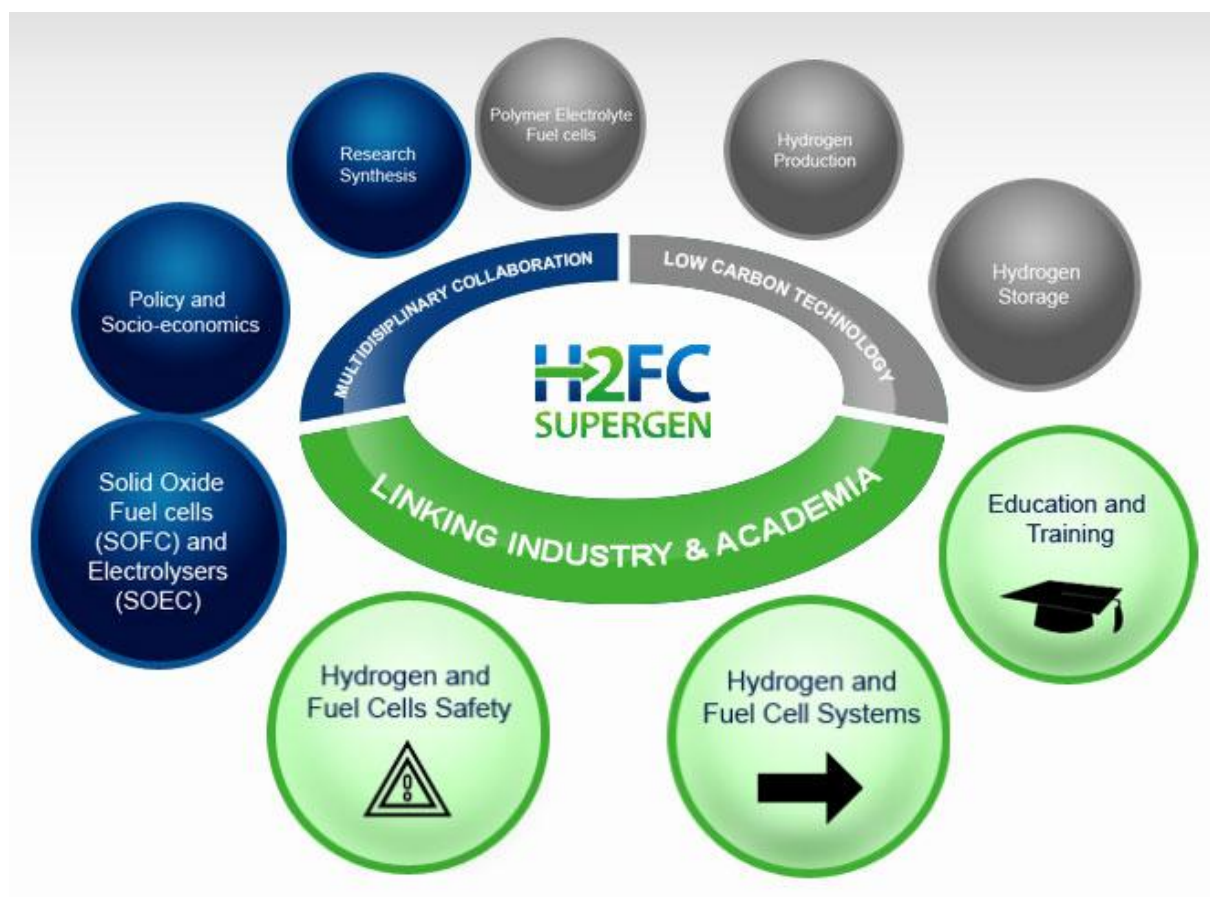


# analyst view

## H2FC SUPERGEN: Linking Industry to Academia

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Academic research underpins our understanding of the world we know, and also provides the education and training which is necessary to help build our future workforce. The transition for new technologies from the laboratory to the commercial marketplace can be difficult and without the proper support, many technologies fail along the way. Hydrogen and fuel cell research is no different and many companies partner with specific university groups in order to gain commercial access to university research. This approach has its limitations, not least in terms of scale when individual companies work with single research groups.

In the UK a newly formed resource called the H2FC SUPERGEN Hub (The Hub) is aiming to improve these interactions, setting itself a broad scope to include the entire hydrogen energy chain, from its production right through to its use in fuel cells. The Hub is working to enhance the role of UK hydrogen and fuel cell research and support its links with industry and government. Fuel Cell Today spoke with Dr Chloe Stockford, Project Co-ordinator for The Hub to find out more.

The H2FC SUPERGEN Hub, led by Professor Nigel Brandon (Imperial College) was founded in May 2012 with a budget of just over £4 million, provided by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), and the programme will run for a period of five years. The Hub has an ethos of inclusiveness and openness and encourages those working in areas of Hydrogen and Fuel Cell research, whether it be PhD students, Professors or Business Development Managers in industry to join, for free, as Associate Members to encourage the interaction between industry and academia. H2FC SUPERGEN is open to those based in the UK and internationally.

The Hub is currently focussed on two main themes: the first is to evaluate and demonstrate the role of hydrogen and fuel cell research in the energy sector (both within the UK and internationally) and the second aims to identify and exploit the use of hydrogen and fuel cells in low carbon energy systems – specifically to help the UK meet its carbon emissions reduction targets.

The Hub's structure includes a management board which is comprised of ten academics from seven UK universities supported by an advisory board made up of representatives from around 20 companies working in hydrogen and fuel cell research and development, as well as UK government and funding organisations, along with a science board of leading academics.

40% of The Hub's funding goes towards its nine core research programmes, shown in the graphic above, which highlights the broad range of interests it covers. The main themes of core research include: increasing the poison tolerance of PEM fuel cells; reducing the rare earth content of solid oxide fuel cells; improving hydrogen production from natural gas and biomass; developing novel hydrogen storage materials; and analysing the socio-economic impact of hydrogen and fuel cell technology in the UK. More information about the research can be found [here](#).

Outside of these core activities, flexible funding is also available with a total budget of around £1.6 M available for qualifying projects from UK universities over the lifetime of the Hub, and the first call for such projects is expected shortly.

Also covered by the flexible funding are plans to release four white papers during the next four years. The first of these is due in April 2014 and will focus on the role of hydrogen and fuel cells in providing affordable, secure low-carbon heat in future UK low carbon energy systems; a call for proposals on this will be made in the near future.

Alongside the core and flexible research programmes, H2FC SUPERGEN allocates funding to network activity which includes the organisation of conferences and networking events to further its goal of developing interactions between academia and industry. Its first annual conference was held recently, coinciding with All-Energy in Aberdeen, and covered a wide range of topics, both from industry and academic research, including hydrogen production, hydrogen storage, fuel cell systems and policy challenges; presentations from the event can be [downloaded here](#). Dr Chloe Stockford commented: "Our first annual conference was a real success; the event was well attended by both academia and industry, we added around 100 new associate members to The Hub and it provided an excellent opportunity for networking." Towards the end of 2013, an event is planned for young researchers, giving PhD students and early career researchers in particular the opportunity to showcase their research to a wider audience from industry and academia.

To find out more about the H2FC SUPERGEN Hub, [visit its website](#) and for companies and individuals interested in joining The Hub as an Associate member, or for more information on its events, flexible funding and the white papers, you can contact [Dr Chloe Stockford by email](#) to sign up.

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