

The FUSION Graduate Programme

OVERVIEW

The InterTradelreland FUSION Programme offers graduates the opportunity to manage new technology-based projects with some of the most progressive companies and Institutions on the Island.

These unique opportunities allow a graduate to help a company, which has been carefully selected by InterTradelreland, to create and develop technologically innovative and commercially viable products and services. All companies are within the fields of Science, Engineering or Technology however each project is entirely unique.

Each year we actively recruit around 60 graduates from across the island and to date we have helped over 350 graduates secure employment within a successful SME.

THE ROLE

When taking up a FUSION graduate position you will become a project leader for one of Ireland's leading innovative companies, covering a range of sectors such as Engineering, Science, IT, Food, Energy and Pharmaceuticals. You will secure employment for the duration of the project with fast track career opportunities for advancement to a senior management position.

As a FUSION leader you will also gain a fully-funded Post Graduate Diploma with one of Ireland's leading academic Institutes.

WHAT DO I NEED?

To apply for a FUSION position you must have a degree or diploma which matches the criteria of the position being advertised by the company. In some cases, you may be required to have relevant previous experience in the industry.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

- Access to research and development facilities in a leading university or college.
- Ongoing support from an academic with expertise in a relevant subject area and a FUSION consultant who will oversee the management of your project.
- Specialist training and development programme, including attendance at relevant conferences and technology-based training courses.
- Networking opportunities with like-minded people working on similar projects across the island.

BENEFITS OF WORKING FOR AN SME

- Become a project leader very early on in your career
- Greater responsibility
- Attractive salary package
- Secure employment for the duration of the project with fast track career opportunities for advancement to a senior management position.
- FUSION offers you the unique opportunity to put your stamp on one of the island's most innovative companies

Who is InterTradelreland?

InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland is the Cross-Border Trade and Business Development Body and helps SMEs across the island — North and South — by offering practical business funding, information, advice and support. InterTradelreland makes it easier for SMEs

to do cross-border business and our support includes:

- Business Funding
- Access to Expertise and mentoring
- Public Procurement Services
- Venture Capital and Business Angel Services

Information and Advice

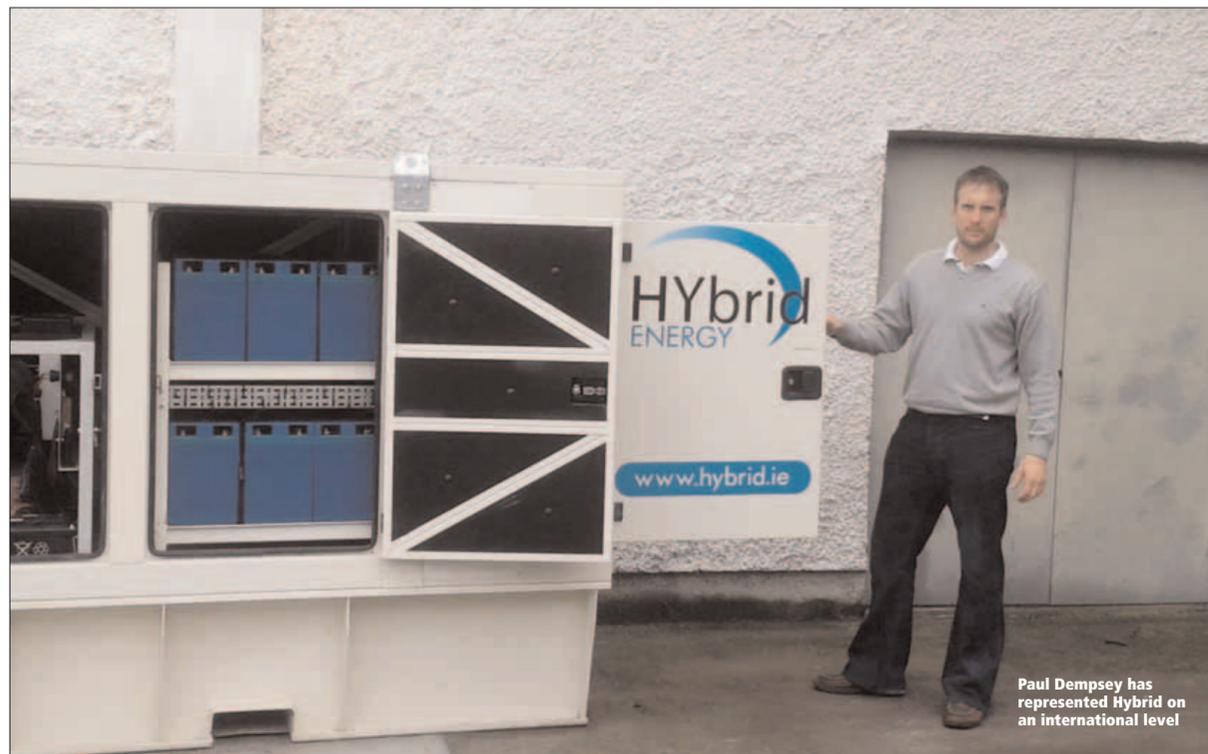
- News and Events

We do this through:

- Business Programmes
- Research and Statistics
- Networks and Partnerships

Stats and Performance:

- 19,000 SMEs have benefited from our cross-border information and advice
- 2,400 SMEs have taken part in our all-island programmes generating £600m of trade and business development value
- 1300 jobs created



Paul Dempsey has represented Hybrid on an international level

NAME: Paul Dempsey, Co Tipperary • COMPANY: Hybrid Energy Solutions, Co Kilkenny

His Experience ...

After discovering information about the FUSION programme entirely by chance, graduate Paul Dempsey has not only headed up a major project but has also relished the experience of representing the company at several overseas events.

Paul (30), from Co Tipperary, admits he knew nothing about the InterTradelreland initiative until he began searching for jobs online.

After securing employment with Hybrid Energy Solutions, Paul's 12-month project is due to end in September, and he admits the skills and experience he has gained since signing up to the FUSION programme are invaluable.

An electrician by trade, Paul spent some time travelling Australia, New Zealand and Asia before coming home to study for a Degree at Cork Institute of Technology. He graduated with a first class honours degree in Electrical Power Systems in May 2010.

As he explained: "After graduating I decided to go travelling again. I was in South America when the trip was nearing its end so I thought I'd better go online and start looking for jobs for when I got back home, and this was the first time I came across the FUSION graduate programme which was advertised online by InterTradelreland.

"I hadn't heard of it before but when I started looking in to it a bit more, I was really impressed by everything that was offered — the Postgraduate Diploma from the highly prestigious Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School, the fact that the cost of the course is covered and the level of responsibility you were given in the workplace."

Paul applied for three different programmes and accepted the position offered at Hybrid Energy Solutions. The Co Kilkenny firm was founded in 2006 to satisfy the growing demand for energy efficient solutions to the telecommunications industry.

Paul revealed: "There were many factors to consider but

Kilkenny being so close to home was a big selling point for me.

"I had my interview with the CEO on the Friday and the next day he called me to tell me I had the job. I actually worked on a part-time basis with Hybrid over the summer and started with them full-time on September 10, 2011."

"Hybrid Energy Solutions are in the business of providing off-grid power to telecommunication towers.

"The company had a bespoke range of hybrid generators for the domestic market (the HES3) but from early 2011 the company began to focus on expanding to international markets.

"The next iteration of the hybrid unit was going through the design process and it was going to be my job to oversee the project and ensure that it came to successful conclusion. In my role as Project Manager, I was tasked to liaise with all the relevant parties during the assembly process and ensure compatibility with renewable sources such as wind and solar.

"The company wanted something that could be used in the international market and the big changing point is that it's now packaged in a high security container."

After designing the prototype for the new and improved HES4, Paul has travelled overseas — with more international trips in the pipeline.

He said: "The first trip I made was to Qatar to oversee a trial on one of our units.

"The production for this large scale project is going to be done in China and as part of my role as project manager, I had to travel to China to oversee the start of the production of the new HES4 prototype

"Whilst in China, I oversaw the assembly, and provided training to make sure the wiring was done correctly and up to standard.

Since starting with Hybrid, Paul will have travelled to

China, America, the Netherlands, Qatar, Dubai, UK, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia to represent the company.

Paul admits that between studying for the Management Practice Diploma at Smurfit and working full-time at Hybrid, he's "busy all the time."

He said: "Hybrid are well aware of my commitment to the diploma and there is never any problem when I need off to attend the course.

"I love the fact that I'm working for a small company, as I'm exposed to every level of the business.

"My background is engineering but now I'm being given more responsibility when it comes to commercial stuff, sales and marketing - which in turn ties in with what I'm studying at Smurfit.

"My range of skills has been enhanced and the course has equipped me with an extra dimension, which I feel gives me a huge added benefit regarding a business approach that I can use in the workplace."

He also spoke of the benefits of working alongside a FUSION academic overseer, Professor Yigzaw Yohanis from the University of Ulster.

As Paul revealed: "Professor Yohanis is a man of huge experience in the field of engineering.

"He was very well suited to the project I was doing as he has previous experience in the field of generators and the packaging of generators. He could pass on his pearls of wisdom to me and he is always on the other end of the phone when I need him.

"The FUSION programme is a winner for everyone involved. The graduate gets to do a Postgrad at a very prestigious third level institution.

"The company gets assistance towards a salary for a graduate, and with FUSION, whatever company you get to work with, you will be allocated a huge amount of responsibility."

NAME: Ben Willis, Co Down • COMPANY: Media Lightbox, Co Louth

His Experience ...

Ben Willis is currently employed with Media Lightbox in Newry



'The FUSION programme offers huge benefits'

My name is Ben Willis and I graduated in June 2011 from the University of Ulster with a degree in Interactive Multimedia Design.

I applied for a post with Media Lightbox, a cloud-based digital asset management system that enables businesses to store, share and manage their files online. The position was for the role of Web Interface Design Coordinator as part of the FUSION programme.

I discovered InterTradelreland's FUSION programme online, when searching for employment. I was amazed at the number of SMEs throughout the island working with InterTradelreland to find high quality graduates.

The posts advertised were for a range of jobs in various sectors including IT, Science, Engineering, Energy and Pharmaceuticals.

On researching the position at Media Lightbox further, I realised the huge benefits that the FUSION programme had to offer over working for a larger organisation.

All FUSION positions are with small to medium sized companies across Ireland. They offer access to research and development facilities in a leading college or university, a Diploma in Business Management at Smurfit Business School and the opportunity to gain excellent industrial experience through a structured and planned programme of work.

Following an interview, I was offered the job and I gratefully accepted.

I have been working for Media Lightbox to co-ordinate the development of the Media Lightbox user interface and improve quality control.

Specifically, my project is to help Media Lightbox integrate online preview and editing tools, so that companies can edit their media directly online without the need to download them first.

To help me achieve this, training was funded by the FUSION programme and I have been working with an IT specialist from Dundalk Institute of Technology.

The Business Management course at Smurfit Business School improved my knowledge of business strategy, finance, marketing, entrepreneurship and human resources management.

This Postgraduate Diploma has enabled me to see the bigger picture in the business rather than the purely creative aspects of my role.

The Postgraduate Diploma has given me skills in project management, budgeting, presenting and marketing - all of which are key elements in my project.

On a personal level, the FUSION programme has helped me develop my communication skills and given me the expertise to effectively co-ordinate a team of designers, support engineers and developers.

Managing a FUSION project greatly improved my business skills and I would recommend that all graduates regularly visit the InterTradelreland website to check for vacancies in their sector.

The FUSION consultant

Since its inception a decade ago, the FUSION programme continues to exceed all expectations.

The cross-border initiative has resulted in around 85% of graduates being offered full-time positions with their host companies — while the companies involved benefit from the development of a new product or process which will enhance their business.

As Peter Grant revealed, in the current economic climate governments globally are turning their attentions to innovative SMEs and their exports, and "FUSION is very much in that space."

Mr Grant, programme director of FUSION, has been involved with the initiative since 2002. He said: "The future of the economy depends largely on the performance of SMEs and their abilities to innovate, so we see our FUSION graduates as the business leaders of the future."

He explained that FUSION projects are carried out by graduates over a 12-month or 18-month period. Saying the scheme was "beneficial for everyone", Mr Grant said: "FUSION is a partnership between a company that wants to develop a new product/process and a university/college that can help.

"These small companies may not have the skills or capacity to do this research inhouse — so FUSION links them with a university or college from the other side of the border with specific expertise in a given area, and a graduate who will be able to oversee the project and bring it to a successful conclusion.

"With FUSION, it has to be a cross-border partnership. For example, one of our graduates Ben Willis is currently working with a company called Media Lightbox, which is based in Newry. This company has been linked, via FUSION, with the Department of Computing and Mathematics in Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)

"We knew there was academic at Dundalk who has experience in software development and cloud computing, which helped determine the link between Media Lightbox and DKIT."

FUSION graduate positions are advertised on var-

ious websites such as gradireland.com, irishjobs.ie, ni-jobfinder.co.uk and footinthedoor.info

And as Mr Grant pointed out: "We advertise graduate position about six times a year, which means that if a graduate is unsuccessful the first time around, we advise them to try again when the next round of positions are available."

He continued: "We believe that everyone involved gains from this programme.

"The company gets to develop a new product or process. Hopefully it will become more capable and more profitable as a result.

"The academics play an important role as well. As they usually spend their time working in the college or university, it's good for them to get out and work within a company, to see what is happening out there in the business world. In turn, they can bring their experiences back to help enrich their lectures and/or research.

"The graduates, as well as working for an SME on a project that is leading edge, also gain greatly from FUSION's Postgraduate Diploma

"The graduates come from backgrounds in science, engineering and technology and the modules on the course are in areas such as sales and marketing, finance, HR etc. . This means we're offering graduates training in areas they may not have any experience in ... more managerial skills which can be transferred to the workplace."

Mr Grant concluded: "At the beginning back in 2002, we wondered if we could fund 20 projects over a three year period as a pilot scheme. That figure more than doubled and we ended up running 60 projects over that first three-year period.

"In the second phase over the next three years, our target was 130 projects and we ended up funding 140. In phase three, what started out as 180 projects has now ended up at over 200 projects.

"So, ten years ago we set a target of 20 and that has now increased tenfold to 200 which is a real measure of the success of the FUSION Programme."

Peter Grant is the programme director of FUSION



FUSION Graduate Story: James Wilson

"The FUSION programme has been a fantastic opportunity for me to enhance my IT skills and gain real industry experience within an innovative company. I graduated from Queens University in December 2011 and was eager to find a career that would continue to develop my skills and also introduce me to the growing IT sector in Northern Ireland. FUSION provided me with an opportunity to do this.

"I am delighted to be working with Fluent Technology; they have introduced me to new technologies and provided an insight into all areas of business including project management, finance and marketing. They are an Investor in People bronze company so I am confident that they will continue to offer training and support for me as my career progresses.

"Fluent Technology provides case management systems and grant management systems to the public and private sector in the UK and Ireland. They also develop local information systems to the UK public sector through their product Origin.

"Fluent Technology identified an opportunity to enhance this product through a mobile phone application and that attracted them to the FUSION programme.

"The FUSION programme enabled Fluent to extend their product offering, add to their staff skill set and engage with UCD to further deliver the idea. It also has given me an opportunity to become highly involved in the delivery development of a new product and see this process grow from an idea into a reality.

"I believe that the FUSION program provides benefits for both businesses and graduates. It is an ideal platform for IT graduates to showcase their talent, create innovative products and get a foot in the door of a successful company."

James Wilson was ranked among the top 30 Death Knights in the world; a world's best gamer in the Fusion Program!

James is a sporting enthusiast and persuaded one of the Fluent Technology team members to attempt the rapids whilst kayaking in the Lagan.