

Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

At Aston University our society is one of the key beneficiaries of our strategy. As part of this, we continue to be highly committed to combatting slavery and human trafficking and have undertaken a further review of our practices in this area during the 2018/2019 financial year.

Our practices continue to include the detailed due diligence of suppliers, contractors and partners, the inclusion of the necessary obligations and protections in all of our contracts with third parties and the monitoring of those contracts to ensure compliance by those third parties.

This year we have introduced a software tool to all of our suppliers to develop our assurance capability further. Our continued commitment to recognised good practice is further evidence that Aston University remains motivated to deliver on its obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.



Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

The University's Structure

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 industry, government and commerce. Aston employs 1,717 employees in the UK and has an annual turnover of £157 million turnover for F/Y 2018/2019.

Aston's academic activity is divided into five academic Schools, each of which is led and managed by a Pro-Vice Chancellor & Executive Dean: Aston Business School, School of Engineering & Applied Science, School of Languages & Social Science, School of Life & Health Sciences and Aston Medical School. Executive Directors and other officers head a number of professional support functions which provide administrative services to the University.

Aston's supply chains are managed under four "super-categories": laboratory and workshop consumables and equipment, ICT equipment and services, estates goods and services, and professional services.

The University has two wholly-owned subsidiaries operating in the UK, Conference Aston Limited and Aston Franchise Limited, and the following wholly-owned dormant subsidiaries: Optimus Energy Limited, EBRI UK Limited and Aston University Consulting Limited. References to the University for the purposes of this statement are also references to these subsidiaries.

Our Policies

The University expects all its members (individually and collectively), its collaborative partners and those providing a service to Aston to be committed to upholding The Principles of Public Life (originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life). These principles are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The University first published its Ethics Framework in October 2015. This framework was produced by the Ethics Sub-Group established by the University Council following consultation with Aston's main stakeholder groups and has been approved by the University's Council. Responsibility for oversight of the framework and issues raised rests with the Chief Operating Officer who ensures that it is reviewed annually.

We are committed to ensuring that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in our supply chains or in any part of Aston University. Our Ethics Framework reflects our commitment to act ethically and with integrity in all

our business relationships and to implement and enforce effective systems and controls to ensure slavery and human trafficking is not taking place anywhere in our supply chains.

We have in place systems to identify and assess potential risk areas in our supply chains; mitigate the risk of slavery and human trafficking occurring in our supply chains; and monitor potential risk areas in our supply chains and protect whistle blowers.

We have a zero tolerance policy to slavery and human trafficking and ensure all our contractors and all those in our supply chain comply with our values through our contractual arrangements with them. Representatives from the following departments ensure compliance with our practices: legal, governance, audit and risk, procurement and human resources, in association with representatives in the academic Schools.

Published training is available on the Ethics Framework and colleagues can request additional training at any time. Furthermore, Aston has a Speak Up Policy to ensure that members of the University feel able to raise any concerns. Aston encourages members of the University to speak up promptly if they have any reason to suspect that there has been a breach or potential breach of the University's ethical principles or any other misconduct. All concerns are treated sensitively and where possible in the strictest confidence. Aston ensures that members who raise issues of malpractice are not subject to disciplinary sanctions, victimisation, or other penalties for doing so. The University ensures that employees are aware that by coming forward and raising concerns they are doing the right thing and helping to make the University a stronger and more effective organisation.

Effectiveness and Further Steps

Aston University is satisfied with the effectiveness of the measures it has taken in the 2018/2019 financial year to combat slavery and human trafficking. The University has invested in the *Supplier Engagement Tool (HE)* from Netpositive. This software tool allows suppliers to create a Sustainability Action Plan (©Netpositive) to share with customers. All current University suppliers have been sent the tool and all new suppliers are asked to register as part of the tender process. In 2018/19 the University has increased the number of suppliers we target in order to embed risk analysis into our procurement processes, ensure supplier profiling is accurate and commodity areas susceptible to potential contravention of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 are prioritised. Further application of this process will allow the University to develop more effective strategies to reduce, and preferably eliminate, the potential for any contravention of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Statement

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes the human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 2018/2019 for the University and its subsidiaries.

Signature: 

Name: **Mr Toby Lewis**

Position: **Chair of Audit Committee**

Date: 18/11/19