practice for diverse firms in the region's business support ecosystem.
Sustainability and environment	We will continue to integrate sustainability through everything we do (Sustainable Aston). We will support the Route to net zero through Aston's Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute , informing effective policymaking and business support projects. We work in partnership – Energy Research Accelerator and UK Manufacturing Symbiosis Network+ . We will leverage Aston's estate and the Knowledge Quarter as a testbed for low carbon technologies. We will support Birmingham's clean air zone and Birmingham Civic society .	Make significant steps in Birmingham's route to net zero through; reducing Aston's carbon footprint and increased biodiversity of our campus through collaboration with partners in the city towards sustainable practices and policy making. The future workforce is trained in sustainability and adopts sustainable practices in their future roles. Improved quality of life in Birmingham through more trees, art, culture and community-building activities.
Crime and justice	We will provide business and law clinics and develop community advice . We will empower communities to translate for themselves. We collaborate with police positive action and forensics teams to support diverse local recruitment.	Local businesses and citizens are signposted to the advice they need to access funding and support they are entitled to. Police recruits are more representative of the communities they serve. Improved online policing prevents more crime.
Education and employment	We have signed the Social Mobility pledge and will continue to engage with local schools to inspire all students, regardless of background, to build skills and consider further or higher education. We engage with employers to fill future skills gaps. We develop micro-credentials to support retraining or upskilling into available jobs. We set up Aston Engineering Academy and host the GBSLEP Institute of Technology ; and Our Enactus society supports refugees with skills and integration.	Provides skills ladders supporting local students towards higher-level skills enabling them to secure highly paid jobs, raising Birmingham's skills levels (currently much lower than the UK average). Also supports people to build skills to support them into new employment after the pandemic. Enactus supports refugees to integrate into society and thrive in Birmingham .



Contact Us

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🌐 www.aston.ac.uk/about/region-and-society