

Principal Candidate Pack

KNOWLEDGE FOR LIFE.
SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE.



Academicis

Welcome from the CEO & Executive Principal

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Principal of Aston University Engineering Academy.

There are relatively few opportunities in school leadership to take responsibility for an organisation quite like AUEA. Since opening in 2012 as one of the country's first University Technical Colleges, the Academy has developed into one of the largest and most successful UTCs in England, with a distinctive educational model built around high-quality academic and technical education, exceptional employer engagement and a deep partnership with Aston University.

AUEA was founded with a simple but ambitious purpose: to give young people an education that connects what they learn with where it can take them. That purpose remains as relevant today as it was when we opened.

Our students come from across Birmingham and the wider region and from an extraordinary range of backgrounds. What unites them is ambition. They choose AUEA because they want something different: an education connected to engineering, digital technology, healthcare, business and the industries that will shape their futures. Our responsibility is to release that ambition into opportunity.

I am immensely proud of what the Academy has achieved. Demand for places is exceptionally strong; outcomes have continued to improve with many course leading nationally. Most importantly as a UTC our progression destinations are outstanding with 0% NEETs and our students progressing to leading universities, degree apprenticeships and employment with some of the UK's most significant organisations. Just as importantly, we have developed partnerships with Aston University and employers that go far beyond sponsorship or occasional engagement. They are embedded within the curriculum and the experience our young people receive.

But this appointment is about the future, not simply celebrating the past.

AUEA is entering an important new chapter. The creation of Aston University STEM Education Academy Trust has seen the organisation grow beyond its founding academy, including the opening of Aston University Mathematics School and the development of new specialist education and skills provision. AUEA sits at the heart of that family and will continue to be central to our ambition for specialist STEM education in Birmingham and beyond.

We are therefore looking for a Principal who understands what makes AUEA special, but who will also be ambitious about what it can become next.

You will inherit an academy with considerable strengths: talented and committed colleagues, remarkable young people, strong demand, established university and employer partnerships and a clear educational purpose. You will also inherit the challenge that should accompany any significant leadership position—the expectation that we continue to improve.

We want a leader who combines high expectations with humanity; who is visible to students and staff; who understands the importance of excellent teaching, behaviour and culture; and who is equally comfortable talking to a Year 10 student, supporting a classroom teacher, working with governors or sitting around a table with university and industry leaders.

Above all, I am looking for someone who believes deeply in what AUEA exists to achieve.

Our Trust's commitment is to give young people **Knowledge for Life | Skills for the Future**. For AUEA that means refusing to accept a false choice between academic excellence and technical education. Our students should leave us knowledgeable, skilled, confident and ready to take their place in university, apprenticeships, employment and the wider world.

The successful candidate will not do this alone. As Principal, you will have the support of an experienced Trust executive team, our Board, Aston University and an extraordinary network of employer and community partners. You will also have the opportunity to influence the wider development of AUSEAT as we continue to grow our impact.

Having had the privilege of leading AUEA for over 15 years myself, I know both the responsibility and the opportunity that comes with this role. It is a remarkable place to lead. I am excited now to find the person who will take what has been built and lead its next chapter.

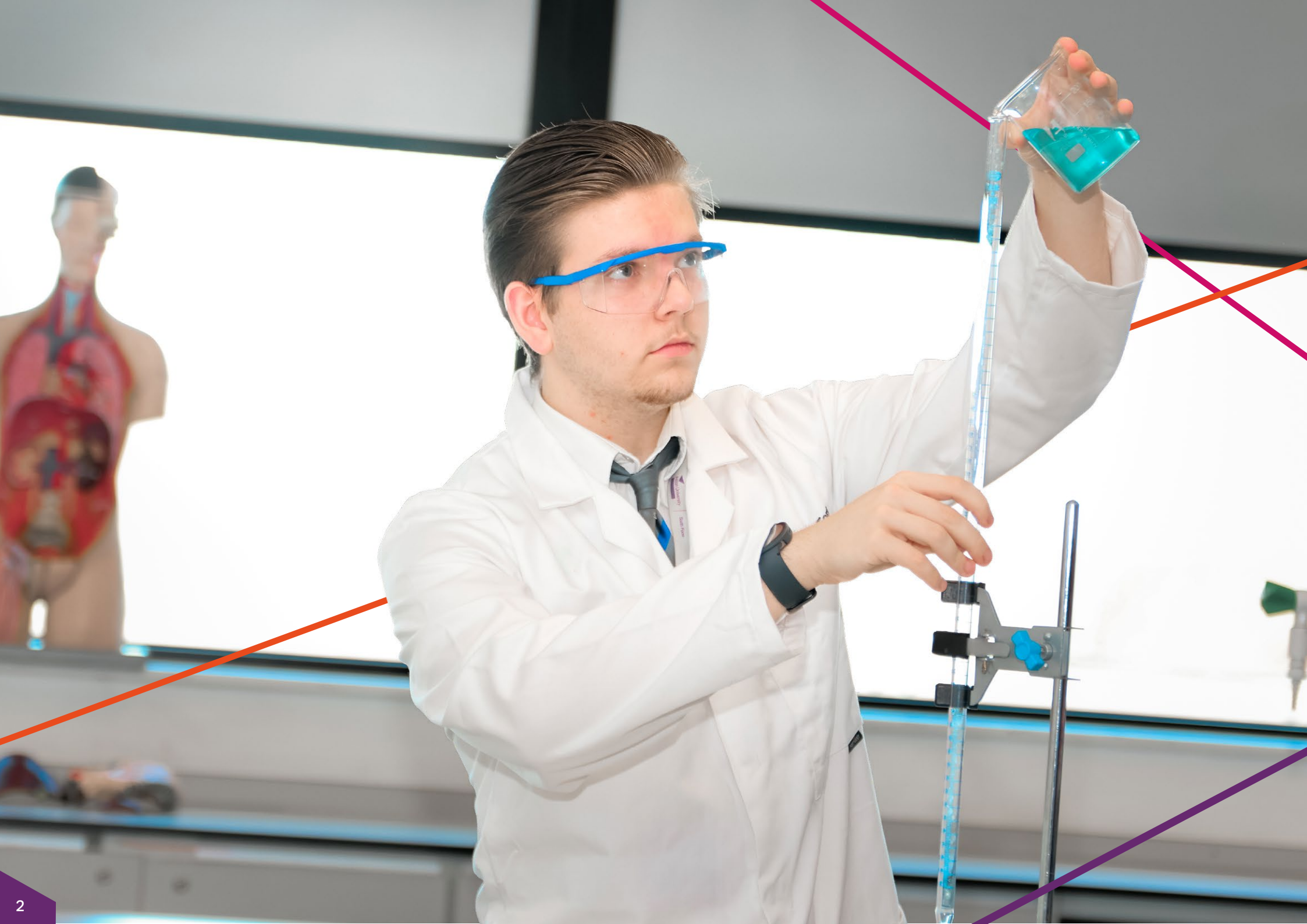
If you share our ambition for young people, believe education should connect powerfully with the world beyond the classroom, and have the leadership, energy and imagination to take AUEA forward, I very much hope you will apply.

I look forward to meeting you.

Daniel Locke-Wheaton CMgr FCMI
CEO & Executive Principal

Aston University STEM Education Academy Trust





About Aston University

A university rooted in Birmingham, with a strong focus on education, research and innovation

Aston University is a long-established, research-active university based on a 60-acre, self-contained campus in the heart of Birmingham. It has a diverse community of around 18,000 students from more than 120 countries, alongside a wider network of partners, employers and organisations across the UK and internationally. The University also has a London hub and offers online study.

Aston's origins can be traced back to 1875, and its development has remained closely connected to technical education, industry and innovation. It became the UK's first College of Advanced Technology in 1955 before receiving its Royal Charter as a university in 1966. This heritage continues to influence the University's approach to education, research and its relationships with industry.



Aston and STEM education

Aston University's contribution to education extends beyond higher education. The University has been closely involved with Aston University Engineering Academy (AUEA) since its establishment in 2012. AUEA provides specialist education for young people aged 13–19, with a particular focus on STEM and technical education and strong links to future study and employment.

This relationship has developed further through the establishment of the Aston University STEM Education Academy Trust (AUSEAT) on 1 September 2025. The Trust brings together AUEA, Aston University Sixth Form, Aston University Mathematics School and Aston University Goldsmiths' Institute, creating a connected educational community spanning specialist secondary education, sixth form, mathematics, higher education and technical STEM pathways.

Through this structure, Aston University's expertise, facilities, research environment and links with industry provide a distinctive context for the development of STEM education. The University's involvement also creates opportunities to strengthen progression between school, higher education, apprenticeships and employment, supporting the development of STEM skills and talent within Birmingham and the wider West Midlands.

Education, research and innovation

Aston offers undergraduate and postgraduate education across a broad range of disciplines, with particular strengths across engineering, technology, business, health and the sciences. A strong emphasis is placed on connecting academic learning with professional experience, with opportunities for students to undertake placements and develop relationships with employers.

Research is an important part of the University's work, with a focus on creating practical impact and addressing major technological, economic and societal challenges. Its current research priorities include Digital Futures, Cleantech, Inclusive Growth and HealthTech, bringing together expertise across disciplines and creating opportunities for collaboration with business, industry and wider partners.

Aston's location in Birmingham further strengthens these connections. Its city-centre campus places the University within one of the UK's major business, cultural and economic centres, supporting relationships with employers and organisations across the West Midlands

Who are we?

Our Mission

Knowledge for Life | Skills for the Future

In each of our trust schools and communities, through outstanding learning, teaching and professional development we drive our commitment to providing

'Knowledge for Life'.

Through our cutting edge STEM technical facilities, industry focused curriculum, specialist staff, and employer and university partnerships we will ensure

'Skills for the Future'.

Our Vision

The impact of our trust schools, specialist colleges, digital enabled curriculum, high-quality teaching, and learning, in collaboration with employers and universities enables incredible progression and talent pipeline for the people of our trust. Underpinned by strong cohesion and belonging, inclusion and care and an unrelenting focus on releasing each person's ambition and potential, learners are supported to overcome any challenge, enabling social mobility, and consequently changing not only their lives but the communities around them.



Our values



Ambition

Our ambition drives each of us to strive for excellence and impact, allowing us to accomplish our goals.



Collaboration

We believe in the value of working together for a shared purpose.



Inclusion

We provide an inclusive, caring and empowering environment for all and respect and support the values that diversity and inclusion bring to our whole community.



Innovation

We nurture an innovative environment that values new ideas and seeks diverse perspectives that make a positive impact.



Integrity

By valuing honesty, trust, fairness and ethical behaviour, we always act with integrity and hold ourselves and others accountable.

Aston University Engineering Academy

A diverse multicultural university technical college, based on the edge of Aston University Campus in inner city Birmingham, which opened in 2012. In September 2019 AUEA extended entry to welcome Year 9 students.

AUEA prides itself in instilling not only the academic and STEM technical knowledge but providing an exceptional breadth of experience and opportunities that truly provide 'knowledge for life and skills for the future'

The UTC has over 1100 Students from over 45 feeder schools (Year 9) and 90 Feeder schools (Year 12) from across the West Midlands from all social and economic backgrounds.

Over 66% of students are Pupil premium with a significant number with English as an additional language. 90% of sixth form are identified by DFE from coming from 25% most deprived UK post codes and 75% from the 10% most deprived.

AUEA has around 100 highly experienced staff and 100% specialist teachers who add value daily to the lives and opportunities of our young engineers, scientists, and business professionals.

AUEA develops a culture of success with students holding strong ambitions and drive to succeed in STEM careers. Year on year 100's students leave AUEA accelerated to next level of learning and training.



Ofsted 2026

Strong standard

AUEA's latest inspection found a Strong standard across achievement, curriculum and teaching, attendance and behaviour, inclusion, personal development and wellbeing, leadership and governance, and post-16 provision. Ofsted highlighted the Academy's ambitious curriculum, excellent attitudes to learning, strong leadership and excellent careers provision, with pupils well prepared for their next steps.

The report also recognised the Academy's effective preparation for higher education, apprenticeships and employment, alongside its strong focus on pupils' personal development and future aspirations.

"All pupils and sixth-form students are very well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment"

- Ofsted 2026

Numbers on Roll

Year 9:	81
Year 10:	81
Year 11:	81
Year 12:	420
Year 13:	380
Year 14:	20

Our service offer



Staff well-being package including Counselling, 24hr GP and Physio services



School to school peer support, collaboration, and sharing best practice



HR support - advice, complimentary and escalation services to your internal HR processes.



Leadership team development, support, coaching and mentorship.



Central IT support to compliment and escalate your internal IT services.



Initial Teacher Training and Early Career provision including mentoring. Staff CPD and development programmes



Highly experienced Central Team including Executive, Finance, HR, IT, Estates, Health & Safety and Governance.



Collaborative curriculum, enrichment and project options for learners.

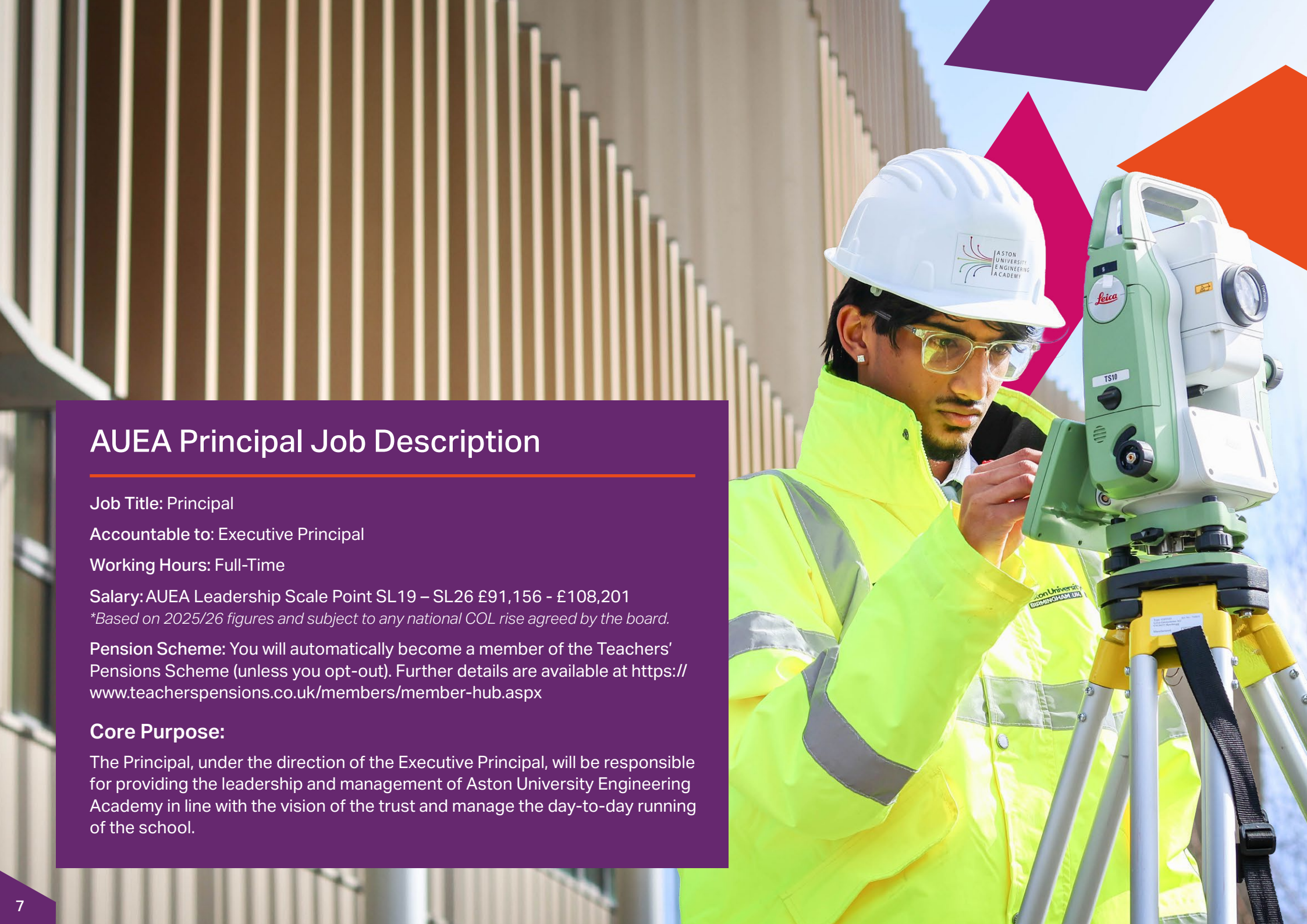


Central Payroll Services



Alumni, destinations and Careers IAG support.





AUEA Principal Job Description

Job Title: Principal

Accountable to: Executive Principal

Working Hours: Full-Time

Salary: AUEA Leadership Scale Point SL19 – SL26 £91,156 - £108,201

**Based on 2025/26 figures and subject to any national COL rise agreed by the board.*

Pension Scheme: You will automatically become a member of the Teachers' Pensions Scheme (unless you opt-out). Further details are available at <https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/member-hub.aspx>

Core Purpose:

The Principal, under the direction of the Executive Principal, will be responsible for providing the leadership and management of Aston University Engineering Academy in line with the vision of the trust and manage the day-to-day running of the school.

Key Responsibilities:

Strategic direction and development of the Engineering Academy and Sixth Form
Responsibilities are:

Leadership and Management

Responsibilities are:

- Manage senior and middle leaders, developing a professional culture amongst all staff at the Engineering Academy
- Support and challenge staff, dealing with underperformance effectively while making sure staff are given the support to do their jobs well
- Manage the school's budget and resources alongside the trust's Executive Principal and Finance Director
- Implement the trust's appraisal policy and other management processes and systems
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of the Engineering Academy and its achievements, responding and reporting to the Trustees as required.
- Motivate staff and students through interest, encouragement and recognition of their unique value.
- Lead the induction of new staff.
- Lead the development for all staff of professional knowledge, skills and abilities including those necessary for career development.
- Facilitate the provision of professional advice, support and training.
- Support the implementation of trust-wide policies and school-level policies
- Undertake self-evaluation and Engineering Academy improvement planning alongside the trust-wide strategy, to improve areas of weakness in the Engineering Academy.
- Support the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff where necessary in co-ordination with the Executive Principal.
- Provide training and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for all Engineering Academy staff
- Identify areas of progression and promotion for staff that support succession planning for the Engineering Academy
- Take a leading role in developing positive behaviour and in ensuring that strategies are in place to remove barriers to learning.
- Support the leadership of the Aston University Goldsmiths Institute, Aston Works and the academy's combined cadet force and tri service partnership
- Support the development of the MAT where necessary in co-ordination with the Executive Principal.
- Deputise for the Executive Principal and other senior trust staff.



Quality of Education

Responsibilities are:

- Promote, establish and sustain high educational and academic standards.
- Lead staff to promote high-quality teaching across all subjects
- Identify any areas of weakness in teaching and implement, monitor and review interventions to improve these areas as well as teaching and learning across the Engineering Academy.
- Make sure the Engineering Academy's assessment system is fit for purpose and provides teachers with useful information about pupils
- Identify areas where staff may benefit from sharing good practice or accessing support from other schools in the trust and area.
- Monitor the Engineering Academy outcomes of pupils and draw out any patterns of underperformance in key groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils or pupils with special educational needs.
- Make sure standards of behaviour are high to foster an environment in which learning can thrive
- Ensure that students have an extensive and high-quality extra-curricular offer.
- Extend and embed contextualisation with the Engineering Academy curriculum and wider activities through fostering partnerships with key STEM employers, Aston University and wider industries.
- Participate in and oversee the Engineering Academy's outreach programme.
- Participate in the delivery of teaching.
- Support the careers curriculum of the Engineering Academy and the promotion of progression to STEM pathways.
- Ensure that all students experience the Engineering Academy as a safe and welcoming community.
- Put in place excellent pastoral support for students including the arrangements to support the welfare of the most vulnerable students.
- Ensure all students are treated with respect, free from any form of discrimination or intimidation and supported to achieve and progress whatever their individual needs.
- Ensure high standards of discipline for the well-being of students and staff and to maximise learning and progression.
- Ensure the Safeguarding Policy (including the 'Prevent' agenda) is implemented and there exists a strong culture and practice of safeguarding.
- Instil a culture that celebrates and values a diversity of beliefs and cultures whilst challenging prejudice and intolerance.
- Ensure that the Health, Safety and Welfare policy is fully implemented in the school.



Communication

Responsibilities are:

- Work with the board of trustees and Executive Principal to keep them informed of the financial and educational performance of the school, giving them what they need to provide support and challenge.
- Attend any relevant trustee meetings and sub committees including responsibility for the preparation of papers and agenda for Learning and Progress Forum and Industry Advisory Group.
- Help to build on the vision of trust and share with colleagues across the trust how this is being demonstrated in the Academy.
- Contribute reports to the Executive Principal or board as necessary
- Undertake relevant external communication to stakeholders including Aston University, DFE, ESFA and the Baker Dearing Trust.

Managing resources

Responsibilities are:

- Contribute to the budget setting, cash-flow management and all other financial management processes with the Executive Principal and Finance Director
- Ensure value for money in any delegated financial responsibilities for purchasing and procurement
- Ensure the efficient and effective use of Engineering Academy resources in line with the ESFA Academy Trust Handbook.

Other Responsibilities:

- The Principal will be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and follow school and trust policies.
- Please note that this JD is an illustrative of the general nature and level of responsibility of the role. It is not a comprehensive list of all tasks expected to be carried out. The postholder may be required to do other duties appropriate to the level of the role, as directed by the Executive Principal.



Principal Person Specification

Experience/Knowledge	Essential	Desirable
Successful experience in leading technical/vocational education	■	
Successful management experience including conducting performance reviews, working with budgets, creating and maintaining systems.	■	
Experience of developing and delivering outreach activities		■
Successful experience teaching in a STEM environment		■
Experience as DeputyHead or Headteacher		■
Experience of working in schools	■	
Experience of working with networks and / or employer partners		■
Education, Qualifications and Training		
Good Degree in a STEM subject such as Mathematics, Science, Engineering or Computer Science		■
Post Graduate Degree		■
PGCE/QTS/QTLS		■
NPQSL or NPQH		■
Personal/Skills/Attributes		
Ability to relate to and inspire students to develop their talents	■	
A genuine passion for the teaching of STEM at the very highest level to the most gifted young people	■	
Ability to enthuse and innovate	■	
Proven track record in leading and inspiring others	■	
Ability to communicate vision in an exciting way to potential students, parents, funders, universities, etc.	■	
The ability to build excellent and fruitful relationships with partner organisations and external bodies	■	
Excellent verbal and written skills with impeccable attention to detail	■	
Positivity resilience, reliability and integrity	■	
Have a commitment to Equality/Diversity and Safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults	■	
Have Disclosure and Barring Service Clearance (following appointment)	■	





How to Apply

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity, need any further information or would like to have an informal discussion, please contact Will Bridge at Academicis, our recruitment partner, on wbridge@academicis.co.uk or by phone on 07825 3465354 / 01223 907979.

Closing date: Monday 23rd November 2026

Shortlisting date: Wednesday 25th November 2026

Interviews: W/C 30th November 2026