

16th April

Dr Lambert
Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Dr Lambert,

The WDA is pleased to be able to respond to your enquiry into Businesses – University Collaboration.

Universities play a key role in supporting the work of the WDA especially in their contribution to economic development.

The main department interacting with the higher education sector is the Technology & Innovation team which is part of the Business Support Division.

The attached response has been compiled by colleagues in the Technology & Innovation team which I manage on behalf of the WDA.

If you have any enquiries or need further information about any of our activities please contact me (029 2082 8732) or Dr Jarmila Davies (029 2082 8738). Further information may also be found on the following websites –

www.knowhowwales.com
www.ceticwales.com
www.wda.co.uk

We also enclose literature on some of our relevant activities.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Virginia Chambers
Director
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WDA Response

Background

The key WDA department responsible for working at the interface of industry and academia is the Technology & Innovation Team.

This comprises of approximately 70 staff who are located at our headquarters in Cardiff and in our 4 Regional offices across Wales.

The team includes a dedicated team of 5 staff (Know-How Wales) who work locally with businesses introducing them to academic expertise and know how. We also host the Wales Innovation Relay Centre. WDA activities in this area include –

- Technology transfer & commercialisation
- Technical problem solving
- Access to specialist facilities and expertise
- Grants for SMEs to access academic expertise
- Access to EC and UK Government R&D support
- Partnerships in Innovation Specialist Research Centres
- A Centres of Excellence programme
- Sector support including limited support for professorship
- Power Electronics and Optoelectronics

Underpinning the work the WDA does in this area is the Welsh Assembly Government's new Innovation Action Plan which was launched last month and which sets ambitious targets for improving the interface between businesses and academia.

The WDA works closely with the Higher Education Funding Council, ELWa, the Welsh Assembly Government and the institutions themselves.

Some of the WDA activities in this area are funded by European Regional Development Funds.

Universities Contribution to Economic Development

The higher education sector in Wales is crucial to the WDA's remit to create new and higher added jobs and contribute to wealth creation.

In particular the higher education institutions contribute to –

- Development of skilled people
- New spin out companies
- Research and provision of specialist facilities
- Support for new inward investment
- Ongoing support for new product/process development in companies already in Wales

Their presence also contributes significantly to the local economies in which they are based and where they may be one of the biggest local employers.

Specific WDA Activities in Support of Businesses - Academia Collaborations

1. Know How Wales

Know-How Wales service is establishing new forms of interface between businesses and academic institutions by underpinning and developing relationship management, knowledge management and communications as the vital tools in the knowledge transfer process. A team of 5 locally based regional project executives forms a key element of an integrated All-Wales network of innovation and knowledge transfer support. Activities include –

- Identification of business needs
- Identification of relevant academic expertise and facilities
- Facilitation of business/academia link and relationship building
- Relationship management
- Promotion of academic expertise and facilities to businesses
- Publication of case studies, creation and management of knowledge transfer portal website etc.

Know-How Wales is a free, impartial service available to all Welsh businesses

2. Centres of Excellence in Industrial & Technology Collaboration (CETIC)

CETICs are recognised both for the excellence of their research and their proven track record of working with industry. 20 CETICs have been accredited in the following areas.

- Centre for Advanced Software and Intelligent Systems
- Aberystwyth BioCentre
- Centre for Complex Fluids Processing
- Centre for Communications and Software Engineering
- Centre for Computation and Simulation
- Materials
- Power Electronics Design Centre
- Centre for Electronic Product Engineering
- National Centre for Product Design & Development Research (PDR)
- Manufacturing Engineering Centre
- Centre for Sustainable Energy Process Management
- Wolfson Centre for Magnetics Technology
- Pest Management & Ecotoxicology
- Cardiff Centre for Multidisciplinary Micro-technology
- Centre for Research in the Built Environment
- Centre for Advanced & Renewable Materials (CARM)
- Institute of Bioelectronic and Molecular Microsystems (IBMM)
- Industrial and Commercial Optoelectronics
- Institute of Medical Genetics
- Wound Healing Research Unit

With the assistance of ERDF and additional Assembly and WDA funding each Centre has a dedicated Commercial Manager who works with companies. The WDA promotes the Centres both in Wales and internationally and representatives from the Centres have participated with the WDA in overseas missions, exhibitions and conferences e.g. Biosciences missions to Boston and Japan.

3. Innovation Centres

The WDA has an ambitious programme to develop in partnership with local academic institutions, a network of business support led Innovation Centres. These are branded Technium. The first centre at Swansea is already a huge success and phase 2 is planned as are Technium Centres at a number of other locations. Some are sector specific e.g. BioTechnium and AutoTechnium.

4. Specialist Business & Research Centres

Building on unique strengths in academia the WDA has partnered to provide a number of sector specific facilities that also provide state of the art equipment which can be used by industry.

This includes a new Optronic Centre in North Wales and development of an Engineering & Manufacturing Materials Centre (ECM²) located at the old Corus Technology Centre in Port Talbot.

5. Grants

The WDA has a grant (Technology Exploitation) which can provide up to £ 10K for SMEs to access academic expertise.

6. Collaborative Research Funding

The Wales Relay Centre helps companies and academic groups to participate and access funds from EC and DTI programmes. Know-How Wales staff also promote a number of UK schemes including TCS, CBP and LINK schemes.

7. Commercialisation of IPR

The WDA runs a Technology Transfer programme which can include commercialisation of academic research. During 2003 a new Technology Commercialisation Centre will be established to identify and commercialise new leading edge technologies in Wales.

8. Sector Support

The academic institutions contribute significantly in terms of provision of specialist skills, knowledge and facilities to the WDA's various sector activities which include biosciences, aerospace, automotive, materials, ICT, electronics and printing & coating. A number of industry led fora which include academic members have been established in Wales. Industry feeds in specific needs especially in terms of skills and facilities e.g. the Optronic Centre in North Wales was developed as a result of input from the Wales Optoelectronics Forum.

9. Spin Out Companies

Finance Wales, a wholly owned subsidiary of the WDA manages an EC funded Spin out programme which encourages and provides grants and mentoring to graduates to set up new companies.

10. Promotion of Academic Expertise to Business

The WDA produces a number of publications which are distributed to businesses in Wales and internationally to promote expertise from our academic intuitions. These include –

- Research Wales – of academic research
- Sector specific directories
- Advances – a quarterly technology transfer journal

Information is also available electronically on www.knowhowwales.com.

The WDA also promotes academic expertise at international conferences, exhibitions and major trade events e.g. COMDEX, Bio and CeBIT.