

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Aston University v. Aston Education
Case No. D2025-2846

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Aston University, United Kingdom, represented by Pinsent Masons LLP, United Kingdom.

The Respondent is Aston Education, United Arab Emirates (“UAE”).

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <astoneducationuae.com> is registered with GoDaddy.com, LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on July 17, 2025. On July 18, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On July 21, 2025, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (XXXXXX) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on July 22, 2025, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on July 22, 2025.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on July 28, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was August 17, 2025. The Respondent sent email communications to the Center on July 30, 2025, August 1, 2025. Accordingly, the Center notified the Commencement of Panel Appointment Process on August 19, 2025.

The Center appointed Kaya Köklü as the sole panelist in this matter on August 22, 2025. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a higher education institution in the city center of Birmingham, England, with roots dating back to the year 1895. The Complainant not only operates a public university, but also various schools associated with it, such as business, law, or medical school. The Complainant has around 18,000 students every year. Around 15,000 students are students from the United Kingdom while about 3,000 students being international students. Among other countries, the Complainant markets its higher education services to students from the UAE to visit and attend its university. For this purpose, the Complainant also operates a UAE country profile website.

The Complainant is the registered owner of the ASTON and ASTON UNIVERSITY trademarks. Among many other registrations around the world, the Complainant is the owner of the United Kingdom Trademark Registration No. UK00003070878, registered on December 5, 2014, for ASTON (as a word mark), covering protection for various educational services as protected in class 41 and the United Kingdom Trademark Registration No. UK00002439001, registered on May 18, 2007, for ASTON UNIVERSITY (as a word mark) covering protection for various goods and services as protected in classes 9, 16, 35, 41, and 42.

The Complainant further owns and operates its main website at <aston.ac.uk>.

The Respondent is reportedly located in the UAE.

The disputed domain name was registered on March 7, 2022.

As evidenced by unrebutted screenshots provided by the Complainant, the disputed domain name resolves to a website that allegedly provides educational services for students and prominently claims “strategic partnerships with top-tier universities and internationally recognized awarding bodies in the United Kingdom”. The website also prominently features pictures of iconic London landmarks. Additional unrebutted evidence provided in the Complaint shows that at least one of the universities, the Respondent asserted to have a partnership with, confirmed in writing that no such partnership exists and that a desist letter from that university to the Respondent remained unanswered.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not formally reply to the Complainant's contentions. However, in its two email communications to the Center on July 30 and August 1, 2025, the Respondent mainly put forward (without any substantiation) that not only the Complainant and the Respondent, but also many others use the term “Aston” as an identifier for educational services. Additionally, the Respondent argued that its logo is significantly different to the logos used by the Complainant. Furthermore, the Respondent noted that any potentially misleading information on the website associated with the disputed domain name is or will be revised.

6. Discussion and Findings

According to paragraph 15(a) of the Rules, the Panel shall decide the Complaint in accordance with the Policy, the Rules and any rules and principles of law that it deems applicable.

In accordance with paragraph 4(a) of the Policy, the Complainant must prove that each of the three following elements is satisfied:

- (i) the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark in which the Complainant has rights;
- (ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name; and
- (iii) the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

For the evaluation of this case, the Panel has taken note of the [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), and, where appropriate, will decide consistently with the consensus views stated therein.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition, ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of the ASTON and ASTON UNIVERSITY trademarks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.2.1.

The entirety of ASTON mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Additionally, the Panel finds that also the ASTON UNIVERSITY mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name, as it comprises the first and more significant part of the ASTON UNIVERSITY trademark in its entirety. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the ASTON and the ASTON UNIVERSITY marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

Although the addition of other terms, here "education" and "uae" may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. Particularly, the Complainant put forward that the Respondent is neither a business or educational partner of the Complainant nor a licensee of its ASTON or ASTON UNIVERSITY trademarks and that the Respondent is not commonly known by the terms “astoneducationuae” or any other similar terms.

In this regard, the Panel has taken note of the Respondent’s arguments in its email communications to the Center, stating that there are also others using the term “Aston” as an identifier for its services and that the logo as used by the Respondent is different in terms of the figurative elements as used by the Complainant. But even if these fully unsubstantiated allegations by the Respondent were accepted as true, they would in view of the Panel not establish a right or legitimate interest of the Respondent in using the Complainant’s ASTON trademark for educational services. The Panel particularly notes that the Respondent states that it is not located in Aston, Birmingham and has also not provided any other argument why it is using “aston” for its educational services – the fact that third parties may use this does not assist the Respondent. It even remains unclear whether the educational services as indicated on the website associated with the disputed domain name have ever been provided by the Respondent. Additionally, the Panel notes that using a logo which is different to the official logo used by the Complainant does not address the fact that the disputed domain name uses the Complainant’s ASTON word mark and invokes the meaning of the ASTON UNIVERSITY mark.

All in all, the Respondent has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent’s registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.2.1.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent must have had the Complainant and its ASTON and ASTON UNNIVERSITY marks in mind when registering the disputed domain name, particularly considering the inherently misleading composition of the disputed domain name, which comprises the Complainant’s ASTON mark in its entirety and is also confusing similar to the Complainant’s ASTON UNIVERSITY trademark for educational services. Furthermore, targeting students particularly from the UAE (and with icons of London on the website), which is a specific target group for the Complainant as evidenced in the Complaint, further indicates that the Respondent has deliberately chosen the disputed domain name to target the Complainant’s trademarks for commercial gain.

As regards bad faith use, the Panel notes that the disputed domain at least until recently resolved to a website that suggested partnerships with various universities in the United Kingdom, which at least partly turned out to be false. It is not even clear whether the Respondent has ever provided the educational services as alleged on the website linked to the disputed domain name. The Respondent did not provide any substantiation or even evidence in this regard. Bearing also in mind that the Respondent particularly targets students from UAE, which are a relevant target group also of the Complainant, the Panel finds that on the balance of probabilities the Respondent has registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith, with the intention of targeting the Complainant and its educational business.

Consequently, the Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <astoneducationuae.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Kaya Köklü/

Kaya Köklü

Sole Panelist

Date: September 4, 2025