

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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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.



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 meeting between academic and business

Attendees at the initial meeting 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.

Preparing for initial meeting	What makes a successful collaboration?
Aims of the project	<p>Be clear about the aims and consider phased milestones with interim reviews, rather than one long overall project.</p> <p>Although the project scope may develop during discussions, check that the proposed solution matches your original problem statement framed in the Interface project outline.</p>
Duration and expected timescales (taking into account priorities and commitment from both parties)	<p>Be realistic! A short feasibility study may offer 2-3 days support. The actual timescales involved from initial meeting 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 meetings at short notice). If the proposed resource for the project is a student assignment, input and supervision will need to be provided.</p>
Communication and project management (who will lead the project to ensure milestones are achieved)	<p>Project management should normally lie with the company. Ensure regular phone calls / meetings are agreed to keep each partner up to date.</p> <p>Agree dates for phone calls and 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.</p>
Consider confidentiality and intellectual assets from the outset	<p>Standard Confidential Disclosure Agreements (CDAs) have been developed by the Scottish Universities and can be put in place in advance of the discussions.</p> <p>Agree terms for IP or confidentiality at the outset (i.e. first meeting) 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?)	<p>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.</p>
Costs and contributions (from both parties)	<p>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</p>

	<p>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.</p>
<p>Funding options that might help to offset the total cost of the project and reduce your cash contribution</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>You can discuss these funding options with Interface or your academic partner.</p> <p>Please bear in mind that each funding option will have their own deadlines, eligibility criteria, guidelines and contracts.</p>
<p>Are you applying for Innovation Voucher funding?</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Continued engagement</p>	<p>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.</p>

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 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 SCO (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 Meeting, Development of demonstrator/Prototype, Examination of Risks, Assessment of the demonstrator/Prototype, Final Close Out Meeting, 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).