

To the members of the press

PRESS RELEASE

A Master's degree in Innovation at Neuchâtel: an innovation in itself

Neuchâtel, 08 February 2017. **From this autumn, the University of Neuchâtel (UniNE) will offer a new programme in the field of innovation: a Master's degree, bringing together expertise from all four of its Faculties. The content of the programme will itself be highly innovative, with innovation studied through the prisms of the social sciences, economics and law. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the UniNE aims to prepare the next generation to advise businesses, organisations and governmental bodies.**

With an internationally competitive economy defined by its high precision industry, Neuchâtel offers an extraordinary setting for the study of innovation. The interconnectedness of means of production and consumers, as well as the growing importance of computer systems in the production of goods and services, are only just starting to transform our societies. This situation, often described as "Industry 4.0", requires a better understanding of the legal, economic and social contexts in which innovation can thrive.

What makes for an environment conducive to innovation? What are the roles of the State and the individual? Which legal conditions facilitate creativity? How should R&D be managed when introducing a certain innovation onto the market? Are consumers ready to accept any innovation, no matter how novel? What are the major challenges to ecological and sustainable transition? These questions will be at the heart of this interdisciplinary Master's programme, which will aim to teach the basic tools and theories in R&D and innovation, and provide a better understanding of contemporary issues.

The curriculum will comprise of a refresher course and a core curriculum, which then lead to three different specialisations: R&D management, Innovation Law, and Innovation and Society. The skills which students will acquire are highly sought after by companies with innovation at the heart of their business models, and those trying to adapt to new forms of innovative competition. The Master's degree will also lead to employment opportunities in Cantonal or Federal public administrations, as well as industries in the parapublic sector, such as business incubators. The specialisation in law will prepare students to work as legal counsel; the specialisations in social sciences and economics will enable them to work in the promotion, support or facilitation of innovation projects (such as project management, innovation management, and independent consulting).

The perfect project for "Microcity"

With this new Master's programme, the UniNE will apply its expertise in law, economics and social sciences to the benefit of "Microcity", the cantonal research centre for innovation. In this sense, it will complement Neuchâtel's other higher education centres and research institutes (HE-Arc, EPFL, CSEM,

FSRM, etc.), whose dedication to innovation primary rests on its technological aspects. Similarly, at the Swiss level, no other academic programme is so dedicated to studying innovation from the perspectives of the various humanities and social sciences, including law and economics.

This curriculum was created as a result of the growing reputation of the Intellectual Property and Innovation Research Centre, [PI]². Designated as an emerging field in the 2013-2016 *Plan d'intentions*, which outlines the University's direction of travel, this research centre has used the study of niche subjects to develop its remit. The strategic aim of offering a Master's degree within this research centre is also supported by the cantonal authorities, within the terms of reference relating to the UniNE.

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