

UKSPA CASE STUDY

SCIENCE PARKS - DRIVING COLLABORATION WITH ACADEMIA

Companies operating from Sci-Tech Daresbury are forming valuable collaborations with universities at a higher rate than ever before. The news is evidence that the science and innovation campus is achieving its aim of accelerating growth for high-tech tenant businesses by driving collaboration. While in the North East, the innovative businesses based at the North East Technology Park (NETPark) have nearly 160 active collaborations with universities



Vanguard House, Sci-Tech Daresbury

Growing Collaboration at Sci-Tech Daresbury

Companies operating from Sci-Tech Daresbury are forming valuable collaborations with universities at a higher rate than ever before. The news, which comes out of the latest tenant survey to be conducted by Sci-Tech Daresbury, is evidence that the science and innovation campus is achieving its aim of accelerating growth for high-tech tenant businesses by driving collaboration.

High-tech SME companies at Sci-Tech Daresbury are being encouraged to form collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with regional universities in particular, along with the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

Of those companies surveyed, 64% were collaborating with a university, compared with 55% in 2013. This represents the highest level of university collaboration to-date.

The increase in university collaboration was driven by a strong growth in collaborative research, student placements and recruitment; and sales activities to universities.

Interaction with the STFC, a UK government body that funds and carries out scientific research, has also increased. The survey showed that 48% of Daresbury companies are utilising services and/or expertise from STFC.

This percentage is significantly up from 39% in 2013

Big Leap in Collaboration

Overall, 77% of Daresbury companies reported that they had a collaboration with either a University or STFC, a big leap from 64% in 2013 and about one third higher than the level reported in 2012.

The Universities of Liverpool and Manchester continue to be the most active with campus companies, followed by Lancaster, Cambridge and Oxford.

Closer to home, the survey demonstrated a notable growth in interaction with the University of Chester.

The total business value from collaboration for Sci-Tech Daresbury companies increased from £4 million to £5 million, a rise of 25%.

Prof John Womersley, Chief Executive of STFC, said, "We work hard to minimise business failure and accelerate growth for high-tech SME companies located on our campus.

"We do this partly by promoting interactions and collaborations with and between companies, the science base of STFC and the universities, and regional and national business support organisations.

"Collaboration between companies on site is very important. This grew by 16% last year: there are now more than 140 collaborations underway between campus companies. The value creation delivered through collaboration is impressive and we are determined to keep building on it year after year."



Translating Research at NETPark

THE innovative businesses based at the North East Technology Park (NETPark) have nearly 160 active collaborations with universities – illustrating NETPark’s existing global position and also its ambition to become the global hub for materials integration by 2025.

The data was collected by Business Durham, which runs NETPark on behalf of Durham County Council, and the number of collaborations is acknowledged to be high. It shows an average of seven collaborations per company, including 10 with Cambridge, seven with Manchester and 22 with Durham.

Simon Goon, managing director of Business Durham said: “This really is evidence that NETPark is doing exactly what it was set up to do: translate first class research into products that have real social impact, which create jobs and prosperity. That’s innovation at work at its best.”

Collaborations between businesses and universities form the heart of every national and EU policy for science and innovation and how to increase them is a constant source of debate.



The distinctive offer of Science Parks

Hans Moller, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership’s innovation director said: “Clearly NETPark companies have got it worked out. NETPark is an essential part of the LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan and Innovation Strategy to make the North East one of the innovation hotspots in Europe; the fact that companies at NETPark work with so many universities across the country and the world is proof of the North East’s global standing.”

Promoting co-operation and collaboration between universities and the business community is part of the distinctive offer of science and technology parks in the UK. UKSPA CEO Paul Wright was delighted at NETPark’s news, saying “NETPark has worked hard to harness the research strengths of respected academic institutions from a central location. It is a successful model that I would recommend to other science and technology parks throughout the world.”



A culture of open innovation

Professor Brian Tanner, dean for university enterprise for Durham University and chief scientific adviser to NETPark, said development of a culture of open innovation was extremely important to science parks.

“NETPark tenants obviously recognise that by working with some of the finest minds, not just in this country, but in the world, there will be long term benefits to the sustainability of their businesses,” he said.

“While it is not surprising that the highest number of collaborations is with Durham University, a local and strategic partner of NETPark, it is evident that NETPark companies seek out the most appropriate partners, wherever they are located.”

Many of NETPark’s companies are integrating ground-breaking technology into everyday products, such as Kromek, which has developed an array of products in health and security, and PolyPhotonix, which has developed a sleep mask which can halt the blindness associated with diabetes.

NETPark is also home to Durham University’s Centre for Advanced Instrumentation, as well as two Catapult Centres, High Value Manufacturing (managed by CPI) and Satellite Applications. CPI has located the National Printable Electronics Centre at NETPark and will also be locating the National Formulation Centre and the National Healthcare Photonics Centre there.

Simon Goon added: “It’s easy to see how NETPark is becoming an innovation powerhouse. Our ambition to create 3,000 jobs and add another £400m to the region’s GVA by 2025 is certainly achievable.”

About Sci-Tech Daresbury

Sci-Tech Daresbury is one of two National Science and Innovation Campuses established in 2006 and is internationally recognised through the reputation of the STFC Daresbury Laboratory and Cockcroft Institute in leading-edge research and development. It is home to over 100 high-tech companies employing over 500 people in areas such as advanced engineering, digital/ICT, biomedical and energy and environmental technologies.

About NETPark

NETPark – the North East Technology Park – is an internationally recognised location for science and technology companies in the UK providing a dynamic and supportive environment to accelerate the growth of ambitious, innovative, high tech companies into global markets. NETPark encourages collaborative multidisciplinary links, driving innovation, enterprise and economic prosperity.

About UKSPA

For over thirty years UKSPA has been supporting the work of its Members to plan, develop and sustain environments for supporting the innovative, high tech, knowledge based businesses that are located on their sites.
www.ukspa.org.uk