

Science, universities and the Basel model

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

Because the chemical industry of Basel depended on science, it built close relationships with the universities and research institutions of Switzerland. The University of Basel trained chemists, pharmacists and physicians, and its professors cooperated with the companies on research projects. The Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, founded in 1855, became one of the leading institutions of chemical research in Europe and trained many of the chemists who worked in Basel.¹

The companies financed chairs, laboratories and scholarships and recruited the best graduates. Professors served as consultants to the companies, some of them moving between academic and industrial careers. Several Nobel laureates in chemistry and medicine worked in Basel or with the Basel companies, among them Paul Hermann Müller and Tadeus Reichstein, and later researchers at the Biozentrum of the University of Basel, founded in 1971, and at the Friedrich Miescher Institute, founded by Ciba-Geigy in 1970.²

This cooperation between industry and academia, which can be called the Basel model, combined the research capacity of the universities with the resources and the market orientation of the companies. It produced a cluster of knowledge, talent and capital that has made Basel one of the leading life sciences centres of the world. Part G examines the modern form of this cluster and the financing of the biotechnology start-ups that grow out of it.

1 Notes

1. On the cooperation between the Basel chemical industry and the University of Basel and the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH, founded 1855), see the histories of the institutions and companies. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the Biozentrum of the University of Basel (founded 1971) and the Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (founded 1970 by Ciba-Geigy, today affiliated with Novartis), see their publications. To be verified. ↩

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