



## University collaboration recipe for success for Lothian food firm

A gluten-free food specialist has its sights set on healthy growth after extending its research and development capability through partnership with Queen Margaret University.

Genius Foods is the latest company to have a team operating from a specialist new food science laboratory at the Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation at QMU. Food scientists have provided expert training on ways to measure the texture, colour and flow properties of its products using specialist equipment.

QMU's team of food innovation experts regularly provide its clients with consumer focus groups, taste panels, nutritional analysis

and shelf-life testing. Genius Foods will also have access to the Centre's fully-equipped sensory suite facility, which allows experts to measure people's perceptions of food and drink products' attributes, including appearance, aroma, texture, flavour and after taste.

Dr Julien Lonchamp from QMU's Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation, said: "The specific combination of sensory and analytical facilities that we offer at QMU was previously unavailable elsewhere in Scotland, so research work was often sent to England or Northern Ireland instead.

"Through practical innovation support and creative business solutions,

QMU is continuing to help leading food and drink businesses with new and innovative product development."

Scotland's food and drink sector currently employs around 34,000 people, and the sector is expected to create more than 14,000 new roles over the next five years. In its most recent Food and Drink research report, Bank of Scotland revealed that R&D investment is expected to rise over the next five years.

Playing to the University's strengths in food and drink research and knowledge exchange, Edinburgh Innovation Park at QMU is expected to create 13,000 new jobs in East Lothian.

### What is Edinburgh Innovation Park?

- Phase 1 will include the Food & Drink Enterprise Centre, a UK first, and a Technical Enterprise Centre.
- Grow-on accommodation for companies graduating from these and the other enterprise centres that will follow, with facilities that can be sub-divided for multiple lettings.
- Stand-alone facilities for larger companies.
- University research centres and facilities.
- A separate Commercial Hub will provide the community with amenities including retail, cafes, restaurants and a hotel.



## Conference marks QMU's commitment to innovation and enterprise

Queen Margaret University has announced a series of events aimed at exploring new approaches to responsible innovation and uncovering opportunities for enterprise. With a panel of speakers including representatives from Nesta, the Scottish Institute for Enterprise, Business Gateway and Livingston-based workwear company, Guthrie Group Ltd, the programme kicked off in March with a conference at the University attended by students, staff and invited guests.

Programme organiser Carol Brennan, Acting Dean, School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management at QMU, said: "The University has a long history of successful innovation across all our subject areas, our research programmes and our

teaching and learning methods, right through to how we run as an organisation. The programme will bring people and expertise together at events throughout the year and allow these groups to spark off each other."

These events reflect the rich innovation-focused culture that exists at QMU, and which make the University the obvious home for the enterprise facilities that will be provided at Edinburgh Innovation Park.

The next event in the series is an exhibition at QMU showcasing Inspiring Entrepreneurs in June and July. For information on future events, please contact Carol Brennan [cbrennan@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:cbrennan@qmu.ac.uk) for details.



# Growing food and drink through innovation

By David Thomson, CEO of Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland

**F**OOD and drink is an essential part of everyone's lives and is critical to the success of our economy. In Scotland our food and drink manufacturing industry employs 36,000 people, representing over 19% of all manufacturing. As we exit the EU it is more important than ever that our economically vital companies are constantly innovating to ensure that they continue to thrive in a changing environment.

Businesses could, for example, find ways to reduce their environmental impact which could also save them money; invest in new technology or equipment that could increase production; create new products or reformulate existing products to meet consumer demand; or invest in current and future staff.

Up-skilling the workforce and recruiting new talented individuals is essential to driving future innovation and growth. However food and drink is facing a skills gap, particularly



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in food science, technology and engineering. By 2024 Scottish food and drink manufacturing is going to need 19,000 new talented recruits to meet the skills needs of the sector. At FDF Scotland we view promoting careers in food and drink as a top priority.

Queen Margaret University

is a great supporter of food and drink innovation, working with companies including East Lothian microbusinesses, mid-size producers and very large retailers. The university's desire for growth is one that supports our own – set out with our Scotland Food & Drink partners as *Ambition 2030* – a strategy which aims to sustainably grow the food and drink industry's turnover from just over £14bn to £30bn by 2030.

Our strategy places innovation at its heart – streamlining the innovation landscape, facilitating collaboration between academia and industry, supporting automation and productivity. An innovation mind-set allows us to seek new markets at home and abroad, and to take opportunities we have not even dreamt up yet.

Scotland's great food and drink industry has a bright future. Queen Margaret University is an important part of that.

## Shaping the future

Students and staff at Queen Margaret University recently took the chance to contribute to the conversations taking place across Edinburgh and the Lothians on the vision for the future of the region. Throughout its history, Edinburgh has been a city of innovation and change. Today, East Lothian is part of this successful city region where population is growing more quickly than any other major city in the UK, and whose strong economy and quality of life is recognised across the world.

The University has already shared in the consultation experience, making clear our view that measurement of success should not focus solely on economic performance but also on its overall health, wellbeing and happiness. It is this view that underpins our plans for Edinburgh Innovation Park at East Lothian's prime employment site in a way which addresses economic development and community needs at the same time. This view is also

reflected in our plans for a commercial hub between the existing University buildings and Edinburgh Innovation Park.

## Next steps

A three way public/private/community partnership approach to the proposed development will be key to its successful delivery. Working closely with East Lothian Council, QMU is now working on a detailed development pathway.

## More information

More information on the Edinburgh Innovation Park is available at [edinburghinnovationpark.co.uk](http://edinburghinnovationpark.co.uk). The website features detailed site plans and places the innovation park in context, including details of the associated commercial hub which will provide retail and leisure facilities for the local community, innovation park users, and QMU students and staff.

Get in touch at [www.edinburghinnovationpark.co.uk](http://www.edinburghinnovationpark.co.uk)

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