

Briefing on Marine and Ocean-Related Study Programs (SDG 14)

This document was originally created to inform a [side event](#) on Ocean Literacy and Partnerships for SDG 14 organized by the [International Association of Universities](#), the University of Bergen and other partners at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, in June 2025, and has been updated with minor modifications.

Higher education stakeholders are at the heart of many actions for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular for **SDG 14: Life below Water**, next to Research (on Ocean, Climate) and Engagement of the different community groups at and around campus, Teaching and Learning (Ocean Literacy and Partnerships) has a huge potential to impact the knowledge and competencies of researchers and practitioners. [Several initiatives \(case studies June 2025\)](#) are underway at universities, and partnerships such as the [IAU Global HESD Cluster](#) accelerate action and foster cooperation further.

To further understand the importance of different academic disciplines informing SDG 14 and training future Ocean Professionals, IAU has shared data based on their own extractionⁱ from the [World Higher Education Database \(WHED\)](#) in June 2025. The below presented data finds **over 3,000 degree programmes** (Bachelor, Master, PhD) globally that explicitly refer to "Marine Biology, Marine Science, and Oceanography" and closely related fields such as Fishery and Coastal Studies.

SDG14-relevant programs by field

SDG14-relevant programs by field	Number
Aquaculture	587
Arctic Studies	6
Coastal Studies	105
Fishery	741
Island Studies	18
Marine Biology	354
Marine Engineering	390
Marine Science and Oceanography	594
Marine Transport	286
Maritime Law	75
Nautical Science	84
Grand Total	3240

This table shows the number of SDG14-relevant programs by field of study listed in the IAU WHED worldwide. Data does not include additional specializations or non-degree certificates.

Fishery, Aquaculture, and Marine Science and Oceanography are the most represented fields, while areas such as Arctic Studies and Island Studies appear far less frequently.

SDG14-relevant programs by region

SDG14-relevant programs by region	Number
Africa	797
Asia and the Pacific	907
Europe	602
Latin America and the Caribbean	331
North America	603
Grand Total	3240

This table illustrates the regional distribution of postgraduate programs directly linked to SDG 14 listed in the IAU WHED.

Asia and the Pacific and *Africa* show the highest numbers, followed closely by *North America* and *Europe*, with *Latin America and the Caribbean* having the lowest representation.

Data Source:

Suggested citation:

International Association of Universities (2025). World Higher Education Database - Marine Science and SDG 14- related degrees. *Data extraction on 5 June 2025:* www.whed.net

The **World Higher Education Database (WHED)** is the **International Association of Universities**' unique online reference portal in **collaboration with UNESCO** that provides comprehensive and detailed information on Higher Education Systems, Credentials, and accredited and recognized Higher Education Institutions around the world. The IAU obtains its information from national higher education authorities, governmental agencies, and national academic bodies. Globally recognized as a reliable source of information, the WHED provides information on around **22,000 higher education institutions (HEIs) in 196 countries and territories**. In addition, the IAU WHED portal also disseminates information on the higher education systems and credentials of these countries.

For any questions or comments, please contact the author of this document:

Isabel Toman, Senior Programme Officer, Sustainable Development, International Association of Universities (IAU) i.toman@iau.global

¹ Specific data extractions from the IAU WHED are available upon request and might be subject to a fee. All use of the WHED Data is subject to the [Terms of Use](#). IAU holds the intellectual property rights to the WHED Portal and data, and its use is not allowed without prior consent of IAU.