

## Lambert Review – Submission from the University of St Andrews

The Lambert Review is looking at the relationship between business and the higher education (HE) sector with a focus on knowledge transfer activities with a remit to address issues from the demand (business) rather than the supply (HE) side. However University's have been asked to submit information to the Review.

For ease of reference, and because the issues that may arise are different St Andrews has divided its comments into 4 sections:

- General
- National (UK)
- Regional (Scotland)
- Local (Fife)

### 1. General issues.

- Universities, like businesses are not all alike; there is strength, and good strategy, in each being different. Not all universities or companies can, or should, attempt to prioritise a mission of business-university collaboration; similarly those that do must find the correct strategic partner with which to match in order to do good business together.
- In the technology exchange sector, neither the corporates nor universities, for different reasons and motivations, clearly elucidates either what they are seeking or what they are offering. Hence there is considerable confusion when non-research intensive businesses attempt to engage with research-led HEI's; the converse is not true since research-intensive businesses actively search for and find suitable HEI research partners.
- There is a misconception that research-led HEI's are there to service industry's needs and must engage in undertaking **contract research** rather than **collaborative research**. These types of work are very different and the agreements put in place to cover each reflect this. Universities carry out substantial research contracts independently from industry and the terms and conditions governing these relationships materially affect both an institutions, and researchers position and value, in working with industry under contract research agreements.
- In a poor economic climate most businesses, other than the very largest, are not be in a position to invest in R&D focussed on long-term goals.
- Most academics at research-intensive universities concentrate their efforts on investigative, intellect-led research and so are not best-placed to serve a short-term contract research, or problem solution function.

### 2. National issues

- There are too many studies, reports and requests for metrics etc. in the area of business-university collaboration that focus on the supply side. Universities, because they are funded from the public purse are continually expected to justify themselves and (re)act to the most recent government initiative or policy. Where are the reports and metrics on the demand side, which clearly elucidate the specifics, of what business would like from an engagement with HEI's?

- Research-intensive universities are a good provider of basic research output for certain areas of business e.g. energy, IT, electronics, biotechnology, pharmaceutical & medical. Other than cost, ownership of IP, and finding and nurturing good partners – which are issues in business to business contracts irrespective of whether one party is an HEI - are there any infrastructural changes that these business sectors could suggest which would facilitate the provision of the research/services sought by them from the HE sector.
- Are there clearly identified business sectors which could, but do not, access universities and can what they seek be provided by HEI's?
- Businesses need to be appraised of sources of external funding (rather than R&D tax credits) which will help them reduce the financial burden and risk in sponsoring mid- to long-term R&D work at HEI's.
- Clarification is urgently required concerning recent key strategic decisions relating to the Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and the associated Science Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTA). Both these bodies now appear to be engaged in many important aspects of the developing knowledge transfer (KT) agenda in the UK following implementation of recent government policy.
- For example, the terms of reference of SEMTA are unclear. Is the strategic partnership between higher education and industry/business proposed therein intended to embrace the whole spectrum of the KT agenda, extending according to the recent White Paper from research collaborations/innovative partnerships/industrial secondment to sector skills needs for graduate/postgraduate training/education, or is it focused on the latter aspect alone? The draft terms of reference imply the former broader remit, which is a huge agenda and one probably beyond both the capability and resourcing of the present groups.
- Of equal concern is that the SEMTA Liaison Group as presently constituted lacks comprehensive and balanced representation across the broad diversity of the HE sector. Also the group lacks any representatives from the research councils, the Royal Societies (both Edinburgh and London) and the funding councils.
- A good starting point for the proposed UK wide agenda in KT would be to learn from the Scottish experience, where considerable progress has already been made.
- Whatever are the ultimate terms of reference of the above initiatives, there is no doubt that substantially more quantitative and more reliable data regarding the requirements of business/industry in terms of their subject-by-subject graduate needs are required than is at present available.

### 3. Regional issues (Scotland)

- Too many Policy announcements and new Initiatives launched at both National and Regional level.
- Poor match between business demand and research base supply – there is relatively low business demand in Scotland for the research provision capability of the regional universities. Hence all these play on an (inter)national stage, often to the detriment of local medium and small businesses which the major Scottish HEI's do not court.

- All Scottish HEI's have a "Research & Enterprise/Innovation" office acting as a single entry point to University services to industry. However most successful research projects arise from direct contact between a university researcher and a potential client's staff. Hence R&E offices perform general promotion activity and perform the role of a contracts office in the negotiation of agreements. There may be a need for a collaborative office drawn from the universities to promote and react to very general, front-of-house enquiries to direct potential clients to those institutions best able to provide the required service. However this may depend on the level of demand since supply considerably outstrips this in Scotland. Technology Ventures Scotland has tried to fill this role.
- Scottish Enterprise employees have an extremely poor knowledge of how HEI's function, or of their key missions (in some cases this may also be true of their business knowledge). Since many of SE's staff serve a role of "account manager" to specific businesses or business sectors this works against good introductions between a business needing assistance and any part of the HE sector. The normal default position appears to be the promotion of consultants as the solution to any problem. The Universities do not have the staff nor resources to specifically court Scottish businesses, and if they did these businesses would react adversely to a confusing situation of too many advisers and intermediaries offering assistance. The Local and National Enterprise agency need to take the lead in bringing businesses to the Universities – or at least their R&E offices – to assist in building sustainable relationships between Scottish business and Scottish Universities. Is that not a key mission for Scottish Enterprise? SE is involved in a substantial number of outward and inward trade missions to foreign parts – an internal trade mission between business and universities may be of more economic benefit.

#### 4. Local issues (Fife)

- New strategic partnership (now in 2<sup>nd</sup> yr) between Local Enterprise Company (Scottish Enterprise Fife) and University. This is targeted at new company formation around university-held IP, local knowledge transfer and company support. Promising first-year.
- Low demand for university's R&D support from Fife-based companies. Any demand is generally low value, short term contract work rather than a long term investment and partnership. Tendency to purchase services and consultancy from researchers.
- University researchers preferentially court international business for major long-term R&D collaborations. This is closely aligned with a high level of Research Council funding (~50% of all research contracts) at the University.

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