

Training Courses Internal Call 4 Guidelines

March 2026

AQUASERV launches the fourth internal call to promote, facilitate and standardise training provision for users, particularly, but not only early career scientists.

1. Background/rationale

AQUASERV, through WP5, provides a strong training component directed at potential RI users to prepare the new generations of researchers in sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, ecological restoration, and blue biotechnology to efficiently use the available resources and facilities.

AQUASERV training courses/topics should concern the services offered by the RIs. For example, they should explain how to use unique instrumentation or analysis to facilitate users' use. These courses should be powerful tools for attracting new users, particularly Early Career Researchers (ECRs), and upskilling/reskilling RI staff, industry staff, and entrepreneurs through tailor-made multidisciplinary training in a diversity of areas of the sectors supported by AQUASERV, including Aquaculture, Fisheries, Ecosystem restoration, and the Blue Economy.

With WP5 Deliverable 5.1, "[Training Guidelines and Course Templates](#)", a common training framework has been defined, including course templates and best practices for RI training. Through this Internal Call for Training Courses, AQUASERV will identify relevant courses organised by one or more consortium partners, select relevant courses/topics to be (re)designed, and support its delivery and organisation following AQUASERV Training guidelines and best practices. Courses should preferably be delivered and hosted online or in a blended format and follow a modular structure using the dedicated Learning Management System (EMBRC ERIC e-Learning Platform). Depending on the topic(s), these training modules will be used for (online) self-paced training or as a support/preparatory to hands-on (onsite) training courses and workshops. This approach will enable potential users to learn at their own pace and make better decisions concerning which technologies to use to address different research questions. Additionally, it will free RI staff from providing continuous, on-demand training for each potential new RI user. Furthermore, it will ensure wide dissemination and the availability of the training resources to other stakeholders (and potential users) outside the consortium.

Following the EU Council's Recommendation on an approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, the training modules will be designed so that trainees can build their competencies and skills according to their specific needs. Assessment tools should be included to guarantee that the uptake of the training can be objectively measured. Successful trainees will receive badges for each completed module (micro-credentials approach). A series of badges may qualify for a Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) in a given (preset) skills/competency framework.

AQUASERV aims to support an average of 6 training courses per year during the first 3 years of the project implementation until available funds are used. The training resources will be available after the project has ended, thus contributing to the project's legacy.

2. Eligibility

Applications must meet the following criteria:

- Organisers must be AQUASERV partners;



- Training course topic(s) must support AQUASERV service delivery and preferably be multi-disciplinary in the diversity of areas and sectors supported by AQUASERV, including Aquaculture, Fisheries, Ecosystem restoration and the Blue Economy;
- Training courses/topics should ideally be linked to instrumentation and resources available in the service offered by the RIs and should cater to new users, particularly Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and the upskilling/reskilling of RI staff;
- Preference will be given to courses delivered online and/or in blended format; strictly onsite courses will be accepted exceptionally and if well justified.

3. Courses delivery mode

Eligible courses should follow one of the following delivery modes:

- Online courses
 - self-paced (no tutor assistance)
 - facilitated (with tutor assistance)
- Blended courses
 - including at least one online phase and one onsite phase¹
- Exclusively in-person (onsite) courses (exceptionally only).

4. Funding Scheme

Budget: €240.000

The following funding scheme will be put in place:

- Online courses: funding support up to 4,000 EUR for content development and course design (e.g. graphics/video tutorials)
- Blended courses: funding support up to 4,000 EUR for content development and course design (e.g. graphics/video tutorials) plus up to 4,000 EUR for onsite-related costs (see below for costs eligibility)
- Onsite courses: funding support up to 3,000 EUR (see below for cost eligibility)
- Note: the amounts indicated above are flexible: provided the proposal meets the criteria and aim of the call, the amounts can be adapted.

5. Eligible Costs

The eligible costs under this call:

1) Other goods, works and services;

- € Costs of producing the course contents, e.g. content development and course design, including graphical design, video production (e.g. tutorials), etc, if applicable; staff time is not eligible.
- € Costs related to practical demonstration/use of the service (onsite), including consumables and related costs;

¹ Not to be confused with hybrid events (not applicable for training courses)

€ Catering costs²;

2) Travel and subsistence (for instructors within the consortium only);

3) Indirect costs (25%).

AQUASERV funds do not cover staff time neither the purchase of equipment, gifts for instructors/facilitators and participants, honoraria and dinners/meals, or any other costs not accepted by the EC.

Costs must be clearly described, and in case of doubt, the AQUASERV Course Committee will deliberate on eligibility. Applications should be as complete as possible.

6. Application Process and Timeline

Applications should be submitted through an [application form](#) containing:

- Course proposal information (as described in Deliverable 5.1)
- A detailed budget according to the items above.

Applications for the Fourth Call (March 2026) should refer to courses taking place ideally between September 2026 and June 2027. **The Fifth and last call for courses** will be launched in July 2026 and will refer to courses to take place from July 2027 until December 2028.

Course organisers are advised to apply before the proposed course date as early as possible to ensure sufficient time for proper organisation, including course advertising, application procedure, and participant selection.

Timeline 4th Call (March 2026)

Phase	Timeline
Call Open	23/03/2026
Deadline for Applications	30/05/2026
Results announced	30/06/2026

Note: a new internal final call for courses to be organised in from July 2027 up to December 2028 will open in July 2026.

7. Funding Terms and Conditions

AQUASERV WP5 through EMBRC ERIC Marine Training Unit will create the course website (including an online registration form) and will lead the necessary course promotion and outreach (in close collaboration with WP2), as well as the course space on the e-Learning Platform for hosting/sharing all course contents. Courses must use the above-mentioned services to ensure maximum impact. AQUASERV funds cannot be used to cover costs related to other websites, platforms, etc. The EMBRC

Marine Training Unit will provide support in the (re)designing and delivery (mainly online delivery mode).

8. Registration Fees

Courses will be provided for free by default. However, registration fees may be possible only if in a cost-recovery model.

9. Selection Procedure

All incoming applications will be screened for eligibility. If an application is considered incomplete and/or needs further clarifications, the AQUASERV Course Committee may request further details and clarifications. Proposals are evaluated and approved by the AQUASERV Executive Committee.

All applicants are informed of the outcome of their application by email.

10. Selection Criteria

The AQUASERV Course Committee is seeking to fund training courses that cover AQUASERV topics and ensure knowledge transfer and upskilling of experts and stakeholders, including RI staff, academia, industry and other relevant stakeholders. Courses should be delivered so that contents are traceable and reproducible, potentially increasing the impact of the courses by reaching wide audiences. Priority will be given to courses delivered online and/or in blended delivery formats that promote using the AQUASERV services and equipment/infrastructure.

The evaluation committee will pay special attention to the following aspects:

a. Course topics:

- The course should address AQUASERV's objectives and priorities, its potential impact and audience;
- The course should avoid replicating already available training and be sufficiently specific (generalistic topics or addressed at a too basic level are not eligible);
- The course should focus on existing and new technologies and services made available through AQUASERV and should facilitate access to such services;
- The topic should be covered in sufficient detail to enable trainees to become independent users (of the technology or service)
- Clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment tools are key criteria.

b. Instructors and facilitators:

- The instructors and facilitators should be qualified Subject Matter Experts.
- The organisers should aim to have an instructor's team gender balance.

c. Course timeline:

- The proposed course timeline (organisation and schedule) should be realistic and adjusted to the contents/topics to be covered. This should also include the timing of application for AQUASERV support.

d. Courses in the blended format:

- The courses should have a balanced structure for online and onsite activities, avoiding overlap or redundancy between the two phases.
- The choice of onsite venue should be justified for effectiveness and costs (including ease of reach) and should provide the necessary conditions, including access to specific research instrumentation and services that are training topics.
- Ideally, trainers and trainees should be accommodated at the same location or a few nearby locations (if applicable) to promote interaction and networking. Catering facilities or services should be readily available at controlled costs.

e. Environmental Impact:

- Courses that consider measures to minimise environmental impact are preferred. As such, online and/or blended training courses will take priority.
- Onsite-only courses will be accepted if no other good pedagogic solutions are feasible.

f. Acknowledgements

- Courses should acknowledge the AQUASERV project, including the Horizon Europe logo and the following sentence “Funded by the European Commission”.

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11.Contact

For further information on the Training Courses Call, please contact aquaserv@ualg.pt