

## Facts and Figures

Interface – The knowledge connection for business, was established in August 2005, as a central point of access to help companies utilise the world-class technology, skills and research available within Scotland's universities. In 2007, Interface expanded its remit to include Scotland's research institutes, now representing 26 higher education and research institutions. In 2008, Interface was awarded a further five years funding from The Scottish Funding Council, following the success of its three year pilot phase.

### How can Interface help?

With established links to thousands of world-class leading experts, Interface finds and introduces companies to the perfect academic partner.

Whether it is research and technology capabilities, consultancy, industrial placements or access to equipment and facilities, Interface is equipped to source the required expertise to help companies solve business challenges and bridge the gap that often exists between business and the academic world.

Collaborating with academic partners brings significant business benefits

- Develop innovative new products, services and processes
- Improve performance using technological advances
- Increase competitive advantage and enhance profitability in existing and new markets

When a company seeks potential collaborators to solve a problem or help its business development activities, Interface carefully establishes the exact requirements of the enquiry. It then identifies potential academic partners and helps to match the appropriate university expertise to support the company in moving their business forward.

Not only are companies finding that Interface's one-stop-shop 'knowledge connection resource' invaluable, but the ongoing support offered including progress monitoring, guidance and contractual and fund-raising advice is also as beneficial.

### Key Stats June 2010

Now in its fifth year of the project, Interface has introduced over 708 businesses to academic partners and its success story is reflected in the following:

- Over 2123 enquiries received
- Approximately 1037 enquiries have progressed beyond enquiry stage to establishing capability and capacity
- 250 company and university collaborative projects initiated
- Over 197 companies in discussions or at stage of negotiation with universities
- 80% of companies who have initiated projects have not previously worked with that academic partner
- 60% of enquiries are from Scottish SME's
- 15% of enquiries are from the rest of the UK & International organisations

### Building links and developing its operational procedures

Interface has established operational mechanisms, which includes a database of university capabilities and a network of contacts within each partner institution – this helps simplify and speed up the match-making process.

Interface has also developed links with business advisors and trade associations such as Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, CBI, IoD, Chambers of Commerce, Scottish Engineering, Scotland IS, etc. Over 50% of Interface enquiries are referred from these organisations, which clearly demonstrates their support and promotion of the Interface service. Interface also receives referrals from academic partners, as a result of the close relationships developed.

The NEW Interface website has recently been launched and provides a comprehensive guide to funding opportunities to support company engagement with academia, case studies and relevant networking events.

## Collaborative projects already underway facilitated by Interface

**Research Collaboration:** Annandale Distillery was introduced to experts in the University of Glasgow, University of Dundee and Glasgow Caledonian University to help get a new brand of whisky out of the distillery and into the marketplace. *"I am so grateful Interface brought together this range of extraordinary academic talent. Each project has its own challenges and the research has been pivotal to keeping the developmental phase on track."* David Thomson, Owner, Annandale Distillery Company Ltd.

**Knowledge Transfer Partnership:** Nairn's Oatcakes Ltd is working with the Scottish Crop Research Institute and awarded a KTP to investigate how to reduce saturated fat levels and the causes of rancidity in their oatcakes. *"Interface introduced us to a number of institutions before we opted to work with the SCRI and apply for a KTP which combined various areas of interest into one project. Interface has opened up a fantastic opportunity for us and given us access to a partner who will offer us the means to move our research and development onto the next level."* Gavin Love, Technical Director, Nairn's.

**Consulting:** Replin Fabrics is working in consultation with Robert Gordon University to to better understand the market and uses of smart textiles to ensure a competitive edge. *"We needed help from an academic that could provide expert opinion and help us recruit an experienced and skilled candidate in smart textiles. Interface introduced us to Prof Bob Bradley who understood exactly what we were looking for."* David Breckenridge, Managing Director, Replin Fabrics Ltd.

**Access to facilities:** Thales is collaborating with Edinburgh Napier University to undertake testing of laser modules and materials analysis.

**Industrial Placement:** Design LED Products, wanted to showcase their products more effectively. Design students from Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Caledonian University were placed to showcase its technology in graphic renders and investigate design applications for the technology into other new markets.

## Scottish Funding Council Innovation Voucher Scheme

Scottish SME's can access between £500 - £5000 to help offset the costs of collaborate projects between small to medium sized enterprises and Higher Education Institutes in Scotland.

Interface introduced Total Waste Management Alliance Ltd (TWMA) to University West of Scotland and were awarded an innovation voucher to help offset the costs of the collaborative project. The University of the West of Scotland's Environmental Initiatives Research Group is helping TWMA to explore the recycling of waste material generated by offshore oil and gas production. UWS and TWMA are exploring options for reuse of materials, in particular rock flour and oil wastes, which are currently disposed of through conventional routes (land fill of rock and reprocessing of oils). The ultimate aim is to evaluate alternative routes for reuse of wastes and reduce the need for conventional disposal.



Many companies don't know that innovative solutions to help their business grow can be developed with academic assistance – the Interface service is free to companies and organisations to help make the right connections for businesses!

To find out how Interface can help you or for further information please contact:

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Visit our website and sign up to the Interface mailing list to be kept updated on our news, events and case studies

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