

ProTon Europe¹ Staff Exchange Programme

VISITOR'S REPORT

Staff Exchange Programme Reference : SE 0504

Dates of exchange visit : from 09.08.2004 to 13.08.2004

PERSONNEL DETAILS

Visitor :

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Host :

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Give a brief description of your job. Which parts of your job did the Staff Exchange address?

I am Head of Division for science affairs and eventmanagement of the administrative Department of Science marketing and Public Relations (former Department of Technology Transfer and Public Relations - Division for Technology Transfer) at the University of Bonn. Since 1995 I am responsible for the consultation for university entrepreneurs and inventors. Since 2001 I am also responsible for intellectual property rights of the university and university staff. Since the German law concerning universities' IPR changed in 2002, many things have changed for us and we have to learn a lot.

Therefore this Staff Exchange enabled me to discuss approaches and best practices in the areas of evaluating inventions, patenting innovations, licensing to existing companies and forming spin out companies.

2. What were the main achievements of the visit ?

During the visit I became acquainted with different approaches of Heriot Watt University, The University of Edinburgh and Abertay University, Dundee as well as the programmes and schemes of The Scottish Executive and its departments, the research councils and Scottish Enterprise (Scotland's main economic development agency). I also met representatives of a Spin out company and the HWU Research Park.

We especially benefited from the fact that Dr. Thomas Kroener from FZK visited HWU-TRS at the same time. From that we derived the advantage of comparing three different viewpoints.

For the future it will be very useful to know about good practised standards like HWU's regulation for the Formation of New Companies, Policy on Intellectual Property, Confidential Information and Commercialisation and the Guide to the IP Policy. The establishment of an Innovation Exploitation Board appears advisable to me. I had collected the questions from my colleagues at the universities of Aachen, Cologne and Düsseldorf and PROvendis GmbH, our consulting company for IPR in North Rhine-Westphalia. I will soon report to them on the answers and my experiences. Together we will try to convince officials in the Ministry of Science of Nordrhein-Westfalen of programmes like the "Proof of Concept Funding", SMART, SPUR, SCORE and SEEKIT.

Finally it will be helpful to stay in contact with Dr. Kroener, Dr. Cox and the TRS-team.

CONTENT OF THE EXCHANGE VISIT

3. Give a short description of the work programme during your visit. Include the people you met, the topics you discussed and the implications for your work back at your home institution.

Monday, August 9

We started with presentations by Thomas Kroener and me to introduce ourselves to the TRS-team. Afterwards, the Technology Transfer Team (Dr Mike Cox, Dr Carol Phillips and Jane Queenan) presented Technology transfer at HWU. We discussed our approaches of spinning out companies.

During lunch we met Gillian McFadzean, the Director of TRS and Vice-Principal John Simmons. He introduced us to the Scottish Manufacturing Institute at HWU.

After the continuation of Technology Transfer discussions we were given a survey of Research & Legal at HWU by Dr Antony Weir, Amanda Hearn and Mike Perreur-Lloyd. This included contractual and research funding matters. It was complemented with EU research funding information by Dr Eva Day.

We ended with an introduction to marketing at HWU by Rachel Bowes.

Tuesday, August 10

Jamie Watt and Derek Brown introduced Intellectual Property & Legal at HWU. They showed us the university's Policy on Intellectual Property, Confidential Information and Commercialisation and the Guide to the IP Policy. We also learned, Mr. Watt is writing the patent applications for the British patent office.

Dr. Siobhan Jordan from Scottish Enterprise gave a presentation on "Proof of Concept Funding". Mike Perreur-Lloyd introduced "Knowledge Transfer Partnership at HWU". In the afternoon we visited a review meeting of the Innovation Exploitation Board. We were allowed to follow the board's method of working. Several examples of innovations by the innovators were presented.

Wednesday, August 11

At Abertay University, Dundee Paul Durrant and Jackie McKenzie introduced "embreonix incubators". In Glasgow we visited Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. Alex Reid, Julie Tunstall, Dr. Teresa Martin and dr. Brigitte Vögele gave presentations on the SMART:SCOTLAND, SPUR and SPURPLUS, SCORE and SEEKIT R & D programmes. Andy McNab of Scottish Enterprise's high growth unit also gave a presentation.

Thursday, August 12

At Edinburgh Research and Innovation (ERI), a subsidiary company of the University of Edinburgh, Andrew Sijan introduced ERI's way of company foundation. Afterwards Laura MacDonald gave a presentation on ERI followed by a comprehensive discussion.

A "University Technology" meeting took place at ERI. university-technology.com was discussed with members of several universities.

At HWU Keith Elrick introduced "Scottish Health Innovations Ltd (SHIL)"

Friday, August 13

We had a discussion with Denis R Hall and Roy McBride on PowerPhotonic, a HWU Spin out company. Robert Bruce introduced HWU's EXPLOIT programme for local SMEs which combines with SCORE and SEEKIT. We visited Jim Coyle in HWU's Research Park. We finished with a feedback session with TRS.

4. In order to share the knowledge gained during your visit please identify and describe at least one good practice² learnt, referring to the Good Practice Guidelines supplied with this report form. This should include, for example, the framework conditions the practice is used in, the critical success factors, management issues, and financial issues. Where appropriate, copies of non-confidential documents and/or templates supplied by the host should be included in the description of the Good Practice. (Use additional pages as necessary.)

There have been several good practices I learnt:

1. It is a very economical way to protect IPR in a first step if there is a person in the office who is able to file a patent application for the national patent office.
2. The way of spinning out companies at HWU is very similar to Bonn University's "Inhouse-Modell".
3. Together with other NRW-Universities and PROvendis GmbH we should try to force the NRW-government to establish schemes like the Proof of Concept Fund (information: http://www.scottish-enterprise.com//sedotcom_home/sig/academics.htm), SMART:SCOTLAND, SPUR and SPURPLUS, SCORE and SEEKIT (information: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/about/ELLD/BGI/00016879/Intro.aspx>). Especially the structure and the succession of the programmes could be adopted.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

5. What do you consider to be the immediate benefits of the exchange visit for your present job?

I will report to my colleagues at the universities of Aachen, Cologne and Düsseldorf and the PROvendis GmbH about the experiences. Together we will try adopt the good practices.

6. Can you envisage some form of longer-term collaboration with your host organisation?

I will stay in contact with HWU to learn about the progress of their approaches. I invited Dr. Mike Cox to visit Bonn University with the help of ProTon Staff Exchange Programme. Perhaps Dr. Kröner will be able to join us.

7. Do you have any suggestions as how the programme could be improved ? What advice would you offer?

I stayed at HWU together with Dr. Thomas Kröner, Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe GmbH. This was an excellent arrangement for various reasons. In this way, the host institution is required to spend time with a visitor only once, not twice. At the same time, discussions are often much more fruitful in this way because many different opinions and views can be injected (in our case, the views of a German university and a national research institution). The variety of institutions and individuals in the ProTon Network should be maintained. It is suggested that all hosts and visitors, respectively, meet at the end of the Staff Exchange Programme in order to draft best practice guidelines.

² The good practice described will be posted to the ProTon Europe website for access by the membership.