Guide to Collaborating

Connecting businesses to academics

Getting the right people together

This short guide is intended to provide you with an introduction to the Interface service and how it supports collaborations between businesses and Scotland's world-leading academic teams.
It is not intended as an exhaustive manual, rather a short checklist of things to be considered to ensure a productive partnership.

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Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

HIE
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

Scottish Enterprise

SOUTH of SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE

SCOTLAND CAN DO
IT'S TIME TO MAKE HISTORY

Introduction to Interface

Based regionally throughout Scotland and with connections into all Scotland's universities, research institutes and colleges, Interface inspires individual and groups of businesses of all sizes and in all sectors, to match them to world-leading academic expertise, research, technologies and specialist facilities.

Our **free and impartial** service has helped hundreds of organisations to innovate and become more competitive, enabling them to increase their profits, maximise their export potential and ultimately become more sustainable.

Interface can also support groups of businesses from key sectors (creative industries, food & drink and tourism) to build projects which address sector challenges or opportunities.

For more information please visit: www.interface-online.org.uk

Interface Impartial Brokerage Process
Interface have an established and efficient process that will save you and your business time and money in finding and accessing academic expertise, technologies, specialist facilities and to offset the cost of the collaborative project.

How we do it:

Interface works with you to understand your specific R&D needs.

These are translated into a working brief which can be sent to *all* of Scotland's higher education and research institutions.

Academic teams, with the right expertise, respond with their potential solutions.

Interface present these and allow you to choose the best solution for your specific need.

Once a match has been made Interface remain on hand to provide continuous support.

Interace administers SFC Innovation Vouchers and can identify numerous funding opportunities to offset the cost of your project.

Interface in numbers
- 92% of expertise searches identified capability and capacity within partner universities, research institutes and colleges for consideration by the companies
- 97% of businesses said that their project would either not have happened or taken longer without support from Interface
- 98% of businesses are either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Interface service
- 83% of businesses recorded reduced operating costs, increased productivity, profits, export, turnover and new or safeguarded employment

Benefits of collaborating for businesses

- Products, processes, services improved/developed
- Increased turnover/Increased profit
- New/Safeguarded jobs
- Increased exports
- Increased productivity
- Reduced operating costs
- Access to expertise not available in-house
- Build relationships with other businesses
- Increased knowledge and expertise of collaborating /open innovation

Hear what other business leaders say:

"Meeting Professor Colin Pulham at University of Edinburgh School of Chemistry in 2010 has led to the most amazing academic-industry partnership and development of what we think is the world's best, most stable, heat energy storage material."
Andrew Bissell, Founder & CEO, Sunamp

"We would never have been able to afford the type of equipment needed to analyse these muscle groups without the support of Interface introducing us to the University of the West of Scotland."
Alison Grieve, CEO and Inventor, G-Hold

"We feel that our work with Professor Buchanan at Edinburgh Napier University has really propelled Bright Red into a different space and has great potential to launch our brand and product well beyond the Scottish border."
John MacPherson, Director of Bright Red Publishing

Benefits of collaborating for academics

- Establish and grow links with businesses relevant to research themes
- Raise profile of university / research institute / college
- Impact the economy through application of research
- Provide additional income to fund staff and departments
- Support student engagement with industry via work-based learning and sponsored students to provide new ideas, skills and enhance employability
- Increase academic publications and provide evidence for Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact case studies
- Create commercial opportunities for specialist facilities and off-the-shelf technologies
- Research and solve real-world industry challenges including establishing new avenues for applied research
- Build relationships with other universities and academic disciplines

Hear what other academics say:

"This is the most rewarding and enriching academic/industrial collaboration that I have been involved in. It is particularly gratifying to see the impact of fundamental research being applied in real-world applications in such a short time."
Professor Colin Pulham, Head of the School of Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh

"Carrying out research on behalf of KINGDOM Scotland was such an exciting and challenging venture – it was fantastic to collaborate with a new Scottish company and to ask new questions of the historical archives based on their needs and interests. It was also wonderful to see my research having a genuine impact on the development of KINGDOM Scotland's new ranges – not many historians can say they can wear the results of their research as a luxury perfume."
Dr Dawn Hollis, University of St Andrews

"This project provided a great opportunity for the Architecture Department to work with this company and acknowledge the support of the Scottish Funding Council in making this possible. The company's vision and insight was incredible and we had a great collaboration in formulating their needs based on our prior knowledge and the further research that we conducted. This project opened new avenues for us to collaborate on further projects, and applications for a CSIC-funded nine-month project and a KTP application have already been approved to further develop the collaboration."
Dr Farzad Pour Rahimian Leilabadi, University of Strathclyde

Preparing for initial discussions between academic and business

Attendees at the initial consultation to scope out a potential project are likely to include the academic and the company as well as a business development representative or commercial knowledge exchange contact from the academic institution.

Due to the COVID-19 physical distancing guidelines, these discussions are likely to take place via telephone/conference call or online meetings via Skype or Microsoft Teams.

Preparing for initial discussions	What makes a successful collaboration?
Aims of the project	Be clear about the aims and consider phased milestones with interim reviews, rather than one long overall project. Although the project scope may develop during discussions, check that the proposed solution matches your original problem statement framed in the Interface project outline.
Duration and expected timescales (taking into account priorities and commitment from both parties)	Be realistic! A short feasibility study may offer 2-3 days support. The actual timescales involved from initial discussions to getting a project underway will depend on the complexity and also the time commitment and availability of each party (business and academic). You should also consider your availability and agree a realistic start date which considers holidays, academic priorities, teaching etc (academics may not always be available for consultations at short notice). If the proposed resource for the project is a student assignment, input and supervision will need to be provided.
Communication and project management (who will lead the project to ensure milestones are achieved)	Project management should normally lie with the company. Ensure regular phone calls / online meetings are agreed to keep each partner up to date. Agree dates for phone calls and online meetings from the outset. If you feel there is a lack of communication during the project, then get in touch – don't leave it to the end.
Consider confidentiality and intellectual assets from the outset	Standard Confidential Disclosure Agreements (CDAs) have been developed by the Scottish Universities and can be put in place in advance of the discussions. Agree terms for IP or confidentiality at the outset (i.e. first discussion) before any project work is undertaken. For many funding awards it is a condition of the grant that arrangements are in place with respect to the IP. • Are standard confidentiality / Non-Disclosure Agreements (CDA/NDA's) / contracts required? • Ownership of outcome (who owns background / foreground Intellectual Property (IP), can academics publish etc?) • Background IP: are intellectual Property Rights owned by or licensed to a project partner at the start of the project? • Foreground IP: what Intellectual Property will be generated in the collaborative project?

Risks (what if something goes wrong? How will you resolve this?	Expect the unexpected - Not all collaborative projects will be successful, however, an unexpected or unintended result is still an outcome and may be as useful to inform the future direction of the product, process or service.
Costs and contributions (from both parties)	Once the project scope has been agreed, the academic team will cost the time and resources required. For collaborative projects, academic contributions will normally be their technical expertise. Company contributions may be towards the cost of consumables and staff time. Businesses must be prepared to dedicate an equivalent time as the academic partner of the project.
Funding options that might help to offset the total cost of the project and reduce your cash contribution	There are a number of mechanisms available that might help to offset the total costs of the project and reduce your cash contributions depending on the scale of the project. You can discuss these funding options with Interface or your academic partner. Please bear in mind that each funding option will have their own deadlines, eligibility criteria, guidelines and contracts.
Are you applying for Innovation Voucher funding?	The Scottish Funding Council offer a number of funding programmes, which are administered by Interface, to help offset the cost for businesses collaborating with Scotland's universities or further education colleges to develop new products, services and processes through R&D projects. All Scottish Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are eligible for these funding streams. SMEs require an academic partner to apply. Visit the website for more information: https://www.interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/funding
Continued engagement	Once you start collaborating with your academic partner, Interface will remain on hand to support your business whether for follow-on projects or to help identify new projects and new academic partners. We're looking forward to hearing about the progress of your project. To help us improve our service, demonstrate impacts and ensure that more businesses like yours get the support they need, six months after your project commences, you will receive an online feedback survey, which we kindly ask you to complete.

Preparing for a Student Work-based Learning project

Student work-based learning projects are a very different exercise to that of working with an academic. Here are some items you may wish to consider to manage expectations of this type of project:

Preparing for a Student Work-based Learning project	
It is important for expectations to be managed from the start - Aims of the project - Duration and expected timescales	• Projects should not be viewed as business critical, it is an opportunity to work with enthusiastic students that can bring fresh ideas and insights to your business, that you might not otherwise have the time to look at. • It is not guaranteed that the student will be able to deliver everything that you require. There may be an emphasis in the student course work on desk-based research (e.g. to

- Communication and project management	understand a new market) rather than more practical problem solving. • It must fit in with the timescales of the student's study, so projects usually start at the beginning of semester one (Sept/Oct time) or semester two (Jan/Feb time). • They are also credit bearing, many count towards a large proportion of their final mark, so it is in the student's interest to do well and ensure they deliver what is required as part of their coursework. • In many instances, students pick which company project they want to work on, rather than it being allocated to them, so the company benefits from having an enthusiastic student keen to work with that company, and the student benefits from working on a project they are personally interested in.
Costs and contributions (for both parties)	Most projects costs only cover consumables, if relevant, so they are of no cost to the company. It is important to receive clarification what is required from you for each university/college project, e.g. you might be expected to meet the students online at the start of the project, be available throughout and attend a final presentation.
Consider confidentiality and intellectual assets from the outset	In terms of Intellectual Property that may emerge from the Student Work-based Learning project, it is advised that you **check the situation with the university/college directly** at the outset to establish the ownership. Generally, contractual arrangements are in place which clarify ownership rights on any Intellectual Property (IP) created by the student for projects that involve third parties.
Continued engagement and funding	If a company does undertake a student project, they are still eligible to progress to an Innovation Voucher unless the company has an existing relationship with the university and has already worked with academics.

Additional resources and information

You can find further information on the Interface website from the links below.
• Guidance to Collaborating: http://www.interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/guidance-collaborating
• Frequently Asked Questions: https://interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/guidance-collaborating/frequently-asked-questions
• Funding: http://www.interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/funding
• Case studies: http://www.interface-online.org.uk/case-studies
• Specialist Facilities: http://www.interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/specialist-facilities

A range of organisations are available to assist with information on intellectual assets and preparing grant applications for funding.

Intellectual Property Office:

• https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ipo-launch-new-ip-resources-for-universities-and-colleges
• http://www.ipo.gov.uk/blogs/equip/

European Patent Office: https://www.epo.org

Google Patents: http://patents.google.com

Writing Grant applications: https://ktn-uk.co.uk/news/how-to-prepare-the-best-application-for-grant-competitions

Other support organisations
Business support organisations throughout Scotland are available to assist your business:
http://www.ecosystem.scot/

Glossary of Terms to support completing Innovation Voucher Application

If you are applying for an Innovation Voucher for the first time and if you are unfamiliar with some of the terminology used within the application form, please refer to the table below and the FAQ document on the website.

Term	Definition/Explanation
Commercialisation	For the Company – this means providing an indication of how the company is going to move the project forward after the outcome from the collaborative project with Academia. What further work is required for the new/improved product/process/service to be *"ready for market"* (how is your company thereafter going to produce/market/brand/make use of social media/identify potential customers etc).
Company In-Kind Contribution	This means providing an equivalent match of company resources for the collaboration with the Academic Institution for a Project – this can take the form of: staff time in providing a Project Brief, attendance at online meetings, examination/testing of proto-type, input to Final Report etc, other resources required (e.g. provision of equipment or other materials to use in the project).
Company Registration Number	If you do not hold either form of registration – you will require to complete a **Pre-Submission Application Form**. Please enter either your Scottish Companies House Registration Number which will commence SCO ……. Otherwise, enter your Charity Registration Number (as Registered with OSCR (Office of Scottish Charity Registration) – which will commence SC0 ……… (note - first one is a Letter "O" and the second one is a zero "0").
State Aid - De-Minimis Rules	De minimis aid is the term used for small amounts of state aid that do not require European Commission approval. Standard Innovation Vouchers are considered de minimis payments. For the Company – simply put this means to check that this Innovation Voucher funding (in the case a Standard Innovation Voucher up to £5,000) will not breach the European Commission rules of a maximum of public funding (grants) to your company of 200,000 Euros over the last 3 years.
Economic Impacts	Here the Company should list any benefits that will result from their new product/process/service – for instance – x% increase in anticipated sales, employ x additional staff, y jobs safeguarded, perceived cost efficiency (reduced production costs of x%), anticipate x increase in entry fees/sales to organisation due to new innovative service etc.

Societal Impacts	Detail how the proposed new product/process/service will have an influence on Scottish Society as a whole (if relevant) or on individuals/society (if relevant) i.e. how the project affects overall wellbeing, improved environment, improved healthcare options etc.
Intellectual Property	Refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. Hence list if you have any registered trademarks etc. (***Background Intellectual Property*** *is that which is currently owned by the company and will be required during the project.* ***Foreground Intellectual Property*** *is the new Intellectual Property that will be created as a result of the innovative project*).
Milestones	Note any significant stages within the development of the new product/process/service (for instance - Start of Project Consultation, Development of demonstrator/Prototype, Examination of Risks, Assessment of the demonstrator/Prototype, Final Close Out Consultation, Production of Final Report etc).
Turnover in Current Financial Year	Company's Sales Figures for past year. If not relevant – enter as appropriate (e.g. Pre-trading company).