



## **Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration**

### **Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership – Views on Issues Raised in the Lambert Review**

The following response to the issues raised by the Lambert Review is based on the current operation of the Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership. The response is therefore only one part of the potential interaction between business and universities, and Pro-Bio Faraday Industrial Members have been advised that separate contributions should also be made where possible.

#### ***Background – Mode of operation of Pro-Bio Faraday to improve collaboration between business and academia***

One aspect of Faraday Partnership operation is to promote the interaction between business and academia. This support is manifested in three ways: to assist with the continued co-operation where this already exists; promote new links between groups that would be expected to work together; and to identify potential collaboration between groups that would not normally come into contact with each other. In addition to supporting these activities the Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership assists with the identification of appropriate research within academia, and to provide support for industry for the final implementation.

One of the major reasons for the success in promoting these activities is the recognised independence of the Faraday Partnership, although this raises longer term issues over sustainability which are currently being addressed by all the existing partnerships. The Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership is tackling the strategic technology sector of biocatalysis. The UK is a world leader in the application of this technology, but the uptake by the wider industry is still necessary to take full advantage of the benefits that may be realised. To highlight the areas of operation of the Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership and its industrial and academic members, examples can be given under the headings highlighted by the review.

#### ***Current best practice***

*Joint ventures:* Through the activity of the Faraday Partnership, new business relationships are being forged, and these include university interaction. The Faraday Partnership scheme allows joint action to be taken prior to commercial exploitation, and it is often at this stage that potential new ventures falter. In addition, companies who are not knowledgeable in the field of biocatalysis are being introduced to either university experts, or other industrial collaborators, and new relationships are formed.

*Informal contacts:* Workshops with multi-disciplinary groups organised, and during these workshops contacts are made. The contacts made are characterised by interdisciplinary relationships, and therefore are unlikely to be promoted during the normal course of business or research.



*Formal contacts:* The Faraday Partnership sponsors strategic projects, for example technology roadmaps, during which specific strands of business and research are connected. The specific activities of the research programme, for example through CASE studentships and the flagship projects, formalises relationships between business and universities.

### ***Barriers to forming relationships***

*Organisational issues:* Some industrial members of Pro-Bio Faraday feel that there is sometimes an unrealistic expectation and demand from universities when entering into relationships with business. An intermediate organisation such as a Faraday Partnership can minimise this feeling for both parties. Also, the introduction of business fundamentals at an early stage for undergraduates is thought to be important, as well as reinforcing basic scientific principles. Introduction to industry can also be achieved through visiting lecturers from industry to assist in forming new relationships, and the alternative of industrial sabbaticals by university lecturers could also assist in bringing the two communities closer together.

*Technology transfer:* The experience of the Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership in technology translation has demonstrated the need for independent experts to visit industry and academia to form new partnerships and to identify new projects. This relationship can only be formed with time, and those holding information or IP must have confidence in the technology translator such that potentially commercial information is held in absolute confidence.

*Intellectual property:* There are a number of misconceptions concerning IP in all its forms. This was noted early in the life of Pro-Bio Faraday and a short guide was written at the request of members. Reference to further reading is needed, but there is often a requirement for those undertaking novel work to have a basic understanding of IP prior to discussing issues with experts in the field.

### ***Industry needs from graduates and post-graduates***

*Quality of students:* Some comments on this issue have already been made above. The ability for students to be exposed to industrial issues at an early stage is generally seen to be useful.

*Communication of needs:* To date, Pro-Bio Faraday have not been able to engage the academic community in the training of students, and promoting contact with industry. A more pro-active role is being taken to ensure that some post-graduate training takes place outside the university environment.



### *Financial Incentives for Collaboration*

An on-going consultation is taking place to identify the appropriate methods to encourage industry to place contracts with academia. This review includes consideration of the current LINK scheme process as well as other financial incentives. One format already identified is the encouragement of small initial projects to establish potential viability of projects before major investment is made. This is seen as particularly relevant to SMEs, although large companies can also benefit from this type of project, particularly when entering new areas of technology.

On Behalf of the Pro-Bio Faraday Partnership

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