

Examples of existing links with Universities

1. Research & Development Links

We have a wide range of Research links with Universities examples provided below.

- Corporate Sponsorship of the Centre for Management Under Regulation (CMUR) at Warwick University business school. The current Head of Regulation in STW (John Owen) sits on the Centre's Management Board which is chaired by Prof Martin Cave (who is also a Non Executive Director of the Ofwat Management Board). Other members of the CMUR Board include; Ian Byatt and Stephen Littlechild, ex Director Generals of Ofwat and Offer respectively. Participation in the Centre allows exchange of views between Regulated Companies (Water, Centrica, NP etc) and Regulators and allows a direct company input to the future direction of academic research.
- Grafham Carbons sponsorship of PHd students under EPSRC jointly supervised research with Wolverhampton and Imperial College.
- Leeds University facilitate a “Credit Management” benchmarking forum with all Utility companies – our Customer Relations team participate.
- We worked very closely with Cranfield during the 1990s developing the Smartmeter. There is still a close relationship between Severn Trent Metering Services Ltd and Cranfield - mainly because Dr Neil Furmidge who worked on the invention, now works for Severn Trent Metering Services.
- There is a considerable opportunity to do much meaningful work with Universities on household water demand. We have possibly the largest body of data on household water use in the country and would be in a position to provide information to support research on climate change, demand forecasting, pricing policy etc.

2. Graduate & Post Graduate Recruitment

- Annual recruitment of graduates into STW. We recruited 22 Graduates last year, over 20 planned for this year. This is a vital component to our succession planning strategy.
- Placement students – approx. 12 – 15 per year. This is an area of greater potential – industry business experience in ‘real jobs’ as part of the curriculum. It also provides an income to help support final year studies.
- Visit selected universities Notts, Aston, Loughborough, Birmingham to promote careers with STW.
- Link into Birmingham University - Engineering Graduate Sponsorship scheme to help improve our recruitment position of Engineers for STW.

3. Joint Ventures & Consultancy Work

- Operations Resource facility at Warwick – work for our Networks department on automatic meter reading – inc. in the PR04 service pipe submission for the next regulatory period.
- Grafham carbons with Wolverhampton University – Rapid small scale test facility for Granular Activated Carbon. Work contracted for next few years. An important area of research for a key product.
- Asset Planning and Investment have used Birmingham University for asset investment research.
- Our Water Supply department commissioned help from Imperial College on safety management.
- One of our technical managers Stuart Brown was involved in a joint venture with Warwick Business School - the "Knowledge & Innovation Network". He also attends an annual "Issues in IS" conference at Nottingham Trent University. This led last year to the involvement of final year Trent students in a joint project to develop a web site for our Grafham Carbons business, which has been very successful.
- Currently, through the Government sponsored Application Home Initiative, we are in a consortium with several businesses and universities including Loughborough, Glasgow , DeMontfort, Heriot Watt and Stirling. This consortium is researching and developing the market for the adoption of technology applications and services by home-based users including security and health care.

4. Learning Relationships

- Warwick Management Development Programme for our Senior Management population – approx. 35 managers each year (5 years now) very successful Senior Level programme on business strategy management.
- Insead for Senior Managers approx. 2 per annum – for strategy makers and leaders.
- Harvard for Directors – when required.
- A quarterly session we call “Hot Topics” for all managers which include inputs from leading business schools/academics.
- BSc Water Management and Environmental Science – De Montfort University 10 STW students last year. Very successful programme with 4 first class degrees.
- Bristol University – Chartered Institution of Water & Environmental Management lead body for diploma certificates 10 per year.
- Newcastle University – MSc in Environmental Management distance learning places. (Gerald Noone our Sales & Marketing Director is visiting professor)
- Loughborough & Cranfield – John Banyard our Asset Management Director is visiting professor in Asset Management.

5. Business Exchanges

- Mentoring of students – Phil Gelder (Networks manager) provides mentoring to a Nottingham student – There are other many managers who do this.
- Various support for University projects on ad hoc basis – eg. MBAs and Phds we actively support when requested to help their research and studies.
- Asset Planning and Investment staff deliver lectures to a number of universities when asked.
- We currently have a research link with Wolverhampton University on Pesticide Removal and Granular Activated Carbon.

6. Use of Government Tax Incentives

- There is very little use of any tax incentives and there seems to be very little knowledge of what is available or the procedures to follow. Those who are knowledgeable have questioned the significance ie. cash value of such incentives.

What Works Well

- Graduate recruitment – we are still able to recruit good quality graduates, although we are starting to experience shortages in Engineering and some pure science disciplines. There is no sign that this issue is getting better. Quality of academic rigor in some disciplines seems to be lower (subjective view).
- Student placement scheme – excellent experience for both parties. Careful selection required.
- Links with University business schools like Warwick have been very successful – providing external insight and experiences to what we do and providing useful networking in the academic and business community.
- Some of the company initiated research projects such as Grafham Carbons have been very successful providing real commercial benefit – as well as research experience.

What could be improved

- Joint venture activities – some of the academics we have worked with are not always as business focussed or paced, (working at the speed we require). Some of the research projects have taken longer than we would have wished – exceeding the project timeline of the business.
- Lack of awareness of Government or tax incentives for supporting academia or research ventures – very few managers cite the use of these incentives or mention

their significance in any decisions to work with universities. Obtaining tax credits is not regarded as an easy process. Significantly it is not regarded as a benefit which would drive or encourage more work with Universities.

- The communication and understanding of business needs and expectations for research or joint venture projects seem to be responsible for some of the more disappointing experiences. One of our Senior Managers said “we are often talking different languages”.
- University liaison – The University network with businesses operates formally and informally. The opportunity for a liaison role between Universities and business could help improve the links.
- Stronger links with a smaller range of Universities – This seems to work well for STW – it is possible to differentiate those Universities which are better connected or more progressive compared with others.
- Employment opportunities for students – Employers could use more flexible working options to employ students in non-academic time providing useful income.
- Use of Intellectual Property Protection – with the research projects we fund and support we would like some IPR protection. Academics on the other hand want to publish their research. This often is a disincentive for research which has commercial potential.
- Understanding of Centre of Excellence – There seems to be little knowledge of which Universities offer the best research or resource potential for business. This is a marketing challenge for Universities.