

# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY



This document sets out the University's policy its approach to the development and maintenance of corporate social responsibility within its community.

<b>Version</b>	1.2
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Executive Director of Business Engagement
<b>Officer Responsible for Policy/ Procedures</b>	Director of Regional Strategy
<b>Consultation Process</b>	Director of Development and Alumni Relations Director of Health, Safety and Business Continuity Associate Directors of Human Resources Director of Organisational Development Head of Procurement and Insurance Estates – Sustainable Aston The University's designated academic expert on CSR from Work and Organisation in Aston Business School in the College of Business and Social Science
<b>Date of Approval and Committee and/or Executive Officer</b>	Executive Engagement Group Executive
<b>Effective Date</b>	29 March 2021

---

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Aston University has a social purpose and is an anchor institution in our City/Region. Birmingham suffers from high levels of deprivation, with 43% of the population living in areas that are classified as being in the 10% most deprived in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019). The University is working with partners in the City to try to reduce inequality and support the City's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The University contributes positively to society through education, innovation, research, volunteering, working with other organisations on CSR as well as our activities as a large organisation that employs people and procures products and services. Our decisions impact on people, communities and the natural environment. These activities have a wider context in that we aim to impact on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ([Sustainable Development Goals | UNDP](#)) by:

- Supporting the principles of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Undertaking research that provides solutions to sustainable development challenges;
- Provide the educational opportunity for our students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development; and

- Contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by ensuring our campuses and major programs are environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive.

# 1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

## 1.1 What is covered by the Policy

This Policy sets out how the university meets its corporate social responsibility as an ethical, responsible and sustainable organisation with the aim of creating opportunities and making a difference to our region and society as a whole in line with the University’s overall beneficiary led strategy and Policy is structured around the four pillars of CSR: Workplace, Community, Environment and Philanthropy. This Policy sets out our approach to partnership working with civic, community and cultural partners locally, nationally and internationally.



## 1.2 Who is covered by the Policy

Everyone at the University has a role to play. This policy outlines our shared and individual responsibilities. This policy applies to all staff, students and visiting researchers.

Our local community particularly focusses on Central Birmingham, North Central (Aston, Birchfield, Nechells, Lozells and Newtown) and extends to East Birmingham as areas of special focus, but we also encourage working within Birmingham and the wider west midlands as a regional focus. The overall aim is to act locally, but then build to have national and international impact.

### 1.3 Policy Ownership

The Executive has approved this Policy, the Executive Director of Business Engagement is the Executive sponsor and the Director of Regional Strategy is the officer responsible for the Policy. Any questions about the operation of this Policy should be referred in the first instance to the Director of Regional Strategy.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENTS

### 2.1 Workplace – Looking after Employees

At the University we address the following SDGs throughout our policy infrastructure and notably through the policies in our Respect pillar:



### 2.2 Supporting our Communities and looking after our Beneficiaries



### Students

- The University puts its students first and has a senior level group looking at all of our processes and activities to ensure that students are supported and that our communications are clear, timely and informative. We have a student charter setting out the partnership between the University, our students and our students union. We work with the Students' Union and its representatives and involve them in university briefings, consultations and decision-making.
- We offer extensive support for our students through our Student Support Services at the Hub and our Careers and Placements team in getting work experience towards securing a graduate level job.
- The University provides opportunities for young people and students at the University through modern apprenticeships and placements, enhancing employability.
- The University makes financial support available for scholarships, bursaries and hardship funds.
- In addition, we work with alumni and friends of the University to provide additional support through the Forward Fund (providing advice, mentoring and work experience).
- Increase opportunities for students to interact with the wider community as part of research, study, work or volunteering programs.

- We are one of the original founding members of the UN-led initiative PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) that commits us to developing the capabilities of students in line with the values of the United Nations Global Compact and PRME.

### **Business and Professions**

- Engagement with business and the professions is central to Aston. It is supported by a central business engagement team who support business development, apprenticeships, engagement through research, bid development and contract negotiation. This also includes a business insight team who join up activities across the university as well as providing data on employers needs e.g. future skills requirements.
- Key accounts are managed by a specific named individual.
- Feedback is requested during a contract to ensure customer satisfaction.

### **Region and Society**

- We have an ethical investment policy to ensure that we act in a socially responsible manner when managing our investments.

### Supporting our local communities

- We will encourage our staff, students and alumni to actively and positively contribute to the local community through our Civic University Agreement commitments.
- We encourage volunteering by our students, staff and alumni.
- We transfer a portion of our apprenticeship levy funds to the WMCA to support local SMEs and charities to upskill their staff within the region.
- Our support for communities includes our commitment to Social mobility to ensure that the University is a place that anyone with ability can access and thrive. Social mobility underpins our access and participation agreement.
- We also engage with the wider community to embed sustainability. The University looks to develop partnerships with regional, national and international stakeholders in order to be a positive partner in society.
- We work with our neighbours and community partners to inspire the next generation of workforce.
- Through our outreach, public engagement, volunteering, engaged scholarship through research and impact as well as our civic activities we work to increase mutual awareness, understanding and knowledge of the university and the community to increase collaboration for mutual benefit.

### Procurement and supplier Standards

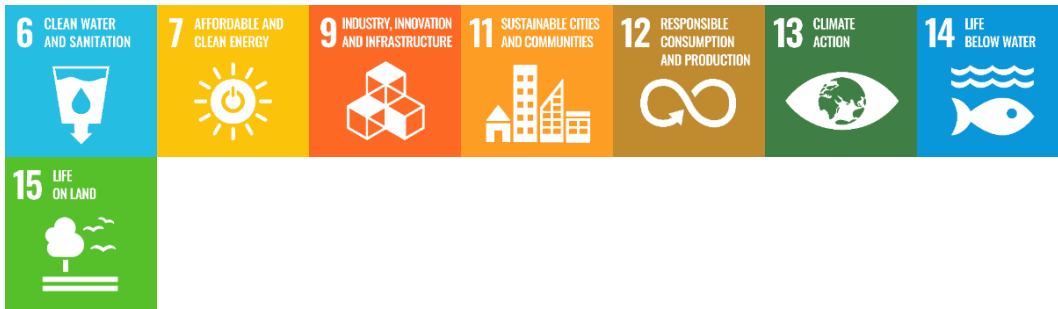
The University undertakes procurement strictly in accordance with its Procurement Policy and has processes in place to ensure use that suppliers comply with the University's compliance requirements.

### Employment practices

Our employment practices seek to maximise benefits for our local communities

- Our HR team work to support local people into Aston jobs through engagement events, apprenticeships and other forms of support.
- We ensure that we advertise our posts across a range of networks/job sites.
- We also support through our pledge of support for the armed forces covenant.

## 2.3 Supporting the Environment



The University strives to embed sustainability and corporate social responsibility into all its practices to aid its three main beneficiaries. The University's Sustainability Policy looks at reducing our impact through our operations, to make the campus more sustainable including our commitment to reducing the impact of climate change. It also focuses on sustainable development in our academic services and embedding environmental sustainability into the wider community. Our students and staff can integrate sustainable values into their daily activities now and in the future to improve theirs and the University's local and global impact. There is an active Go Green Champions (staff) network that sits within all departments, which supports staff to integrate environmental, social and economic changes within their own departmental procedures.

## 2.4 Philanthropic activities



The University undertakes the following philanthropic activities:

- Support for our students through hardship funds etc.
- Working with our alumni and friends to generate philanthropic support for students and research.
- Working with local alumni to support our civic mission.
- Sponsoring of events and activities that support SDGs that align with our civic strategy e.g. inclusion/equality diversity, social mobility.
- Encouraging colleagues across the University to volunteer or raise funds for local charities.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION**

The University is an active member of the Birmingham Anchor Network that develops projects to encourage local growth particularly through employment and procurement projects.

The University has developed a Civic University Agreement that sets out a framework of how we support our region.

The University continues to support local third sector organisations (through research projects, volunteering and public engagement activities) and active membership with Citizens UK

Work with Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnerships to positively impact on the local community.

### **4. REPORTING**

The University publishes an annual CSR impact report which will incorporate an effectiveness review of the Civic University Agreement.



Aston University  
Birmingham  
B4 7ET, UK

+44 (0)121 204 3000  
aston.ac.uk

