WELCOME TO ASTON

Pre-Arrival Guide

#AstonFreshers
#AstonWelcomeWeek
The stress of exams and grades is over, it’s time to throw yourself into something new and start the next phase of your life as an Aston Student.

This year marks the opening of our brand-new Students’ Union, so we have more events than ever to help you settle in and meet new people.

We’ve put together this guide so you can find your way around campus and get to know the University. All the best with your studies and see you on campus soon.

Aston University
ACCOMMODATION

What’s included in campus accommodation

All campus accommodation contains:

• Fridges and freezers
• Ovens and hobs
• Sinks
• Kettles or water boilers
• Microwaves
• Toasters
• Tables and chairs
• Cupboards
• Waste and recycling bins
• A bed and mattress
• Desk and chair
• Wardrobe/storage
• Curtains
• Desk lighting
• Shelving

If you have an ensuite, you will also have:

• A shower and/or bath
• Toilet
• Sink
• A mirror

What to bring to your accommodation

• Crockery and cutlery
• Saucepans and a frying pan
• Kitchen utensils such as a cheese grater and a tin opener
• Tea towels, oven gloves and a dish cloth
• Toilet roll
• Toiletries such as shampoo, conditioner and shower gel
• Toothbrush and toothpaste
• A mattress cover, bed linen and pillows
• A laundry basket or bag
• Coat hangers
• Mobile phone charger and laptop charger

What not to bring to your accommodation

• Large items or lots of stuff – storage space is limited so don’t bring large TVs, your own furniture or lots of personal belongings
• Candles, burners and fairy lights – don’t bring anything that could be a fire hazard, e.g. oil burners, a chip pan or portable heaters
• Ashtrays – You cannot smoke in campus accommodation
Private accommodation

Short term lets are not as easy to find as long term lets, and you may need to look at areas further from the campus. Please seek advice and start your search early.

Alternative off-campus accommodation types:

- Private student halls
- Shared house
- Flats/Studios
- Homestay Landlords

Aston Student Homes (ASH)

ASH is the official Students’ Union accommodation support service. Check the website www.astonsu.com/housing/astonstudenthomes for available rooms by clicking on ‘accommodation search’ or ‘find a flatmate’.

ASH also offers an accommodation contract checking service through the Advice and Representation Centre in the Students’ Union. Once you have found accommodation (especially if it is through a private landlord), we recommend that you contact one of the advisers to check the contract before you sign it – this will help to avoid any issues or disputes after you move in.

Please email astonstudenthomes@aston.ac.uk to book an appointment to see an adviser.

If you are an international student, it’s a good idea to arrive in the UK early so that you can view properties and make arrangements in person. Remember to book some temporary accommodation for when you first arrive in the UK.
What to pack

Passport and visa
Don’t forget these, otherwise you won’t even be able to get in to the UK! Also pack copies of your CAS (Tier 4 visa holders) and your financial evidence in case you need to show these at the border. If you are not an UK or EU passport holder, please bring along your visa.

Clothing
The weather in Birmingham can be unpredictable, even in summer! Bring some layers of lightweight clothing, as days can start off cool and get warmer, and make sure to include a waterproof jacket. The style is generally casual, but bring some smart clothes or your country’s traditional dress for more formal events.

Laptop and electrical appliances
The standard electricity supply in the UK is 230V and the standard outlet is a 3 pin plug. If you are bringing your laptop and other electrical items to the UK, make sure to pack some adaptor plugs too. Electrical appliances are relatively cheap in the UK, so don’t worry if you don’t have enough room in your bag.

Medical/optical prescriptions
If you’re receiving medical care, speak to your doctor before you leave home to get information to pass onto your new doctor in the UK. If you wear glasses, bring a copy of your prescription in case you need to get new glasses or contact lenses while you are here.

Things from home
Pack some photos and things that will brighten up your room and remind you of home. Make sure to bring a camera so that you can add photos of all your new friends and experiences!
Your entire wardrobe
You can buy any clothes you need in the UK. If you’re from a hot country, the selection of winter clothes here may be better than back home.

Kitchen equipment
This will take up lots of space in your luggage and is cheap to buy here – you can even buy specialist items like rice cookers.

Food
The local markets in Birmingham sell many different foods from around the world, so you’re sure to find some home comforts.

Restricted/prohibited items
You can bring limited amounts of some items like alcohol and cigarettes to the UK. Other items such as fresh food and illegal drugs are completely prohibited. Please make sure you do not bring any prohibited items with you.
If you are living on campus, make sure you arrive in good time to move into your accommodation before your enrolment slot. The drop-off areas are car parks 5, 6 and 12 and you have a time limit of 15 minutes to unload your belongings. The driver must stay in the car for that time and after your time limit has passed, you will need to park your car off campus to allow other students to move in.

Student volunteers (Aston Aunties) will be on hand to help you move your things and answer any questions, and can tell you where you can park off campus.
ENROLMENT AND ARRIVING ON CAMPUS

How to enrol

Step 1: Upload your photo

Once you have a firm offer with us, you will be sent a link to upload a photo to your records.

Step 2: Online enrolment

You will need to complete online enrolment before arriving at the University. We’ll contact you by email with instructions about how to do this.

Step 3: On campus face to face enrolment

If you are studying at the Aston University campus you will be sent an email inviting you to an individual enrolment timeslot. For September starters, this will be on either Friday 13th, Saturday 14th or Sunday 15th September.

Off campus enrolment

If you are not studying on our campus, a member of staff will complete your enrolment for you remotely.

We will email you before Welcome Week to let you know the day and time of your individual enrolment slot.

What to bring to enrolment

UK/EU students

- Passport or Photo ID as well as full birth certificate
- If your country of domicile is in the UK, then you will be sent your Student ID card (UniCARD) before Welcome Week. However, if you do not receive your ID card, you will be able to collect this when you arrive on campus
- Original qualification documents if applicable – you will be emailed a list of the documents we need to see once you have completed your online enrolment

International students

- Passport
- Visa – if you have arranged for your BRP card to be sent to the University, you can collect this at enrolment
- Qualification documents as listed in your CAS, for your visa application

All students can collect their Student ID card (UniCARD) at enrolment.
Our campus is located in the centre of Birmingham, the UK’s second largest city, ranked the second best English city for quality of living outside of London (Mercer 2019 Quality of Living Rankings). Birmingham has a wide range of cultural, social and sporting attractions. We are home to Bullring, one of the largest shopping malls in Europe, as well as numerous museums, art galleries and sporting venues, including football, cricket, athletics and tennis.

Nearby Coventry also plays host to rugby and netball teams. We have the oldest working cinema in the UK, over 50 festivals each year and a whole range of bars and restaurants with cuisines from all over the world.

We are also renowned for our street food scene, with Digbeth Dining Club every Friday and Saturday evening, the Balti Triangle and Chinatown. As well as numerous bars and restaurants, Chinatown also features several grocery stores, so you can buy authentic Asian products. Birmingham’s diverse population means you will easily find halal food. Many major supermarkets across the city stock halal produce and many restaurants and takeaways will also easily cater for you.

**Food costs**

The main supermarkets (grocery stores) in the UK include Asda, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Morrisons, Lidl and Aldi. Most offer online shopping which can be delivered to your accommodation.

**Sport Aston**

Our on campus Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sport Centre offers a range of different sport and leisure activities including:

- Gym
- Swimming pool
- Sauna and steam rooms
- Fitness and yoga classes
- Badminton courts
- Squash courts
- Sport halls
- Football pitches

Student gym memberships are available as well as various pay and play activity options. Sport Aston also offer a range of health and wellbeing services and is the venue for the University Sports Clubs training and matches.
The Chaplaincy Team at the Martin Luther-King Multi-Faith Centre

The Chaplaincy offers pastoral and spiritual guidance, prayer, support and friendship to those of all faiths or of none. The team consists of members of different faiths and backgrounds, including Christian, Buddhist, Pagan, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh chaplains.

The chaplains are experienced at listening and offering spiritual guidance, prayer, support, and friendship. Whether you belong to a faith community or not, you are welcome to talk confidentially with a chaplain about any problems or concerns you may have.

You will also find a wealth of religious provisions through the Birmingham region including churches, mosques and temples, all of which offer regular religious worship. Our chaplains will be able to help you find your nearest place of worship.

Student Support Services at The Hub

The Hub is a central location which brings together all of Aston University’s key student support services. We offer a friendly and welcoming environment where students can get the help and advice they need. The Hub Reception Team will either be able to give an immediate answer to your query, or refer you to specialist staff who will be able to help.

At the Hub you can access Student and International Advice Teams to get help on immigration and legal issues, student and work visas, student finance, managing your money, social security benefits and student hardship funds.

You can also access our Counselling and Wellbeing Services and our Disability and Enabling Teams, who provide friendly, approachable and understanding mental health and disability support.
Learning Development Centre

The centre brings together services including advice on writing for assignments and research, a maths support centre, programming support and general study skills guidance, covering exam and revision techniques, presentations, working in groups and much more.

Peer mentoring

We offer mentoring from our current students, from pre-arrival right through your degree programme.

English language tuition

As an international student at Aston you will be entitled to free English language tuition in individual or small group tutorials. In these sessions you will:

• improve your accuracy and fluency when using spoken and written English
• get support with specialised vocabulary used within your field of academic study
• get support with written assignments, including dissertations/project reports
• get support with other academic skills such as listening to lectures or taking part in seminars

Advice and Representation Centre (ARC)

The Students’ Union’s representation centre offers free, confidential advice and representation, independent of the university.
Security

Our fully-trained and friendly security staff help ensure our campus is safe and secure for you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In an emergency, Security can be contacted on +44 (0)121 359 2922 or 2222 on an internal phone.

For all other queries, our Security Team can be contacted on +44 (0)121 204 4803 or 4803 (on an internal phone) or at security@aston.ac.uk.

You can also visit them in the Main Building, to the right of the main university reception.

SafeZone

SafeZone is a safety and security app designed to optimise safety around campus for both students and staff.

Aston University has launched this free app for both students and staff to enhance personal safety, security and wellbeing around campus. The Safezone app ensures you are able to easily connect with members of the Aston Security Team if you need assistance or medical support for yourself or others whilst on campus.

Aston University also has an in-house dedicated team of Security personnel to help ensure that all of its community are safe and secure. The Security Team are the first point of contact in any emergency situation and can be contacted at any time on 0121 204 4803 or 0121 359 2922.

Students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties

We welcome applications from students with disabilities or long-term medical conditions. Your application will be based on academic merit and any support needs you may have will be considered separately by our Enabling Team. Once the Admissions Team have made a decision on your application, the Enabling Team will assess your form and may invite you for an interview to discuss arrangements in advance.

All teaching is carried out on our single campus, where Aston Student Village is located. We have access to a number of specially adapted rooms on campus and accommodation may be guaranteed for the duration of your course if your individual circumstances warrant this. Rooms are available with ground floor/lift access, larger floor space, ensuite bathrooms, vibrating alert/doorbell systems, shower seats, grab rails etc.

To help you plan and prepare for university life, the Enabling Team can provide advice and support on a confidential basis.

www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/hub/the-enabling-team
The MyAston app is designed to improve your experience of studying at Aston and living in Birmingham, and is available to download from iOS and Android app stores. If your phone is not supported by the app, the desktop version is a great alternative as it provides the same functionalities.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ARRIVING IN THE UK

Immigration and customs

When you arrive in the UK, you will need to pass through immigration and customs. The nearest airport to Aston is Birmingham Airport, which is a 15-minute train journey to Birmingham New Street Station in central Birmingham, or a 30 to 40 minute taxi ride directly to campus.

If you are arriving at Birmingham Airport via another European airport, you should check before your journey whether you will need a transit visa. If you are unsure, please contact our immigration advisers at astoninternational@aston.ac.uk or call +44 (0)121 204 4567. If you do require a transit visa, make sure you allow yourself enough time to get one before travelling.

If you are travelling via a connecting flight, the airline staff at your first departure airport can check you and your baggage through to your final destination if you are travelling with the same airline.

When you get to your final destination in the UK, you will need to pass through immigration – make sure you join the right queue for the passport you hold. The immigration officer will:

- ask to see your passport and visa (if required)
- ask to see your completed landing card, which you will be given by the flight crew during your journey
- check that you can speak a suitable level of English without the use of an interpreter

If you do not require a visa you will need to show the immigration officer your unconditional acceptance letter from Aston and evidence that you are able to pay your tuition fees and living costs for the duration of your studies.

Do not be alarmed if you are asked to undergo any health checks – these are a normal part of the immigration process. The airport doctor may perform a brief medical examination and x-ray, which will take place in a private room.

A large majority of students pass through immigration control without any problems. However, if you do encounter any issues, you can ask the immigration officer to ring the International Student Support team at Aston on +44 (0)121 204 4567.
Airport Meet and Greet

As part of Aston Welcome Week, Aston Students Union organises a free ‘Meet and Greet’ service for new students. If you arrive at Birmingham International Airport between the following times, you can book a place on a shuttle to take you directly to campus:

- Saturday 14 September 09:00 – 21:00
- Sunday 15 September 09:00 – 21:00

For further information and to book your time slot visit www.eventbrite.com and search for Aston University Birmingham airport meet and greet.

Collecting your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

If you have a Tier 4 visa which is for longer than six months you will need to collect your BRP card when you arrive in the UK. The easiest way to do this is to choose Aston University as your collection location when you apply for your visa. If you do not choose the University as your collection location, you will need to collect it from the main Post Office in the city centre.

When you receive your visa decision letter it will tell you where you can collect your BRP – just remember that you must collect it within ten days of arriving in the UK.

If you selected Aston University as your collection location, you can collect your BRP card by using the ACL code 2HE554 when you attend face-to-face enrolment.

Police registration

If you need a visa to study in the UK, you may need to register your details with the local police station. Your visa will state if you need to do this and we will send you details about this before you arrive. Once you have done this, you will be given a Police Registration Certificate and you will need to bring this to the Hub in the Main Building on campus.
Medical emergencies

**On campus:** If you need an ambulance or other emergency service, please call Security on 2222 – do not call the ambulance service direct, as Security need to allow access to these services and need to know the exact location of the emergency. This will help to improve response times of the emergency services.

**Off campus:** If you need immediate medical assistance (for example because of an accident), telephone 999. This is a free phone number. Your call will be put through to an operator who will ask which emergency service you require (ambulance, coastguard, fire or police).

A hospital’s accident and emergency (A & E) department is for emergencies only. If you are not sure if you need to go to hospital you can ring the National Health Service (NHS) free non-emergency number on 111 first or visit a local pharmacy for advice.

Medical insurance

You may wish to take out medical insurance for the duration of your stay in the UK, even if you are entitled to free NHS treatment, to cover you for other costs. If you already have medical insurance at home, check if your cover can be extended to the UK. Costs medical insurance can cover may include:

- private healthcare treatment
- any accommodation or tuition fees you may lose if you are unable to complete your degree course
- you returning home if a relative is ill or if a relative needs to visit you in the UK if you become ill
- you returning home for treatment

Immigration health surcharge

You will have paid the immigration health surcharge of £300 for each year of study, if you are studying for more than six months. However if you are on a course lasting less than six months, you will need private insurance to cover the cost of healthcare.

- The IHS gives you access to the NHS on the same terms as a permanent UK resident. It covers the full range of treatment offered by the NHS, including pre-existing, chronic conditions and pregnancy
- The NHS will assist you in the case of a medical emergency
- Just like UK citizens you may have to pay for some dental treatment and for medication prescribed by a doctor
TV licence
If you plan on watching television while you are in the UK, you will need to purchase a TV licence. This will allow you to watch or record live TV, download or watch programmes on BBC iPlayer. Even if you do not watch programmes on a television but use another device (e.g. a laptop or tablet), you will still need to purchase a TV licence. This also applies to any online TV service you use, such as Now TV, Apple TV, YouTube and Amazon Instant Video.

A standard one-year colour TV licence currently costs £150.50 to £154.50 and can be purchased from www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Mobile phone
There is a whole range of mobile phone providers in the UK offering both pay-as-you-go and pay monthly packages, with or without a handset. Some will also offer special deals to students. The Which? consumer guide can help you to decide which package will be best for you: www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phones. Once you have decided on a package, comparison websites such as MoneySuperMarket (moneysupermarket.com/mobile-phones) and Carphone Warehouse (carphonewarehouse.com) can help you to find the best deal for you or you can look directly on the network providers' websites.

Proof of age
You may find when buying age-restricted products such as alcohol or tobacco, going to a bar, club or to the cinema, that you are asked to provide proof of your age. Your passport, EU national identity (ID) card or your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) can all be used as proof of this.

Safety
The UK and Birmingham are generally safe places to live. There are however, a few precautions you should take as you would in most major cities. Do not display any valuables, keep purses and wallets securely hidden from view and avoid walking down dimly or unlit streets at night. If you can, walk in a group at night time.

If you do need the police or other emergency services, call 999 from any phone (including mobiles). The 999 number is for emergencies only. If you need to speak to the police in a non-emergency situation, you can dial 101 and you will be asked which police force you would like to be connected to (for Birmingham, ask for the West Midlands Police).
Welcome Week is for all new students. If you’re keen to make friends with UK students, make sure you go to some of the social activities in the students’ union this week. There will be a mixture of events, including academic, practical, cultural and social. You can find and learn about all the many different student activities that are on offer.

For more information visit our Welcome Week page www2.aston.ac.uk/welcome-week

To book tickets for the events we have, please visit www.eventbrite.com and search for Aston Welcome Week 2019.

To buy tickets and/or the wristband for Welcome Week from the Students’ Union website www.astonsu.com.
Congratulations on getting into Aston!

We are the go-to-place for Aston students, delivering exceptional services and opportunities for YOU!

Join the Facebook Group to stay up to date on what’s happening during Welcome Week. Get all the details from the Students Union website www.astonsu.com.

Clubs and societies welcome fair

Learn about and join our clubs and societies, and grab some great freebies too!

Tuesday 17th September
From 11 - 4 pm at the Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre.

Meet your Union Sabbatical Officers

Danielle Gallagher
President

Pawan Kumar Neglur
Vice President (Education)

Annas Mazhar
Vice President (Student Activities)

Eleanor Chambers
Vice President (Welfare)
The Hub
Email: thehub@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 204 4007
Website: www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/hub