

Institute of Aquaculture to develop postgraduate degree in ‘Blue Biotechnologies’ with European partners

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The Institute of Aquaculture at the University of Stirling is to help develop an innovative new Master’s degree to explore the benefits of biotechnology to health, nutrition and aquaculture industries. The consortium of Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) and academic partners from Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain will launch the programme later this year to address skills gaps recognised by employers in the blue biotechnology sector.

The ‘Blue Biotechnology Masters for Blue Careers (BBMCB)’ degree will be taught at the University of la Rochelle and will include an extended work placement with an industrial partner. The initiative is funded by the European Union’s Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and its “Blue Careers in Europe” call that aims to underpin growth and job creation in the blue economy.

Students will receive the latest knowledge and practical training in blue biotechnology, including the exploration of marine organisms to develop new products. In addition, participants will undertake a programme of transferable skills aimed to enhance employment prospects and ensure workplace readiness, such as communication, language and management skills, which are key to a successful career.

Dr Andrew Desbois, Lecturer of Marine Biotechnology at the University of Stirling and UK co-ordinator, said: “This project brings together European partners from academia, business and the public sector to provide students with the knowledge and practical skills they need to secure employment in the growing biotechnology sector. It will identify and expand good practices from each partner and encourage mutual learning, thereby enhancing dialogue between industries and academics working across Europe in Blue Biotechnology.”

Study schools during the work-linked training aspect of the course will enhance the learning experience by enabling students to reflect on their time in industry, and provide opportunities to meet prospective employers. Employed workers wanting to enhance their knowledge and skills, as well as people seeking employment, will benefit from the training on offer, through access to lifelong learning schemes and mentoring opportunities associated with the course.

This unique public-private partnership led by the University of la Rochelle was awarded €668,000 in EU co-funding. The partners include the University of Stirling (UK),

Xanthella Ltd (UK), the Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine and Environmental Research (CIIMAR; Portugal), Valencia Catholic University Saint Vincent Martyr (Spain), Valbiotis (France), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (Belgium) and the University of la Rochelle's Apprenticeship Formation Unit and the Lifelong Training and Employability Department.

For more details, please follow us on Twitter (@BlueBiotech) or email Dr Andrew Desbois (ad54@stir.ac.uk).