



Interface

The knowledge connection for business

Annual Report 2014-2015



The above map shows the location of the **1,200** businesses that Interface has introduced to Scottish universities and research institutions.

Who we are

Interface connects organisations to Scottish universities and research institutions for the support they need to create and develop new products, services and processes.

Our service is unique in that it saves both businesses and academia time and money in making initial and sustained collaborations.

We are committed to working together with our academic partners, our stakeholders and our businesses to ensure that Scotland becomes a world-leading entrepreneurial and innovative nation: a CAN DO place for business.

Fresh Eyes, Fresh Thinking



Many small and medium sized businesses are reaping the benefits from students undertaking company led work-based learning projects. Moreover, it appears to be a win-win situation, with almost 60% of the students securing additional work with the companies who are benefiting from fresh perspectives, new ideas and viewpoints. These partnerships, many brokered by Interface, are bridging the gap between academia and industry through input into the education process of future professionals and innovators ultimately making degree courses more attractive to future students by enhancing their employment prospects.

A great example of an ongoing partnership is University of Edinburgh Business School MBA student Chih-wei Chou who completed a dissertation on international marketing on behalf of Spoonfed, who produce online management software for caterers and restaurants. This in turn led to a 12-week project handling international enquiries, and she was then recruited as the company's International Business Development Manager.

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

With established connections in each of Scotland's universities and research institutions we are able to identify the expertise, technologies and the most relevant facilities and equipment to solve any number of business challenges.

We promote inclusive growth; we have supported businesses to become more innovative, allowing them to attract investment, reach new international markets and develop products, processes and services that will tackle environmental and societal challenges.

Our role as impartial translators between business and academia enables companies to foster innovation and impact to drive forward their profitability and commercial success, while universities see impacts from the development in knowledge and public understanding.

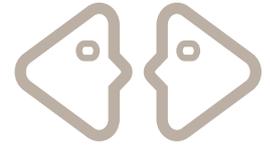
179 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS
369 ENQUIRIES SCOPED AND PRESENTED TO UNIVERSITIES/RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN YEAR 2014/15



CELEBRATING SUCCESS



We actively recognise the achievements made through academic collaboration and in November 2014 Loadfast Systems, MARA Seaweed, The Food and Drink Industry Advisory Group on Resource Efficiency and Dr Nigel Kerby, former Managing Director of MyInfield Research Services (MRS) Ltd., were each presented with Interface Excellence Awards by Mr. John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister of Scotland and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy.



THE RURAL PICTURE

To gain a greater understanding of our varied business base across Scotland we commissioned two pieces of research into companies based in rural areas in 2014/15.

The first, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise, surveyed 382 companies in rural lowland Scotland who were 'innovation inactive' with the goal of establishing their barriers to successfully innovating and how Interface could better tailor our support.

The research showed that the barriers for these businesses ranged from a lack of awareness of the opportunities and benefits of working with universities to understanding how to start a relationship.

Business isolation, lack of resource and having appropriate in-house expertise also emerged as key challenges, with businesses stating these negatively impacted on profit margins, resulting in missed opportunities and restricted their ability to develop new ideas to innovate and grow.

The results contrasted with a second independent research study of companies in the Highlands & Islands that have engaged with academia through Interface.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

83% recorded reduced operating costs, increased productivity, profits, exports, turnover, and new or safeguarded employment

97% said their projects would either not have happened or taken longer or been less valuable without assistance provided by Interface

69% of businesses reported that they were more likely to work with academia in the future as a result of the assistance from Interface

In conjunction with Scottish Government, Cabinet Secretaries and other business support organisations, we held two round table meetings in Perth and Dumfriesshire. These round tables provided opportunities for local businesses that have been supported by Interface and key funders to directly discuss the opportunities and challenges in relation to business and academic collaboration.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Over the past twelve months we have provided considerable support for the Universities Scotland and Innovation Scotland Forum's programme of continuous improvement to make it easier for businesses and academic teams to work together. These improvements have included clarity around intellectual assets ownership for companies and academic teams receiving Innovation Voucher funding and developing a standard legal template which is now conditional for all projects funded through Innovation Vouchers.

In addition, on the basis of feedback and request for simplification from many businesses and academic teams we have revamped the online information and application forms for Innovation Vouchers including creating frequently asked questions, with a simple flowchart of the application process, and a step-by-step guide.

Health Science Solutions



Health Science Solutions, based in Inverness, approached Interface seeking academic expertise to develop a method for securely transporting transducers – the most fragile and expensive mobile part of ultrasound equipment, which are frequently damaged beyond repair in transportation.

Interface connected Health Science Solutions to the University of Strathclyde and the University of Dundee who worked together to successfully develop a working prototype which is currently being tested.

MORE THAN
60 JOBS
WERE SECURED OR
CREATED ACROSS THE
HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS
BETWEEN 2011-2014
AS A DIRECT RESULT
OF INTERFACE. THE
COLLABORATIONS
BETWEEN BUSINESS
AND UNIVERSITIES AND
RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS
CONTRIBUTED
£2.2M
TO THE ECONOMY.

HELP WITH FUNDING

The Scottish Funding Council's Innovation Voucher Scheme, which Interface administers, helps business to work with academia by providing grants from £5,000 to £20,000.

ALMOST 1,000 STANDARD INNOVATION VOUCHERS HAVE BEEN APPROVED SINCE THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL LAUNCHED THE SCHEME IN 2009, AMOUNTING TO JUST OVER

£4,500,000

IN 2014/15

193

STANDARD INNOVATION VOUCHERS WERE APPROVED, TOTALLING



9

FOLLOW-ON VOUCHERS WERE APPROVED, TOTALLING

£104,000

2

STUDENT PLACEMENT VOUCHERS WERE APPROVED TOTALLING

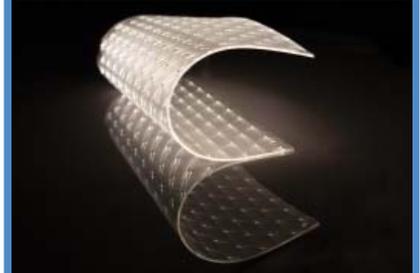
£8,800

2

HORIZON 2020 VOUCHERS WERE APPROVED TOTALLING

£8,800

Design LED



Design LED, based in Livingston, worked with the Intelligent Lighting Centre at the University of Strathclyde to develop more efficient lighting technologies. Wanting to attract European partners, they approached Interface which identified the Horizon 2020 SME Engagement Scheme as a viable funding solution to allow them to attend Light + Building, the world's leading trade fair for lighting and building services technology, hosted in Frankfurt.

Thanks to the funding, Design LED have successfully created a team of industry experts from across Europe and three Horizon 2020 European Funding applications have been submitted allowing them to tap into the £70bn fund.

FUNDING DEVELOPMENTS

A pilot scheme for further education colleges to collaborate with businesses in the construction sector through Standard Innovation Vouchers was undertaken in the Academic Year 2014/15. The pilot was a success and has since been rolled out by the Scottish Funding Council so that colleges are eligible to apply for Innovation Vouchers to collaborate with businesses from all sectors.

Meanwhile companies working with two research institutions - James Hutton and Moredun Research Institutes - are now eligible to apply for Innovation Vouchers through funding from Scottish Government.

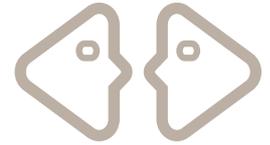
In addition, a new funding scheme, The Student Placement Innovation Voucher, was launched by Professor Alice Brown, Chair of the Scottish Funding Council in November 2014, providing SMEs already in receipt of a Standard Innovation Voucher the opportunity to host post-graduate students to help with the development of the initial projects.

ScotLab



Scotlab Ltd, based in Glasgow, has developed a specialist device aimed at simulating the effects of extreme altitudes for use in the sports and fitness markets, with potential future applications in Health and Wellness.

Working with the University of Strathclyde and the University of the West of Scotland, and with SFC Innovation, Follow On Innovation and Student Placement Innovation Voucher funding, Scotlab have undertaken a number of projects which has allowed them to develop, manufacture and launch their first product, the Altium i10.



SUPPORTING KEY INDUSTRY SECTORS

As part of Innovation Scotland, and to support the development and success of the new and emerging Innovation Centres, Interface have created a specific Sector Team who are providing guidance and cohesion for businesses seeking to work together with academia to address longer term industry needs. Currently the greatest demand is coming from Food and Drink, Creative Industries and Tourism.

Interface with the Creative Industries



An internal research report prepared for the tourism sector concluded that while business to academic activity levels remain low across the sector, businesses respond well to local activity and with Interface encouragement are more likely to become "innovation active". Academic expertise has been sought from a range of disciplines beyond hospitality, from computing sciences to marketing and business strategy.

Interface with Tourism



PARTNERING WITH INNOVATION CENTRES

Maintaining sector wide support, Interface complements the activity of Scotland's eight Innovation Centres through active partnerships. Agreements are in place ensuring the most effective way of working together and recognising and utilising the added value each organisation offers. By exploiting our respective and complementary strengths, together we help promote a clearer understanding of the whole innovation landscape.

The Innovation Centre collaborations already in place will help develop the skills that Scottish business needs to succeed in the global marketplace in a range of sectors. By using Scotland's exceptional research base, we are able to respond nimbly to opportunities for potential growth.

“This is an exciting time for the centres, which are developing practical solutions to challenges faced by industry.”

Mike Russell MSP, the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, August 2014

CM2000



Established in 1999, Greenock based Care Monitoring 2000 (CM2000) have developed a mobile platform that enables health professionals to be identified in a Service User's home ensuring the right care is delivered at the right time.

CM2000 records around 10 million community care visit each month and also collects a great deal of data on the needs of Service Users. They approached Interface looking at how this data could be used to evaluate the long-term health of an individual, further supporting those administering the care, as well as those receiving it.

Interface worked with CM2000 to develop their brief, sending it to the most relevant universities and research institutions in Scotland. The company decided to work with academics at Edinburgh Napier University, who secured a £5,000 Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Innovation Voucher.

CM2000 were so pleased with their initial project with Edinburgh Napier University that they developed a second project focussing on building a more robust evaluation platform, and successfully applied for SFC Follow-On Innovation Voucher funding to match their own cash funding.

Since working with Edinburgh Napier University CM2000 have gone on to work with the Digital Health and Care Institute (DHI) Innovation Centre, attracting more funding and developing an ongoing strategic partnership.

A GVA of

**£26.3
MILLION**

has been achieved from
Interface's support for
food and drink businesses

Source Ekos Ltd



Scottish Craft Distillers Association



The Scottish Craft Distillers Association was established by Interface Food & Drink and other partners to encourage innovation in the craft distilling sector in Scotland by working with academia.

The 35 strong group of companies drawn from across Scotland, has created and developed a commercial arm with its own brand. They have exhibited in Italy and the U.S. and in the coming months, hope to be listed with Ocado, reaching new markets outwith Scotland.

The group held a highly successful first UK conference for craft distillers in early October 2015 in Blair Atholl, bringing together almost 200 distillers, academics, suppliers and enthusiasts for an AGM, spirits showcase, gala dinner and competition.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In January 2015 EKOS Ltd conducted an independent review of Interface innovation support provided through academic and business collaborative activity across the food and drink sector in Scotland, this included individual company brokerage, common interest groups and funding for the food and drink sector. The review informed Interface on the future of academic and business engagement across the sector and how the model might be best developed to deliver increased economic impact.

INTERFACE FOOD & DRINK

A key success for Interface Food & Drink has been developing multi-party groups established to allow businesses and organisations with a shared purpose to join resources to tackle a specific problem. These include the Resource Efficiency Industry Advisory Group in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland and Scottish Food & Drink Federation, which covers issues relating to waste, energy and water as they impact on food and drink businesses.

Other groups include Scottish Rapeseed Oil producers and food and drink companies using sea buckthorn as an ingredient.

A range of different academic project ideas have been identified through these groups with almost £350,000 of grant funding awarded in the last year.

COMPETING FOR SUCCESS

Through the annual Interface Food & Drink competition two Scottish companies from the food and drink sector shared £80,000 to create projects that will have significant environmental and economic impacts for them and the industry as a whole.

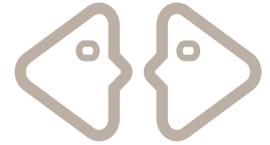
Glasgow based Dawnfresh will partner with Abertay University Dundee, to undertake research to allow them to control variations in the farming and processing of fish to align with consumer preferences.

The Scottish Salmon Company, based in Edinburgh, will work with the University of Aberdeen to convert wastewater from their processing plants into valuable fuels and chemicals which they can use to generate extra revenue and further reduce their impact on the environment.

FOOD & HEALTH INNOVATION SERVICE

As partners in the successful delivery of the Food & Health Innovation Service, Interface has helped many companies work with academics on new product and process development projects.

For example, Fife based fruit and veg wholesalers Ivan Wood & Sons Ltd, were introduced to Abertay University Dundee for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership to develop an innovative filtration system to help chip shops meet new waste water laws when washing potatoes.



Looking ahead

REFRESHED ADVISORY BOARD

Interface welcomed five new members to its Advisory Board in 2014/15, drawn from business and academia. The Board provides independent advice and guidance on the development and implementation of Interface's strategic objectives. More information can be found at www.interface-online.org.uk/about-us/meet-board

PROMOTING UNIVERSITY ASSETS

To ensure that businesses are aware of the wealth of resources available in our universities and research institutions Interface is working in partnership to develop an online platform to promote commercially available facilities. Due to launch in 2016 this will provide a cost effective resource for businesses to test and develop their innovative ideas as well as providing universities and research institutions across Scotland with new way of creating revenue.

Further to this Interface are working with our university partners to actively promote the existing technologies that are available for businesses to commercialise helping them to create and develop new products and services



THE 2016 YEAR OF INNOVATION, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



From textiles and technology, to architecture, fashion, and more, the 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, running from 1 January to 31 December, shines the spotlight on Scotland's greatest assets, icons, and hidden gems.

Interface is proud to support the coming year and, in partnership with VisitScotland, is launching a competition to encourage Further and Higher Education Institutions to develop an interactive digital product that showcases Scotland's places of interest further celebrating Innovation, Architecture & Design. More information can be found at www.visitscotland.org/digitalcompetition.aspx

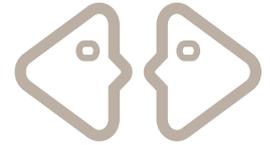
THE SCOTTISH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AWARDS

To celebrate Interface's 10th Anniversary, the 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design and to promote and celebrate Knowledge Exchange in Scotland Interface is creating the first ever Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards.

These awards build upon the previous Interface Excellence Awards and ensure that all academic and business collaborations can be recognised, not only those facilitated by Interface or Innovation Voucher Funding.

The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards will reward and celebrate the progress made through commercial and academic partnerships promoting the benefits of academic collaboration with the overall aim of stimulating further business demand and further positioning Scotland as a CAN DO nation. Applications are open until Friday 11th December 2015 and the event will be hosted at the RBS Gogarburn Conference Centre on Thursday 25th February 2016. More information can be found at www.interface-online.org.uk/events/scottish-knowledge-exchange-awards





WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Interface seeks to complement and work in partnership with all organisations in Scotland to promote academic – business collaborations as a key activity in driving innovation, investment, internationalisation and inclusive growth. Our involvement in the Scotland CAN DO framework ensures that Interface continues to be a vital part of the innovation ecosystem in Scotland, helping to create opportunities for all businesses.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

During the last 12 months, Interface continued to be cited as an exemplar, both home and away, in impartially brokering academic to business partnerships.

The Dowling Review of Business-University Research Collaborations www.raeng.org.uk/policy/dowling-review noted the achievements of Interface and concluded that there was a closer engagement in Scotland between business, universities and local authorities than elsewhere in the UK.

We are contributors to the evidence for the Growing Value Scotland Task Force co-chaired by Rob Woodward (Chief Executive, STV Group plc) and Professor Sir Ian Diamond (Principal & Vice Chancellor, University of Aberdeen), which is considering the challenges and opportunities for the future of Scottish innovation.

The Task Force, which will publish its recommendations in 2016, seeks to identify and prioritise actions specific to Scotland that will enhance the value of publicly-funded research and increase university-business collaboration.

We continued to foster links with other regions across the UK and countries including Ireland and Australia to exchange best practices for collaborative support.

OUR NEXT DECADE OF SUCCESS

We, the team, funders and academic partners, can look back over the last ten years with pride and encouragement in establishing Interface as the “go to” destination for impartial brokerage of academic to business collaborations. Our own commitment to innovation continues and the refreshed Advisory Board are developing the Interface 2021 vision which will inform our strategy and operations to ensure even greater opportunities for the next ten years.

We are grateful for the ongoing commitment and enthusiasm over the last twelve months by the Interface staff, our Advisory Board and the businesses and academic teams. We acknowledge the support from our funders including Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and European Structural and Investment Fund 2014-20 Programme.

Investors in People



Edinburgh based Investors in People (IIP) was connected to the Training and Employment Research Unit (TERU) at the University of Glasgow by Interface for a large scale research project on its impacts, which has been fundamental to confirming the value and impact of Investors in People on a range of organisations in Scotland.

The success of the initial research led to a further project focussing on the market potential and barriers pilot stage of their Investors in Young People initiative. Interface, once again, used its connections to complete a comprehensive search across all Scottish universities and research institutions to provide Investors in People with access to world class expertise. IIP chose to work with the University of Glasgow again and the resulting report has helped to provide valuable evidence for policy and practice.

20 Potterrow
Edinburgh EH8 9BL
interface-online.org.uk
0845 013 0536
info@interface-online.org.uk

