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Biocon starts academy to train biotech professionals

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In a first for Asia's bioscience industry, India's leading biotech company, Biocon has started an academy to train biotech professional for the Indian and global industry in association with California's Keck Graduate School (KGI).

Announcing the launch of Biocon Academy in Bangalore on Monday, Biocon's chairman and MD, Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said the institution was part of the company's efforts to reduce talent gap faced by India's bioscience industry and help sustain the growth momentum.
The first batch of the 16-week programme will start on January 10, 2014 and the company has invested nearly $ 3 million to run the programme which will have international faculty from KGI and in-house trainers imparting intense courses to bring out industry-ready professionals.
Dr Mazumdar-Shaw said Biocon will provide scholarship to cover three-fourths of the course fee of $ 10,000 (Rs 600,000) and even for the balance amount the students will be assisted with bank loans if required. The first batch will have about 25 students selected nationally and the Academy plans to run 3 to 4 batches in a year.

Launching the programme, Karnataka state government's chief biotech policy maker, Mr Srivata Krishna congratulated Biocon for the innovative programme and urged the state-run Biotech Finishing School project also to work closely with the Academy. He was hopeful that biotech industry will emulate the Academy and spawn many more such initiatives in the state.
India currently has some 725 biotech institutions producing more than 40,000 engineering and masters students in biotech streams. However, only about 2,000 of them employed by the industry every year due to skill gap. " This is the gap we want to bridge in a small way and often industry growth is stymied due to the lack of availability of tech talent in biosciences, " added Dr Mazumdar-Shaw who will be the chief mentor of Biocon Academy.

Students can apply online for the course through the website www.bioconacademy.com and for the first batch the selection will be based on interview. A stringent criteria has been set for eligibility. The 16-week course will have nine modules covering molecular biotechnology, pharmaceutical development, biopharma quality assurance and control, CMC regulations of pharmaceuticals, introduction to USFDA and European laws and regulations, fermentation principles, mammalian cell biotechnology, bioseparation engineering and science and professional skills development.

Initially, the programme will be for people based in India and after a few years it may be thrown open to students from all over the world. The Academy will be based in the Biocon campus in Bangalore.
Mr Sheldon M Schuster, president KGI said:" KGI faculty will deliver courses synchronously to students at the Biocon Academy facility using highly developed technology, supported by experts in the life sciences industry at Biocon." KGI, founded in 1997 is part of the Claremont University Consortium and focuses on training professionals for the biotech industry in the US.