

WELCOME HANDBOOK

For incoming early career researchers

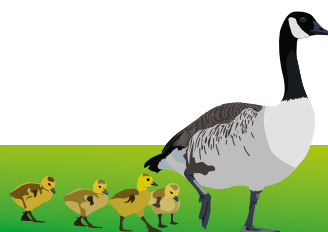


THE WORKPLACE
**WELLBEING
CHARTER**



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WELCOME TO ASTON UNIVERSITY



Welcome to Aston University. We are delighted to have you here as one of our Early Career Researchers. We hope you enjoy your time at Aston and get as much out of it as possible.

We truly value our researchers here at Aston. We recognise the great contribution that you make to our university, and there is a range of support on offer to you which is outlined in this handbook.

This handbook gives you some useful tips and information that are essential when moving to a new place and settling in. It is always useful to know what you can expect and how things work in different places, so we hope this booklet answers most of your queries.

We understand it can be quite daunting to arrive in a new city, and our team is always here to help. If you have any questions or concerns contact:

- Our Researcher Development Advisor, Dr Fatosh Eren Bilgen:
f.erenbilgen@aston.ac.uk
- Our Researcher Forum: rke-ecrforum@aston.ac.uk

We are certain you will enjoy your time as part of Aston's academic community and in Birmingham. While your research career may well mean you move on from us to another institution around the world, we hope that you will stay in touch with us; you are now part of our global Aston family. We wish you all the best.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor
Aston University



ABOUT ASTON UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1895 as the College of Advanced Technology, Aston University received its University Charter in 1966. 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.

Aston has an excellent reputation for research which shapes and improves lives. Our real-world research is impactful, collaborative, excellent and sustainable, making a substantial and beneficial difference to people, organisations and society.

Our strategy is structured around the beneficiaries of Aston University, who are the parties external to the university. Our beneficiaries are students; external organisations (businesses, public entities, the not-for-profit sector and the professions) and, the West Midlands region and wider society.

94%

of our research is World Leading or Internationally Excellent (3*/4*) in the category of Allied Health

(Research Excellence Framework 2014)



We have a strong reputation for developing highly employable graduates, who go on to positive graduate destinations with above average earnings

78%

of research submitted evaluated as 'world leading' or 'internationally recognised'

(Research Excellence Framework 2014)



Employed Aston graduates have the 15th largest median salaries in the UK five years after graduating

(Longitudinal Education Outcomes 2020)

22nd

In the UK and 70th in the World for International Outlook

(Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020)



Awarded GOLD for Teaching Excellence

(Teaching Excellence Framework 2017)

Professor Alec Cameron is our Vice-Chancellor, the principal academic and executive officer of the university. He sets the strategic direction for the university and is supported by an Executive Team.

Administratively we are comprised of three Academic Colleges, each managed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor:

- ▶ Engineering and Physical Sciences
- ▶ Health and Life Sciences
- ▶ Business and Social Sciences



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE IN BIRMINGHAM

1. Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)

Applicants need to indicate on their application form if they require a CoS. For new staff the CoS would be issued by the Aston recruitment team (HR) following successful appointment. Once issued the CoS will be valid for three months to support your visa application. It will enable you to seek permission from the UKVI to take up our offer of employment.

2. Prove your knowledge of the English language

You will NOT need to prove your English language skills if you are a UK national or have a degree from a majority native English-speaking country. (You can find the list of these countries, with more information on Tier 2 visas, at www.gov.uk/tier-2-general/knowledge-of-english). In order to prove your English language skills you need to pass an IELTS exam. The exam should be "IELTS for UKVI". This is the UKVI Approved IELTS test that displays the UKVI Unique Reference Number (URN).

3. Tuberculosis (TB) test

You need to take this test if you reside in one of the countries listed on the webpage below. It should be done in an approved clinic. However, if you have lived for at least six months in a country where TB screening is not required by the UK, then a TB test is not required. More information can be found at www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa.

4. Apply for a visa online

www.gov.uk/tier-2-general/apply.

5. Pay Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

You pay this online as a part of the visa application. Costs can be found at www.gov.uk/tier-2-general.

6. Visa fee

The costs of this will depend on your circumstances and can be found at www.gov.uk/tier-2-general.

7. Make an appointment

At a UK visa application centre you need to bring all your original documents and a photo. You book the appointment online after you have completed your visa application.

Once the CoS has been assigned it will take approximately six weeks to apply for a Visa for UK entry.

PhD students

You have to apply for a Tier 4 visa. Seek guidance from the Visa Compliance Team before you travel to the UK.

Transcript

You need a certified translation of your study title/certificate and your exams. Some universities will provide this directly in English which is sufficient. In the case that your university does not, you can visit the British Foreign Commonwealth Office website to find a list of registered certifiers.



FIRST STEPS AT ASTON

Human Resources (HR) Meeting

All new staff will be asked to attend a meeting with the Human Resources Department, the date and time will be confirmed in a letter to you. HR will ask you to bring your passport, education certificates and other documents to the meeting - it is very important you do this. HR will take copies of your documents and you cannot start work until the checks on your documents are completed by HR. All new starters must bring this documentation to be checked before any work starts, regardless of whether you are a UK, EU or other national. This meeting is a good opportunity to ask any questions or to request any employment confirmation documents you might need. You will also need to confirm details of the bank account into which your salary will be paid. For any questions contact: **HR_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk**.

At the meeting you will be given a form which you need to take to the IT Services helpdesk for them to issue you with an ID card. This will give you access to restricted areas of the university such as the library and any work areas which require swipe card access.

Introduction to your school/department

Your line manager should introduce you to your school or department, show you your office and introduce you to the systems and people in the school - this also includes your email and university intranet account. You should receive the information of your username, password and payroll number from HR in a separate confidential email. Our induction intranet page can be found at **aston.ac.uk/induction**.

Further arrival information for international researchers

Police registration for international researchers

You may need to register your ID and accommodation address (temporary/permanent). It must be done in the first week of arrival. Moreover, any change of address or visa status must be reported during your stay in the UK within seven days. Please use this link to find out whether or not you need to register:

www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police

Police registration must be made by appointment only via the following website: **www.west-midlands.police.uk/advice-centre/help-and-advice/overseas-visitor-registration/index.aspx**

Note: There is no difference between types of visa to do this procedure.

Getting mobile phone access

There are a number of different networks that you can choose from. They all have different packages and vary in price. SIM-only deals are usually the cheapest ones and often work on a rolling monthly contract basis. You can also get 'Pay as You Go' SIM cards from a number of providers where you top up every time you need credit on your phone. You can use uSwitch as a starting point. It compares different packages and deals from different networks in the UK.



ACCOMMODATION

Finding accommodation

Finding suitable accommodation can be challenging. Searching online allows you make comparisons and you can apply filters to the various options to find the accommodation that suits you and your budget. The websites listed below will help you to compare prices and find exactly what you are looking for.

www.rightmove.co.uk

www.zoopla.co.uk

www.gumtree.com

www.spareroom.com

www.openrent.co.uk

How to go about it

Most properties online will be managed through an agency; in rare cases you will be dealing directly with the landlord or landlady. Letting agencies are no longer legally allowed to charge you administrative fees (www.gov.uk/government/collections/tenant-fees-act), but will typically ask for a refundable tenancy deposit (capped at no more than five weeks' rent). It is important to be cautious in agreeing to any substantial rent payments in advance. We advise that you do not accept any offer paying more than 1-2 months in advance because you could be held in a contract you don't want. Furthermore, if you have not seen the apartment in person, the best thing to do is to try and arrange try to arrange a one-month agreement or sign when you arrive. Alternatively, you can arrange temporary accommodation (there are affordable hostels in Birmingham) and this will give you the opportunity to find and view, apartments locally.

Getting set up before starting to rent

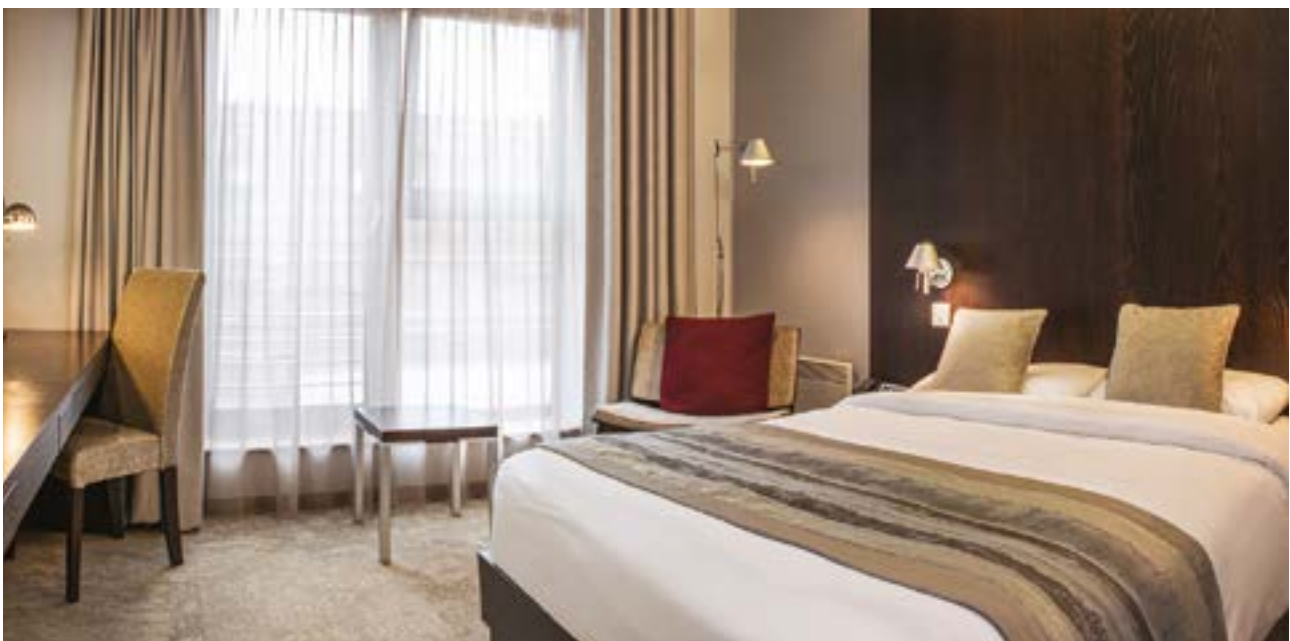
AirBnB can also be a good option to stay for several days or weeks while you are searching for more permanent accommodation: Airbnb.co.uk.

There are also some local hotels for short-term stays:

- ▶ Conference Aston Hotel, The Aston Triangle, Birmingham B4 7ET is on campus (image below)
- ▶ Holiday Inn Express Birmingham - Snow Hill, 1 St. Chads Queensway, Birmingham B4 6HY is within walking distance of Aston University
- ▶ Premier Inn, Birmingham Central East, Richard Street Waterlinks, Birmingham B7 4AA is within walking distance of the university
- ▶ Hatters Hostel, 92-95 Livery Street, Birmingham B3 1RJ, within walking distance of the university
- ▶ Birmingham Central Backpackers, 58 Coventry Street, Birmingham B5 5NH

The safest approach is to seek advice from our Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) team at the Students' Union. They have a website that helps to find available accommodation through approved landlords. The ARC can also send you a housing leaflet with very useful information. Another useful link is www.astonstudenthomes.org/Accommodation. For more help and advice from the ARC, please call +44 (0)121 204 4848 or email advice@aston.ac.uk.

They are there to help with any concerns you may have, look at your lease with you and offer any suggestions on the landlord or agency you are applying through. They can also provide you with hotel/hostel information as well as a list of landlords who have indicated that they may be able to offer short-term lets.



Recommended areas to live

There are a number of things you should take into account when searching for accommodation. These include: good access to transportation (buses/trains/trams); proximity to Aston University; access to shops and local amenities; local nurseries/schools; general safety of the neighbourhood and crime rates.

Options available

Shared accommodation: In Birmingham it is common to share a flat or a house with one to six other housemates. Some of these houses have bathrooms included as an ensuite. Others have a shared bathroom.

Private accommodation: Private apartments and studios can be found throughout Birmingham, mainly in the city centre. Private houses can be found a little further out in the suburbs.

- ▶ **Five Ways:** Close to the city centre; very well connected with bus and train links (20 minute journey from the university by public transport); shops nearby.
- ▶ **Moseley:** Very nice bohemian community area of Birmingham with many independent shops/pubs/restaurants. Good for families and young people. Transport needed (15 minute car journey/ 25 minute cycle/35 minutes on public transport).
- ▶ **City Centre (Jewellery Quarter, Chinese Quarter, and city centre):** Perfect for city lovers, very convenient for transport or shopping and extremely close to the university. Higher budget needed and expect apartments with less space.
- ▶ **Edgbaston:** Large family houses, higher budget. In comparison, North of Hagley Road.

Areas to be cautious about due to potential security concerns: Hagley Road, south of the Chinese Quarter, Hockley, Smethwick, Ladywood. If you would like advice, please feel free to contact the ARC team on **+44 (0)121 204 4848 / advice@aston.ac.uk**



Paying your accommodation bills in the UK

Bills to be paid in the UK include: electricity, gas, water, internet, TV licence and Council Tax. In shared housing, you can find contracts with all bills included or you can share bills among housemates. Typically, contracts begin as fixed-term (3 month, 6 month or 12 month) and often they will go onto rolling contract. In cases of private accommodation, you may need to set up bills yourself - typically your landlord will be able to advise you on this.

COUNCIL TAX

What is council tax?

The council tax is set by local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to pay for local services, such as rubbish collection, the police and the fire brigade. It is based on the value of the dwelling (house, flat, or other accommodation) in which you live.

The council tax for a dwelling depends on its value and the number of adults living there. Note – Your landlord would be able to give you advice on whether you will be paying council tax. Don't forget to ask.

How is the bill calculated?

The council tax bill is calculated on two elements:

1. The value of the dwelling
2. The number of adult residents

The local authority puts each dwelling into one of eight 'bands', A-H, according to value. Band A is the lowest and Band H is the highest.

You can check your dwelling's band online at **www.direct.gov.uk**

Exemptions and discounts

- ▶ If you are a full-time student then you are fully exempt from council tax.
- ▶ If you live alone, you are also eligible to 25% discount to your council tax.
- ▶ There may be other discounts if you are professionals that have students living in your house. You can find out more at: **www.birmingham.gov.uk/ctdiscounts**.

Payment for council tax can be via direct debit or direct payment.

TV LICENCE

You must have a TV licence to watch or record live TV programmes, irrespective of what channel you're watching and what device you are using (TV, computer, laptop, mobile phone or any other device).

A TV licence costs £157.50 a year, for both homes and businesses.

A single TV licence covers all of the following in a single property:

- ▶ TV sets
- ▶ Computers
- ▶ Laptops
- ▶ Tablets
- ▶ Mobile phones
- ▶ Any other device that can receive a TV signal
- ▶ You need a TV licence to download or watch BBC programmes on demand, including catch up TV on BBC iPlayer

You can be fined up to £1,000 if you watch or record live TV without a TV licence. In some cases you will need more than one TV licence if you share a property and pay individually for your own rooms. The tenancy agreement on your property is often a good indication of this.

You can pay for your TV licence online and check whether you need a TV licence on the official website: **www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one?WT.ac=home_plt_check**



CAREER PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aston University takes the professional development of its staff very seriously and is committed to the national 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'. The Concordat is an agreement supported by the UK Research Councils and implemented by universities across the UK. It lays down a set of principles for the support and management of research careers, ensuring that universities share good practice and that they put in place mechanisms to support the career aspirations of researchers. The Concordat also emphasises the responsibility of researchers to take control of their careers and to be supported in making informed decisions about their professional development.

The university holds the HR Excellence in Research award, in recognition of its excellent work in promoting the support of Early Career Researchers.

Details of the Concordat can be found here: aston.ac.uk/research-award

Vitae

Vitae is a national organisation dedicated to the career development of researchers. It is responsible for ensuring that universities in the UK adhere to the Concordat and promotes best practice across universities. The Vitae web site provides a range of valuable resources for researchers at all stages of their careers and offers support for their line-managers and for supervisors of research students. These resources include guidance for supporting and supervising researchers with a disability. The Vitae website also offers a useful free online course in career management and planning (PDP-ROC), alongside short descriptions of 150 "researcher career stories".

Aston University is a member of Vitae. This means that Aston staff can access the resources on the Vitae web site and can create a login. By inserting their university email address, the Vitae website automatically recognises that Aston staff belong to a member institution and will give them access to Vitae resources. For more information go to: www.vitae.ac.uk

For example: by creating an account with Vitae, Aston researchers are able to access this useful on-line careers planning course:

Professional Development Planning for Researchers Online Course (PDP-ROC) - www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/professional-development-planning-for-researchers-online-course-pdp-roc

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is a comprehensive tool aimed at supporting researchers in planning their personal and professional development. By articulating the important personal qualities, transferable skills and competencies which employers value among postdoctoral employees, the RDF offers a sound basis for productive discussions with managers and mentors. It can guide researchers with early career planning and management by helping them to make better choices about formal training courses, workshops and other professional development opportunities they should choose.

Researchers can use Vitae resources to position themselves to apply for fellowships, lectureships and other senior posts in Higher Education, as well as high level positions in other employment sectors.

For more about the Researcher Development Framework please see: www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/researcher-development-framework-rdf-vitae.pdf/view

Researchers, in discussion with their line managers, supervisors or mentors (see below) can draw up a list of professional development opportunities which match their goals and the interests which they would like to pursue. These opportunities may include conferences, workshops and training courses, online courses and webinars. Whilst funding is often required for attendance at academic conferences and courses outside the university, generic skills training courses are available to Aston University staff and research students free of charge.



Booking training courses online

To support the career development of researchers, Aston University offers a variety of free staff training courses and development programmes. These include opportunities to obtain formal qualifications in management and teaching as well as professional development workshops for university research students, staff and managers.

Staff can manage their own course bookings and managers can book their employees onto training events, guide their professional development and view their training record.

Mandatory training courses include Cyber Security, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Equality and Diversity and Prevent. These are found on Blackboard.

Find out which staff development courses are available: **aston.ac.uk/development**

Training courses can be booked via the Aston Staff Portal. Research staff can obtain full access to the Aston Staff Portal once their staff username and password has been generated by the HR team.

Digital services offer a range of IT related courses which can be found at: **aston.ac.uk/it-training**

For Early Career Researchers (ECRs) there is a team responsible for developing, planning, organising and delivering professional development activities and opportunities for ECRs at Aston University. The university's website has all the information on training activities, opportunities and resources that Aston offers to support their career development. **aston.ac.uk/ecr**

Resources and Support for Researchers with a Disability can be found here: **www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/every-researcher-counts-equality-and-diversity-in-researcher-careers/resources-and-support-for-disabled-researchers**

For more information about any of these resources, please contact: Dr Fatosh Eren Bilgen, Researcher Development Advisor at **f.erenbilgen@aston.ac.uk**.

Careers guidance online resources

A range of additional useful on-line Careers planning resources can be found here:

Vitae Careers Guidance:
www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers

Job seeking tips:
www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/jobseeking-tips

Guidance on writing your CV:
www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/cv-templates

Mentoring for researchers

The university has a mentoring scheme aimed at helping researchers to identify a suitable mentor, who is well placed to offer careers support and general guidance about their professional development. For more information please discuss with your PI or line manager, and see: **aston.ac.uk/mentoring**

ECR Forum - Early Career Researcher Forum

The Early Career Researcher Forum meets regularly during the year. It provides an opportunity for Early Career Researchers to shape the research environment and organise activities which support their professional development and career planning. An annual event is held each year in September and there is a range of lunch time seminars and training events, organised throughout the year, based on suggestions from research staff. Research and Knowledge Exchange also holds informal coffee mornings and networking opportunities.

For further information please contact the Early Career Researcher Forum **rke-ecrforum@aston.ac.uk**

UNIVERSITY FACILITIES

Sport Aston

As a member of staff you can get great discounts at The Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre. This includes discounted access to:

- ▶ Gym facilities
- ▶ Swimming pool and sauna
- ▶ Exercise classes

For more information on the sports membership and classes that are available go to: aston.ac.uk/sport

What's on campus?



All our student accommodation



All lecture theatres, seminar rooms and labs



A well-equipped library open 7 days a week



Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Centre



On campus drop-in doctors' surgery, an opticians and dental surgery located in the Vision Sciences Building



Extensive IT facilities - often with 24 hour access - and Wi-Fi internet access available across campus



Sports facilities



24 hour cashpoints

There are also many other benefits you can access as a staff member such as:

- ▶ The employee travel scheme
- ▶ Staff volunteering
- ▶ Aston Campus Wildlife Group
- ▶ Family and childcare
- ▶ Car park scheme
- ▶ Cycle to work scheme

Pension scheme

Aston University also offers the pension scheme, to which all employees grades 7 and above are automatically enrolled. If your contract is pensionable you are automatically a member of the scheme unless you opt out. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is a tax-efficient way to save for your retirement.

Quick overview of its features:

- ▶ A regular income for the rest of your life
- ▶ Tax-free cash
- ▶ Immediate life cover
- ▶ Incapacity cover
- ▶ Pension increases
- ▶ A significant contribution from your employer
- ▶ Pay more and get more
- ▶ Early retirement

You can find more information about the USS pension scheme on our website: aston.ac.uk/uss

For further information please visit: www.uss.co.uk

You can also contact the Pensions and Employee Benefits Administrator for more details: pensionsandbenefits@aston.ac.uk

Nursery and childcare facilities

Aston has many family friendly policies which help you keep the balance between your work and family life.

Aston has its own day nursery with places for 104 children aged from three months to five years. The nursery and pre-school have now moved to brand new purpose-built building. It is based on Coleshill Street, just a short distance from the Birmingham city centre and easily accessible via public or private transport. Each of the four nurseries have direct access to the carefully landscaped garden with a separate zone for under 2's. This will provide the opportunity for investigation and exploration and support all areas of learning as well as provide space for running, jumping, riding bikes and climbing. For further information on the brand new nursery please contact the nursery on: +44 (0)121 204 4562 or email nurseryenquiries@aston.ac.uk.

Also, if you have any questions or queries about childcare in general then please contact Human Resources at HR_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk or +44 (0)121 204 4500.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety induction training courses

The general university Health and Safety induction material can be found within the university's Health and Safety Awareness and the Fire Safety Awareness e-learning training courses.

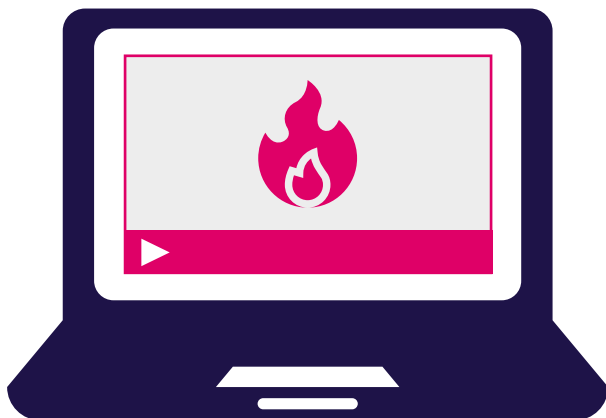
These courses are mandatory and should be done within a few weeks of joining the university. The links can be found within the staff portal on Core, under Training.

Local fire safety and more specific Health and Safety information should be provided during local induction. Further information can be obtained from the local School/Professional Health and Safety Coordinator or the Health and Safety Unit and Business Partners for the Colleges via safety@aston.ac.uk.

Fire and safety

The effects of fire can be damaging in terms of lives lost and injuries, to equipment and property, the environment, the business and its reputation. Good management of fire safety is essential to ensure that fires are unlikely; that if they do occur, they are likely to be controlled and contained quickly, effectively and safely, or that, everyone is able to escape safely, easily and quickly.

As mentioned above, please review the Fire Awareness Course on Blackboard and watch the Aston University Fire Safety video found by clicking the link below: youtu.be/owvq6e9KJgA



Emergency and fire evacuation procedure

In case of a fire alarm, please leave the building immediately using the nearest available fire exit and report to the designated fire assembly point.

Designated fire/emergency assembly points

- ▶ Main Building and South Wing/North Wing - CAR PARK 12 (covered car park underneath the football pitch)
- ▶ Vision Sciences, Aston Day Hospital, Library, Aston Student Union, Woodcock Sports Centre, and all Residences Buildings – FOUNTAIN AREA IN FRONT OF MAIN BUILDING.
- ▶ Nelson Building (Aston Business School) - 'amphitheatre' adjacent to Aston Student Union

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

A PEEP is an agreed evacuation plan which contains all required information to ensure safe egress from a building by an individual requiring assistance to leave the building in an emergency.

If you have special needs, or may find it difficult to evacuate the building in an emergency, you should complete a PEEP Self-Assessment form on arrival at the university obtained by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Upon completion your PEEP document will be reviewed by the fire safety advisor, who will contact you either to confirm your PEEP arrangements or to discuss your PEEP needs with you.

For more information on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans please contact the Health and Safety Unit by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Fire Alarm and Fire Alarm Testing

Every Thursday in the Main Building the fire alarm is tested four times between the hours of 0830 - 0900. These tests should last no longer than 15 seconds. Should the alarm continue for longer than 15 seconds you should follow the evacuation procedure, as shown in the Fire Safety Video.

For all other buildings you must contact the reception staff for that building to confirm when the test is undertaken.

If you have any queries or concerns you can contact David White, Fire Safety Advisor:
+44 121 204 4805 / d.a.white@aston.ac.uk

Please be aware that smoking or vaping is NOT permitted inside or within 5 metres of an opening of any university Building

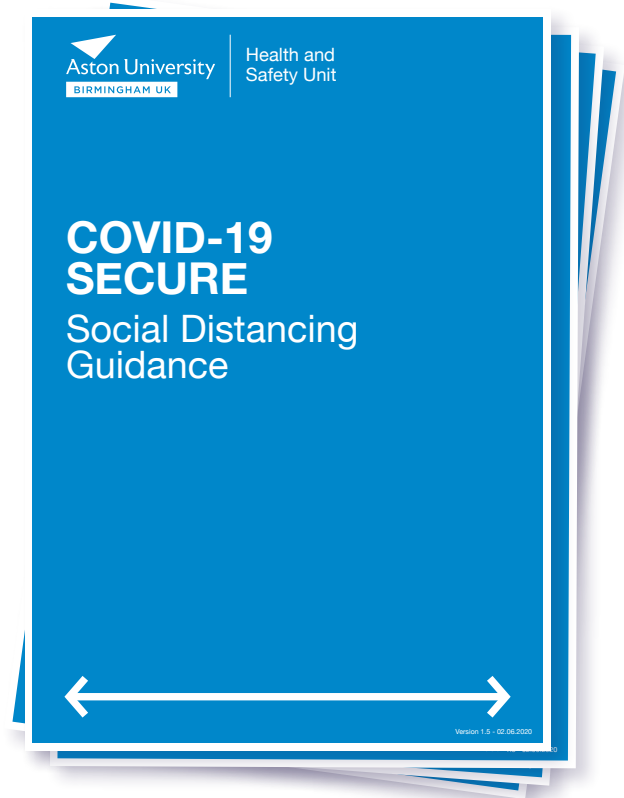
COVID-19 SECURE social distancing guidance

The university Health and Safety Unit has developed guidance to minimise risk and to enable staff and students to work safely in a COVID-19 secure environment.

This guidance is available on the university website. It includes information on:

- ▶ Lone working and the use of Safezone Mobile App (check in - strongly recommended)
- ▶ Access routes to and from buildings
- ▶ Use of PPE
- ▶ Corridors, staircases and lifts
- ▶ Customer service desks
- ▶ Open plan and shared offices
- ▶ Use of kitchens and toilets
- ▶ Labs and workshops.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Unit: safety@aston.ac.uk.



SafeZone

SafeZone is a free app for Aston students and staff to enhance their personal safety.

It ensures you are able to easily connect with members of the Aston Campus Safety Team.



HEALTH

We recommend registration with a local doctor and dentist. To find your local doctor or dentist, please visit the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital is the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department to the university.

There is a doctor (GP), dentist, sexual health and walk-in centre located at Lower Ground Floor, 67-69 High St, Birmingham B4 7TA.

Henderson's Dental Surgery (entrance on the south side of the Health Clinics building) make a small charge for an assessment and provide advice on whether further treatment can be offered at Hendersons or whether you need to be referred elsewhere such as to a NHS practice.

More health information for international researchers

The National Health Service

The NHS was launched in 1948. It was born out of a long-held ideal that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth - one of NHS's core principles. With the exception of some charges, such as prescriptions, optical services and dental services, the NHS in England remains free at the point of use for all UK residents. The NHS in England covers everything. Funding for the NHS comes directly from taxation.

Registering with a doctor or dentist

In the UK, you must register yourself into a doctor's surgery and dentist of your choice. Registration is completely free of charge if you can provide your proof of residency and work contract.

To find your local doctor (often referred to as a general practitioner (GP) or dentist, please visit the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/service-search

During registration you will be asked to show your Aston University offer letter or enrolment letter.

It could be the case that at that particular time periods some doctors or dentists do not have space to register new NHS patients, so you may need to go to more than one place before you find somewhere you can register.

A visit to the doctors is free. However, there are some charges for prescriptions. The current prescription charge is £9.15 per item. A three month prescription prepayment certificate (PPC) is £29.65 and could save you money if you need more than three prescribed items in 3 months.

A 12 month PPC costs around £105.90 (see website for current costs) and could save you money if you need more than 12 prescribed items in a year. To find out more about PPCs please visit www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/2600.aspx?categoryid=68&subcategoryid=161

Prescriptions are easy to collect from any local pharmacy.

For more information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions about prescriptions you can visit: www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Prescriptioncosts.aspx

Contraception in the UK is always free.

Visits to Sexual Health Clinics offer a completely free treatment as well as free contraception. The closest Sexual Health Clinic near Aston University is: Lower Ground Floor, 67-69 High St, Birmingham B4 7TA.

In order to get treatment in psycho-therapy, counselling, physiotherapy etc. you will require a referral from your GP. The way to go about getting an appointment with a specialist is to firstly book an appointment with your GP.

Emergency health information for international researchers

Emergencies: In the event of a campus emergency contact Campus Safety at ext 2222 or 0121 204 4803

Aston makes use of the 'safezone' app - a free safety and security app designed to optimize safety around campus for students and staff. Visit aston.ac.uk/safezone for further details.

In a medical emergency, you should telephone 999 and you will be put through to Police/Ambulance/Fire. This is a free call.

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital is the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department to the university. If you have an accident or an urgent problem that needs treatment as soon as possible you can go to the A&E department - you do not need to make an appointment, but you may have to wait for more than an hour before being seen by a doctor due to the long queues. Treatment in an A&E is always free. However, this service should only be used in emergencies and for serious injuries. Minor injuries can be treated in your local pharmacy.

There is also the NHS 111 telephone number, for when medical advice is needed urgently but it is not life threatening. The call is free and a team of medical advisors will listen to your symptoms and direct you to what help you need. They could advise you to go to an out of hour's clinic that is close to your location.



Emergency



**Non-emergency
medical**



**Emergency that
works on mobile
phones anywhere
in the world**



**Non-emergency
for the police**

TRAVELLING TO THE UNIVERSITY

Travelling by public transport



Buses

Being located so close to the city centre has its benefits. One of these benefits is that travelling to the university by public transport is fairly easy and many bus routes pass through or near campus. Termly bus passes are available and offer good value for money.

To plan out journeys and find bus routes, the best place to visit is the National Express West Midlands website nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands/plan-your-journey

You can pay by contactless card or in cash (correct change is required).

The university is committed to reducing its environmental impact and has a bus, rail (regional travel) and combined public transport discount scheme, where staff can purchase an annual pass at a discount.



Coach

Coach services, including motorway services to London, operate from Digbeth coach station, which is a short taxi ride or 20 minutes' walk from the campus through the city centre.

To plan your journey visit nationalexpress.co.uk or call National Express enquiries: +44(0)990 80 80 80.



Train

Just a 10 minute walk from Aston is Birmingham New Street Station, a major rail hub with links across the country - perfect for visiting friends or travelling home. The station has direct lines to most major cities and many local services.

Moor Street and Snow Hill train stations are both within 10 minutes walking distance of campus.

You can check train timetables online, and don't forget that if you're 25 or under, you're eligible for a Young Person's Rail Card, which can save you up to a third on train fares. If you are 25-30 you're eligible for a Millennial Rail Card, which also saves you up to a third on train fares.



Metro

The metro runs between Birmingham Library and Wolverhampton city centre. The closest stop is a 10 minute walk from campus on Bull Street. The trams run every 7 minutes in peak times. You can pay with cash or card on the tram or with the My Metro app.

Travelling by private transport for international researchers

If you wish to drive a car in the UK then you MUST ensure that you have a driving licence valid for use in the UK. It is illegal and a criminal offence to drive in the UK without a valid licence. It is very important that you check the latest guidelines on the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) website:

www.dft.gov.uk/dvla. You must also make sure that you have a valid motor insurance cover and that the vehicle you are driving has a valid tax disc. Remember: All traffic in the UK drives on the left.

Parking at the university

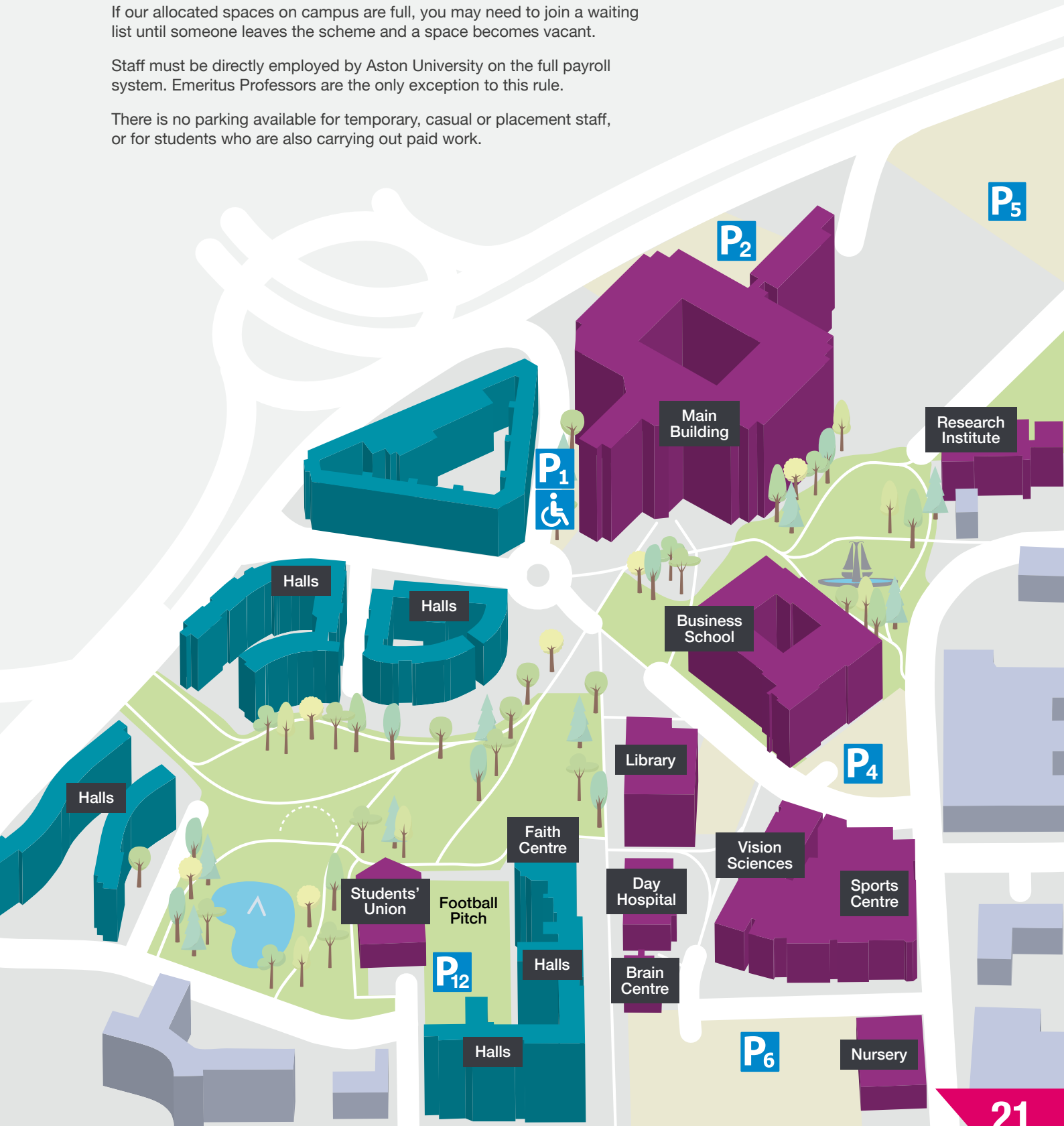
Car parking scheme

If you wish to join the staff car parking scheme to use on campus car parking, you will need to apply online via the staff intranet. Visit aston.ac.uk/staff-parking for details.

If our allocated spaces on campus are full, you may need to join a waiting list until someone leaves the scheme and a space becomes vacant.

Staff must be directly employed by Aston University on the full payroll system. Emeritus Professors are the only exception to this rule.

There is no parking available for temporary, casual or placement staff, or for students who are also carrying out paid work.



OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

General Information

Do I need a bank account?

Having a UK bank account is essential if you are living in the UK for more than six months. If you need to make a visa extension application in the UK, it is often easier using statements from a UK account than having to use documents from an overseas account.

How do I open an account?

Santander is the only Bank that is located on Campus. We advise that you open a bank account on the university campus if you are not UK national, as international colleagues have found it more straightforward to organize the documentation with them. There are a number of different banks that are located near the university. These include: Barclays Bank PLC, TSB Bank PLC, Bank of China, HSBC, Halifax, NatWest and Nationwide.

If you are an international researcher, you need to bring

1. Proof of Address
2. Letter from the university
3. Passport
4. You may be asked to provide statements of utility bills.

UK Banking Terminology

Cash Card - this can only be used to withdraw cash from cash machines (ATMs)

Debit Card - this can be used to withdraw money at cash machines (ATMs) or to make payments to businesses e.g. shops, restaurants, cinemas. Many debit cards can also be used for online purchases. Debit card payments come directly from your account.

Credit Card - this can be used to withdraw cash at a cash machines (ATMs) or to make payments to the businesses, be it offline or online. By using a credit card, you are borrowing the money to pay for the item from the credit card company. At the end of the month you will be sent a bill. If you do not pay the bill in full and on time, interest will be charged on what you owe. The interest rates on Credit Cards are very high, so it is a very expensive way to borrow money.

You have to have a credit history of a least 6 months in order to apply for a credit card. The bank will use this credit history to determine whether you are eligible.

Cheque Book - this allows you to make a payment by completing a cheque. This is a fairly archaic and uncommon way of paying and increasingly, businesses are no longer accepting cheques.

Standing order - a way of setting up a regular, fixed payment from your bank account. Setting up a payment to be taken at a certain frequency (for example the 1st of each month) for a set amount of time, such as six months. Your payments will consist of money set at an amount chosen by you.

You can normally set up a standing order by:

- ▶ Completing a standing order form and giving it to your bank or
- ▶ Setting up the standing order in branch, over the phone or using online banking

Direct Debit - this is when you give authority to someone to claim money from your account. The amount of money can vary – in amount and frequency. By agreeing to a direct debit you give instruction to your bank to allow money to be taken from your account. Common uses for direct debits are bill payments made to the university for accommodation and tuition fees, payments for your TV licence, gym membership, mobile phone contracts, gas, water and electricity bills. If you were to sign up for any direct debits you would receive a letter of confirmation.

There can sometimes be a confusion between a direct debit and a standing order.

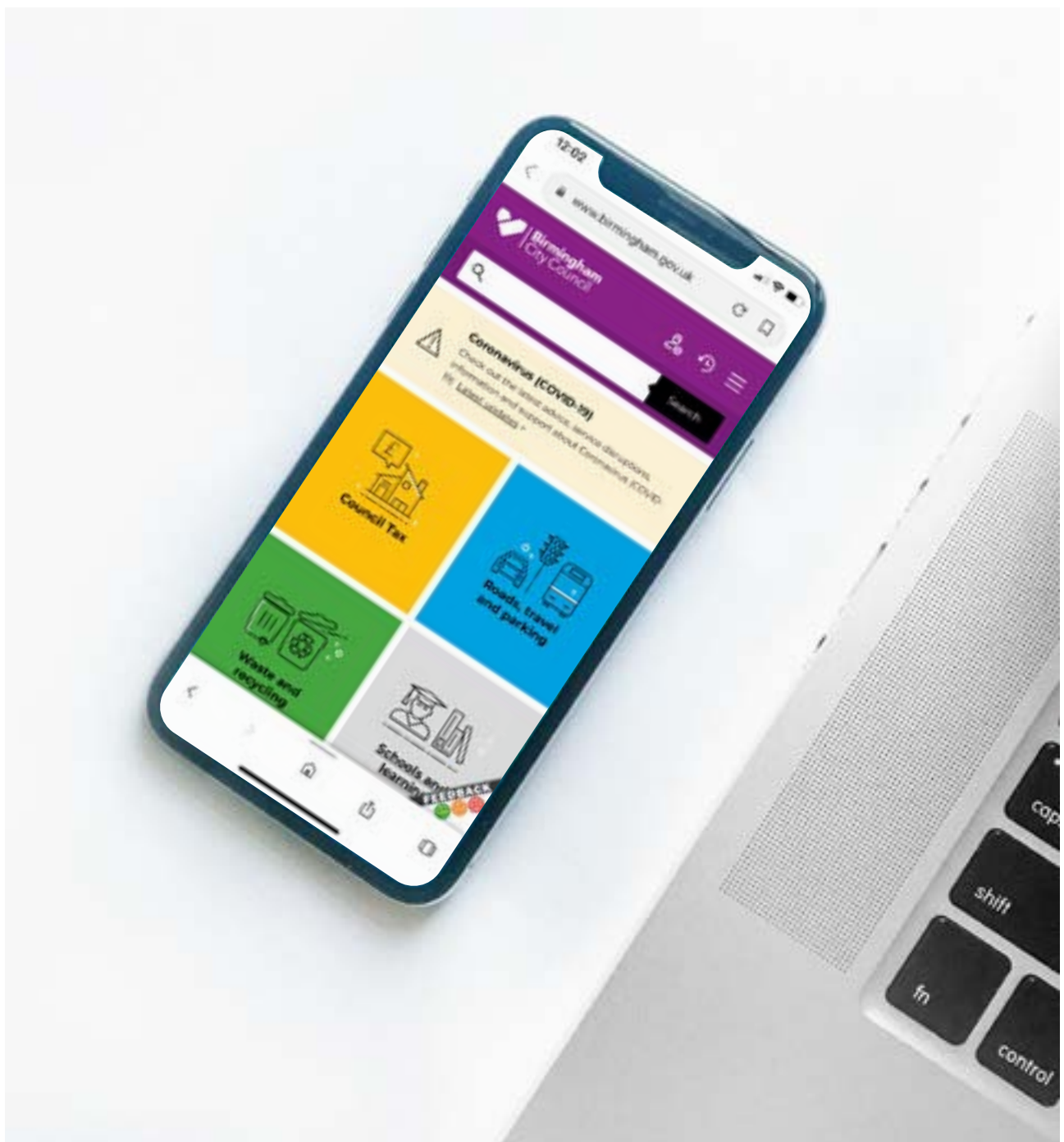
Essentially a standing order is an instruction to your bank, whereas a direct debit gives permission to a company to take money from you. You are the only person who can change the date or payment amount on your standing order. This is the main difference to a direct debit.

Overdraft facility - this is when a bank allows you to take out money you do not have in your account. This is a type of loan and interest is often charged. Few banks offer this facility to non-UK residents.

SOME EXTRA HELP

There are some useful websites out there that could provide further help:

- ▶ 'Internations' has a number of different articles which address different topics about moving to, living in and working in Birmingham. Many newcomers have found these articles extremely useful as they go through many different aspects of living in the UK. This can be found at: **www.internations.org/birmingham-expats/guide**
- ▶ Birmingham City Council offer a guide for moving to the city: **www.birmingham.gov.uk/welcometobirmingham**
- ▶ A very useful cost of living tool is 'Numbeo', which includes a comparison to the cost of living in various cities around the world. It has the average prices of housing, meals, transport, etc. in Birmingham. **www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Birmingham**
- ▶ For International Researchers: Questions about taxes? The HM Revenue and Customs provides some information on how working and paying taxes in the UK works: **www.gov.uk/tax-come-to-uk**



DIRECTORY

Human Resources

✉ hr_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk

☎ 0121 204 4500

HR provides: Professional and advisory support to Schools and Departments, payroll services, equality and diversity, organisational development.

General Office

You can get in touch with all the different schools by contacting this number. You will be put through by reception.

☎ 0121 204 3000 / Ext. 3000

Campus Safety

☎ 0121 204 4803 / Ext. 4803 / Ext. 2922

☎ In an emergency dial ext 2222

✉ campussafety@aston.ac.uk

🌐 aston.ac.uk/about/campus-safety

📱 Safezone, our campus safety app is available here

Digital Services

🌐 solve.aston.ac.uk/tas/public/ssp

✉ servicedesk@aston.ac.uk

Estates

Helpdesk (Problems with your office/working space)

✉ estates_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk

Mark Atkins (Contact for specific room set-up/layout)

✉ m.w.atkins@aston.ac.uk

Room Bookings on Campus

✉ teaching-operations@aston.ac.uk

🌐 To view all rooms: learning-spaces.tlc.aston.ac.uk

Catering

✉ nourish@aston.ac.uk

🌐 Booking form: aston.ac.uk/staff/catering/cibofresco

Pensions

Peter Brookes

✉ p.c.brookes@aston.ac.uk

☎ 0121 204 4582

For more staff contacts please visit the staff intranet page once a log in has been assigned to you: aston.ac.uk/staff