



# Management Essentials Handbook

# Contents

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Welcome	03
Purpose	04
Supporting framework	05
Strategy	06
Role expectations	07
Developing my network	08
Systems	09
My development journey	10-14
Development and career plan	15
My learning diary	16-17
Useful links and resources	18
Glossary of terms	19



# Welcome

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Dear Colleague,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you as a new leader at Aston University. We have a strong ethos of collegiality, inclusion and support. So I am delighted that you have chosen us for the next stage in your career.

In recognition of you becoming a manager at Aston we would like to invite you to access our Management Essentials Programme, developed to support you in all aspects of your role as a manager and leader.

Whether you are new to the academic profession, new to Aston, or whether you come to us from a different sector altogether, there is always a process of acclimatisation to the structures, procedures and values of a new organisation.

No matter what our role is in the University we all have the opportunity to make a difference and to help transform the lives of our students and beneficiaries.

Yours sincerely



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Are you new to Aston? Have you seen our 'New to Aston' page:  
[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/new-employees](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/new-employees)

# Purpose

## So what is Management Essentials?

Management Essentials is a framework offering guidance and support for all managers, new and existing, academic and professional support to master the systems, skills and behaviours you need to know and move yourself, your team and Aston University forward.

Feedback from focus groups highlighted the need for a consistent reference point for all managers, whatever their level and whether they were academic or professional support.

Managers also requested that the guidance and support was both structured and flexible in order to support those at the beginning of their management journey and those who just needed to update and refresh.

The information in this handbook provides everything you need to start you on your journey and support you in being an effective manager.

## What can you expect to find in this handbook?



# Supporting framework

Within Management Essentials we have developed this framework to support managers with all elements of their role. Feedback tells us there is a lot to learn and sometimes it is difficult to know where to start and where to go to find what a manager needs to do their job effectively. The framework is divided into four key areas which are knowledge, business skills, people skills - the what, people skills - the how.



## Knowledge

- ▶ The handbook
- ▶ One stop intranet
- ▶ Your development
- ▶ Management forums



## Business skills

- ▶ Finance and budgets
- ▶ Health and safety for managers
- ▶ Project and change
- ▶ Risk and decision making
- ▶ Key performance indicators (KPIs) and quality



## People skills - The what?

- ▶ Policies and procedures
- ▶ Recruitment and selection/Probation
- ▶ Equality and diversity
- ▶ My Development Conversation (MDC) – the process and the system
- ▶ Managing your team



## People skills - The how?

- ▶ Having adult to adult conversation
- ▶ My Development Conversations (MDC)
- ▶ Manager as coach
- ▶ Managing performance improvement
- ▶ Difficult conversations
- ▶ Negotiation and influence



Underpinned and supported by coaching and mentoring and Action Learning Sets (ALS):

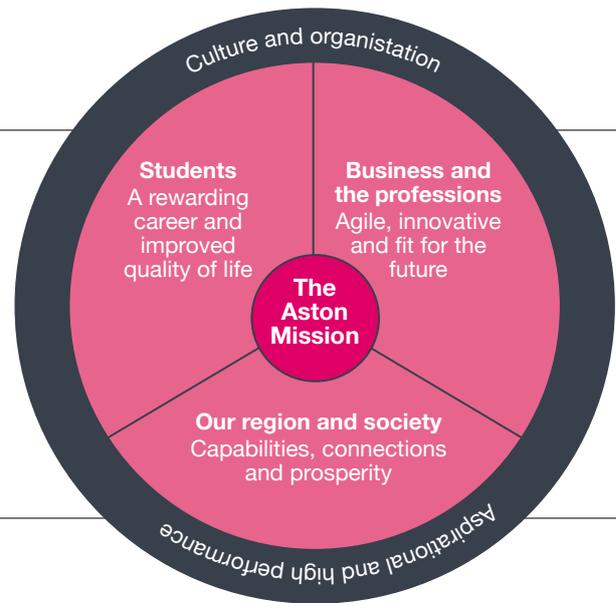
**Coaching:** [www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development/coaching](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development/coaching)

**Mentoring:** [www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development/mentoring](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development/mentoring)

# Strategy

The strategy at Aston has been deliberately framed differently from most other Universities.

It is structured around the beneficiaries of Aston University who are the parties external to the University and who we exist to serve. Beneficiaries are categorised into students, external organisations (business & the professions) and the Birmingham and West Midlands Region.



## Mission

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.

## Vision

In 2023 Aston will have an international reputation for delivery of outstanding graduate outcomes and equipping business and communities with the skills for future success.



Do you know what is in your school/department strategy and plan?

How do you fit in and what is your accountability in the delivery of the strategy?



For a full Aston Strategy 2018-2023 please visit:  
[www.aston.ac.uk/about/strategy](http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/strategy)

## Our values

PROFESSIONAL AND AMBITIOUS

INNOVATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE

ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE

## Our behaviours

BE YOUR BEST SELF

MAKE IT HAPPEN

STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP

THINK BIG, THINK WIDE

SERVE OUR BENEFICIARIES



In order to bring our strategy alive for all staff at Aston University, we need to ensure all My Development Conversation (MDC) Priorities provide a clear line of sight back to Aston's strategy, values and behaviours.



For a full Behaviour Framework visit:  
[www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/documents/hr/policies-guidance/Behaviour%20Framework.pdf](http://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/documents/hr/policies-guidance/Behaviour%20Framework.pdf)

# Role expectations

It doesn't matter what level manager or whether you lead a team in professional support services or a head of department (HoD) in a school, all managers are key to the success of the University. These expectations apply to all managers.

- ▶ Be a role model and a member of the management team, representing the department in informing and delivering the strategy and objectives.
- ▶ Encourage and develop innovations and continuous improvement.
- ▶ Have an overview of all activities within the department or team.
- ▶ To provide leadership to the workforce and the coordination of activities including identifying and implementing new opportunities.
- ▶ Setting clear priorities and monitor progress using the appropriate tools.  
([www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/mdc](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/mdc))
- ▶ Manage gaps in performance, empowering staff to be their best self.
- ▶ Inspire staff through your communication to secure their buy-in and commitment.
- ▶ Recognising, recruiting and retaining high performing staff while challenging and addressing under performance.
- ▶ Manage a budget and resources within a team or service to deliver quality outcomes.
- ▶ Allocate workload equitably within the department or team, ensuring an overall balance of contribution according to the school and department needs.
- ▶ Identify ways to continuously improve services, learn from experience and build a culture of high performance.

## Lead others

- ▶ **Be your best self** - I adapt my leadership style to the individual and situation so that people can give their best
- ▶ **Make it happen** - I take responsibility for team effectiveness, focussing on improving outcomes and decisions
- ▶ **Strengthen leadership** - I create an inclusive environment that values wellbeing and enables everyone's contribution
- ▶ **Think big/Think wide** - I encourage curiosity in my team so they learn, explore and innovate
- ▶ **Serve our beneficiaries** - I inspire shared purpose so we positively impact our beneficiaries

“ A good manager knows their team and knows what style of management to use and when. ”

“ A good manager gets to know each individual team member understanding what motivates them and uses conversations to praise and improve performance. ”

“ A good leader is someone who can be humble and admit they don't know the answer. ”

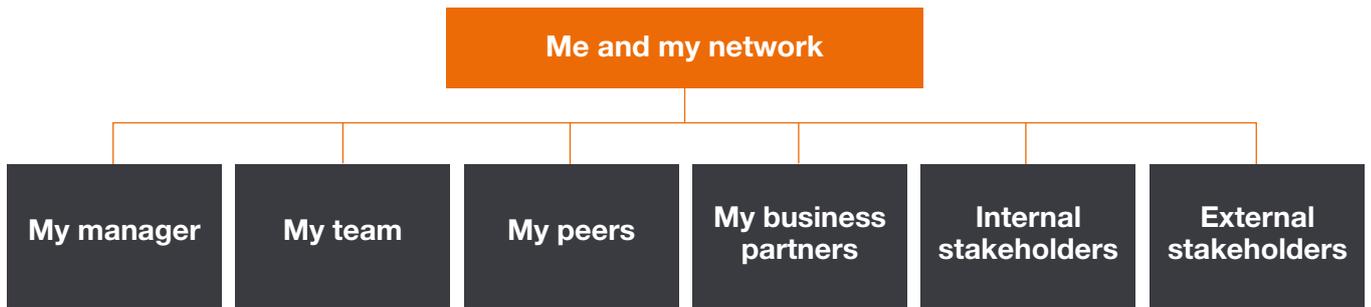
# Developing my network

You are not on your own, there is a whole network of people who are there to guide you and make your journey in management easier. Think about who can support you in different areas of your role and also consider who you might like to spend time with and learn from to keep yourself well, energised and motivated.



## Staff and stakeholders - my team, my network

- ▶ Who do I need to know?
- ▶ Who can support me to develop my knowledge and skills?
- ▶ Who can help me understand how I make things happen around here?
- ▶ Who are my beneficiaries and key stakeholders?



Role	Name	Contact details	Notes
My manager			
My team			
My peers			
HR BPs			
OD BPs			
Finance BP			
Stakeholders			

# Systems

There are several systems you will need to get used to using and it's fair to say not all of them are intuitive, however, they are there to help you do your job and do your job well. We are continually striving to improve our systems and to find out more visit [www.aston.ac.uk/about/project-management-office](http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/project-management-office).

The links below provide overviews and detailed information of many of the systems, policies and procedures you will need to understand and apply in your role as a manager.

Why not start by listening to our short vidcasts delivered by the HR team and University legal providers on key employment issues or look at the quick reference guides for an overview of key HR processes.



## Vidcasts and Quick Reference Guides

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/managers-resources/quick-reference-guides-vidcasts](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/managers-resources/quick-reference-guides-vidcasts)



## HR Policies and Procedures

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies)



## Staff Portal/Core HR

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal)



## Academic Policies and Procedures

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/academicpromsprocedure](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/academicpromsprocedure)



## Agresso - finance system

New users:

[form.jotformeu.com/72763455347363](http://form.jotformeu.com/72763455347363)

Existing users:

[aston.unit4cloud.com/uk\\_asu\\_live\\_agresso\\_web/Login/Login.aspx](http://aston.unit4cloud.com/uk_asu_live_agresso_web/Login/Login.aspx)



## Staff Expenses

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/payroll-and-pensions/expenses](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/payroll-and-pensions/expenses)



## Digital Aston

[www.aston.ac.uk/about/project-management-office/digitalaston](http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/project-management-office/digitalaston)



## SITS - Student Information System

[www.aston.ac.uk/academic-services/for-staff/css/sits/icon](http://www.aston.ac.uk/academic-services/for-staff/css/sits/icon)

# Management Development Plan

## Development Plan

You are unique and so is your career journey; there's no one else quite like you. You have your own strengths, personal motivators, individual learning needs and will be at a particular stage of your career. This development plan has been designed for you to choose the development that's right for you from the options provided; after all, you know yourself best, where you might want to go and how willing you are to be open to learning new things and grasping opportunities. Of course, we will do everything we can to help you on your journey.

**Staff Portal**      <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal>

**Blackboard**      <https://vle.aston.ac.uk/ultra/course>

**HR Intranet Page**      <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr>

**Coaching Culture**      <http://coachingculture.aston.ac.uk>

**OD Intranet Page**      <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development/organisational-development>

Development Area/Need	Development Activity	What support do I need?	How will I know I have improved?	Timescales	RAG Status
<b>Individual self-development</b>					
<b>Awareness of management role and expectations</b>	Read through the Management Essentials Handbook	Access OD Intranet pages and select Leadership and Management	Knowledge of support available and ability to personalise own development plan based on needs	By end	
<b>Mandatory training</b>	Complete all online mandatory training > Equality and diversity > Cyber security > Prevent > Data Protection Law > Fire Safety > Health and Safety Awareness	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning course	Understanding of application within day-to-day practice	By end	

Development Area/Need	Development Activity	What support do I need?	How will I know I have improved?	Timescales	RAG Status
<b>Understand policies and procedures</b>	Read through all policies and procedures	Access HR Intranet pages and select Policies, Procedures and Guidance	Understanding of application within day-to-day practice	By end	
	Complete Managers guide to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; investigations</li> <li>&gt; disciplinary and grievance hearings</li> <li>&gt; managing capability</li> <li>&gt; preventing harassment at work</li> <li>&gt; effective probations</li> <li>&gt; health &amp; safety for managers</li> <li>&gt; Introduction to KPIs</li> </ul>	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning course	Understanding of application within day-to-day practice	By end	
	Review recruitment process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; E-Learning</li> <li>&gt; Resources</li> <li>&gt; Vacancy Manager</li> </ul>	Access HR Intranet pages and select Recruiting and Engaging Staff	Understanding of how to recruit effectively	By end	
<b>Delivering My Development Conversations (MDC)</b>	Complete My Development Conversation journey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Introduction to MDC for Managers</li> <li>&gt; MDC – Developing Priorities Competency &amp; Awareness</li> <li>&gt; MDC – Developing Priorities</li> </ul>	<p>Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey</p> <p>Access HR Intranet pages and select Policies, Procedures and Guidance, then Pay and Performance</p> <p>Access the Staff Portal to book your place on the workshop</p>	Applying MDC and delivering ongoing performance support to team	By end	

Development Area/Need	Development Activity	What support do I need?	How will I know I have improved?	Timescales	RAG Status
	MDC Using the Staff Portal – online tool				
<b>Self-awareness</b>	360° Feedback	Speak to your ODBP	Increased awareness of self and impact on others	By end	
	16 personalities	Speak to your ODBP	Increased awareness of self and impact on others	By end	
	Emotional Intelligence	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey	Increased awareness of self and impact on others	By end	
	Mindset Modules	Coaching Culture Platform	Self-coaching around specific areas. Development of mindset and skills.	By end	
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>	Complete Having Adult to Adult Conversations E-Learning	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning course	Feeling comfortable with conversation	By end	
	Complete the Introduction to Coaching journey and attend the workshop	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning course  Access the Staff Portal to book your place on the workshop	Asking not telling	By end	
	Complete the Manager as Coach journey and attend the workshop	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey  Access the Staff Portal to book your place on the workshop	Ability to utilise different tools and techniques to engage and motivate team members	By end	

Development Area/Need	Development Activity	What support do I need?	How will I know I have improved?	Timescales	RAG Status
	Coaching Lessons	Coaching Culture Platform	Increased coaching knowledge and skills.	By end	
	Complete Influencing People E-Learning	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey	Influencing behaviours and strategies and improved ability to influence those around us	By end	
	Complete Decision-Making E-Learning	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey	Effective decision-making	By end	
<b>Budget management</b>	Attend Finance for Budget Holders training	Access the Staff Portal to book your place on the workshop	Effective budget management	By end	
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Read through wellbeing resources for managers including: > Wellbeing sway presentation	Access HR Intranet pages and select Popular Pages	Understanding of wellbeing for self and team	By end	
	Complete Mental Health for Managers eLearning (mandatory)	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning course			
<b>Change management</b>	Complete Understanding and Responding to Change E-Learning	Access Blackboard and search for E-Learning journey	Knowledge of the impact of change on others and tools and techniques to manage people through change	By end	
	Complete Supporting People Through Change E-Learning				

Development Area/Need	Development Activity	What support do I need?	How will I know I have improved?	Timescales	RAG Status
<b>Dynamic Working</b>	Read through manager resources	Access HR Intranet pages and select Popular Pages	Understanding of dynamic working	By end	
<b>Coaching</b>	Request a Coach	Access OD Intranet pages and select Coaching	Personal coaching goal achieved	By end	
<b>Mentoring</b>	Request a Mentor	Access OD Intranet pages and select Mentoring	Personal mentoring goal achieved	By end	
<b>Team development</b>					
<b>Developing knowledge and confidence</b>	Attend HR Roundtable Discussions to consider issues in confidence and embed learning	HRBP	Confident to have discussions around performance or absence management; workforce planning etc.	Ongoing	
<b>Developing confidence and experience</b>	Attend Action Learning Sets to discuss challenges and work towards shared solutions	ODBP	Confident to actively manage team challenges	Ongoing	

# Development and career plan

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Your development is not just about attending training and it is not just something at the beginning of your career here.

Development is a life-long commitment and you will have the opportunity to access:

- ▶ coaching and mentoring
- ▶ action learning sets

Look for opportunities to learn by doing as well and build these into your development plan.



To find out more about your development visit our Organisational Development pages:  
[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development)

# My learning diary

Building you and your team to be successful and deliver beneficiary outcomes.

## Analysis

- ▶ Conduct a systematic programme of learning about yourself and your new role (through conversations and management essentials).
- ▶ Reflect on what you have learned and identify critical or strategic actions that need to be included in your plans.
- ▶ Identify opportunities for easy wins
- ▶ Reflect and plan for continuous improvement

## Planning

- ▶ Focus on building you and your team
- ▶ Plan ahead – book your training in advance

## Action

- ▶ Act to ensure success as a manager



### 1. Be open to suggestions and feedback

This will help you develop a more comprehensive set of actions and build effective communication channels.



### 2. Use trusted advisors to test your actionable leadership priorities



### 3. Remember the 80/20 rule. Do not put in unneeded effort

There is a place for perfectionism, but for most activities, there comes a stage when there is not much to be gained from putting extra effort into it



### 4. Finally, always follow-up, measure and check to see if the actions are doing what is required

**Develop a learning diary to share with your leader in your My Development Conversations and career planning.**

<b>Focus of learning</b>	<b>What have I learnt or what do I need to learn?</b>	<b>How do I apply the learning or make it happen?</b>	<b>What else do I need to do? Who can support me?</b>	<b>Target / review date</b>
Yourself				
Your team				
Your service /department				

# Useful Links and resources



## Staff intranet:

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff)



## Wellbeing:

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing)



## IT Helpdesk:

[www.aston.ac.uk/ict/helpdesk](http://www.aston.ac.uk/ict/helpdesk)



## New employees:

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/new-employees](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/new-employees)



## Health and safety:

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff/safety](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/safety)



## Policies, procedures & guidance:

[www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/index](http://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/index)



## Staff portal

- ▶ Book annual leave
- ▶ View your payslips
- ▶ Claim your expenses
- ▶ Book training

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal)



## My development

- ▶ Mandatory training
- ▶ E-Learning
- ▶ Coaching
- ▶ Mentoring
- ▶ Apprenticeships

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/development)



## Bank & Public holidays

- ▶ Bank holidays
- ▶ University closure days

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/annual-leave/bankholidays](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/annual-leave/bankholidays)



## Phone directory

Find your colleagues from across the University

[www.aston.ac.uk/phones](http://www.aston.ac.uk/phones)



## Universities & Colleges Employers Association

[www.ucea.ac.uk](http://www.ucea.ac.uk)



## Inclusive Aston

Our vision is to create an inclusive environment in which individuals can operate at all levels regardless of their personal circumstances. Our success as an institution depends on the diversity of our staff and students, and we value the contribution that every individual makes.

[www.aston.ac.uk/about/inclusive-aston](http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/inclusive-aston)



## Staff Equality Networks

We have several Networks at Aston University that staff can access, get involved with, or utilise for service, resources and advice.

[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/equality/networks](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/equality/networks)

## Other Networks:



**INSPIRING  
WOMEN AT  
ASTON**



**Parent  
Network**

**YOUR  
Network**



Click here to discover other staff networks at Aston  
[www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/equality/networks](http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/equality/networks)

# Glossary of terms

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**ALS** - Action Learning Sets - A structured method for small groups to address complicated issues by meeting regularly and working collectively.

**ASG** - Academic Subject Group (referred to as 'departments' from 2017/8)

**Athena SWAN Charter** - The Athena SWAN Charter was established to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research.

**BP** - Business Partner

**CLIPP** - Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice

**ECAP** - Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Panel

**ECR** - Early Career Researcher

**FEC** - Full Economic Costing. This is an approach to costing research projects.

**HEFCE** - The Higher Education Funding Council for England.

**HEA** - The Higher Education Academy. A UK-based organisation responsible for enhancing teaching and supporting learning in higher education.

**HEI** - Higher Education Institution

**HESA** - Higher Education Statistics Agency

**LOA** - Leave Of Absence

**LTC** - Learning and Teaching Committee MDC  
- My Development Conversation NSS - National Student Survey

**MDC** - My Development Conversation

**NSS** - National Student Survey

**PG** - Postgraduate

**PGR** - Postgraduate Research

**PGSSCC** - Postgraduate Staff Student Consultative Committee

**PGT** - Postgraduate Taught

**PTES** - Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. An annual sector-wide survey of postgraduate taught students' learning and teaching experience.

**REF** - Research Excellence Framework. This is a system for assessing the quality of research in Higher Education Institutions in terms of outputs, impact and environment. The results of the last REF were published in December 2014 and the next assessment is expected to take place in 2020.

**QAA** - The Quality Assurance Agency for England. This is an independent body tasked with monitoring, assessing and advising on the quality standards of HEI'. Aston University was reviewed by the QAA in 2015.

**OD** - Organisational Development

**SITS** - Student Information Systems

**SSR** - Staff Student Ratio. This shows how many students are taught per member of staff and informs national league tables.

**STEM** - Science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEMM is also a term when medicine is added to the subjects.

**Teaching Periods (TPs)** - The period of time when teaching is actually taking place.

**Term** - Periods of time the University is open. There are three terms in each academic year.

**UCAS** - Universities and Colleges Application Service. A UK charity whose main function it is to provide the application process for almost all UK Universities and Colleges.

**UCEA** - Universities & Colleges Employers Association

**UG** - Undergraduate

**UGSSCC** - Undergraduate Staff Student Consultative Committee

**UKVI** - United Kingdom Visas and Immigration is a part of the Home Office.

**WASS** - Web Appointment Scheduling System

This is the first version of  
Management Essentials, your  
feedback is vital to its success,  
please send all feedback to:  
**[orgdev@aston.ac.uk](mailto:orgdev@aston.ac.uk)**