The Italian University System in Brief

The Academic Year runs from October the 1st to September the 30th, though in many Faculties courses begin in October. Italian Universities award the following qualifications: Bachelor’s Degrees, Post-graduate Degrees, Research Doctorates, Specializations and First and Advanced level Master Degrees. After eight years of primary and middle-school education and five years of high school studies, Italian and EU students, regardless of their place of residence, and non-EU students residing in Italy are, in most cases, free to enrol at the Faculty of their choice.

The Legislative Decree of the Minister for University and Scientific and Technological Research N. 509/3.11.1999, began a radical reform process of the national University System, with the purpose of both standardising courses and corresponding qualifications at a European level and keeping university studies within congruous limits at each level, thus making it easier for graduates to find employment.

Degree Courses have been reorganised and undergraduate students begin with a streamlined three-year Degree, followed by a two year post-graduate Degree.

The reform divides the Italian University System into different types of courses, the following two been the main cycles:

- three-year Degree Courses (180 credits);
- two-year Post Graduate Degree Courses (120 credits).

To integrate these two fundamental cycles, Universities can introduce further courses such as:

- first and second level Master Courses (MU);
- Specialization Degree Courses (DS); and
- Research Doctorate Courses (DR/PhD)

However, a limited number of subjects are required by European Union regulations to be taught as European Degrees (Architecture, Medicine, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine). This reorganisation took place within the framework of the Bologna Declaration, signed in Bologna in 1999 by 29 EU Ministers of Education with the aim of creating a European space for higher education and promoting student mobility.

2.1 The University Reform: Keywords

ECTS

ECTS, the European Community Course Credit Transfer System, was developed by the Commission of the European Union in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad providing a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements, and transferring them from one institution to another.

ECTS credits

ECTS credits are a value allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. In the ECTS, 60 credits represent the workload of a year of study; generally 30 credits are given for a semester and 20 credits for a term. Credits are awarded only when the course has been completed and all required examinations have been successfully taken.

ECTS grading scale

The ECTS grading scale provides a common currency to measure the quality of student achievement. It is important to note that it is not meant to replace the local grade but to be used optionally and in addition to it. The performance of the student is documented by a local/national grade.

Italian Grading System

The Italian Grading System ranges from 18/30 to 30/30. The highest mark is 30/30 with distinction (Lode). Exams under 18/30 are considered as “not passed” and cannot be registered on the final transcript of records (Libretto dello Studente). The following chart compares Italian grade and ECTS grading system and provides a translation of the numerical value of Italian grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Grade Translation</th>
<th>30 e lode with distinction</th>
<th>29-30</th>
<th>28-27</th>
<th>26-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
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Formative aims
A study course is aimed at acquiring knowledge and abilities characterizing a specific cultural and professional profile.

Formative Activities
Activities provided for by the Universities to assure students cultural and professional training (teaching courses, seminars, labs, didactic activities for small groups, tutorial and orientation activities, traineeships, thesis, etc.).

Curriculum
The whole university and extra-university formative activities needed to gain the study course title.

Degree Courses
Courses aimed at providing students with an appropriate mastery of general scientific methodologies and contents together with the acquisition of specific professional knowledge. These courses last three years. To get the University Degree students have to obtain 180 credits (60 credits per year), including the compulsory credits obtained for the knowledge of at least one EU language beside the Italian language.

Post-graduate Specialised Degree Courses
Courses aimed at providing students with advanced qualified training leading to a high qualified professional activity in specific fields. These Courses last at least two years after the first Degree course. In order to enter a Specialization Course students have to obtain a University Degree or another valid and qualified Degree obtained abroad.

Specialization Courses (DS)
Courses aimed at providing students with knowledge and abilities required by particular professional activities. They can be instituted only by applying specific Laws or Directives of the European Union. In order to enter a Specialization Course students have to obtain a University Degree or another valid and qualified Degree obtained abroad. To get a Specialization Degree it is necessary to obtain from 300 up to 600 credits, included those already acquired by the student within the specialization course.

Research Doctorate Courses
Research Doctorates (DR) are Courses directed at the in depth study of research methodology and advanced scientific preparation in different scientific sectors. Access to these studies is through a public competition after obtaining a Specialised Degree. In order to enter a Research Doctorate Course students have to obtain a Post-graduate Specialised University Degree or another valid and qualified Degree obtained abroad.

University Master Courses (MU)
Scientific specialization courses subsequent to the obtainment of a University Degree (1st level Master) or a Post-graduate Specialised University Degree (2nd level Master). To get a University Masters students must obtain 60 credits plus those acquired to obtain a University Degree or a Post-graduate Specialised Degree.

Specialization Schools
The courses aiming to obtain Specialization Diplomas provide students with notions and skills required by specific professional activities. At the University of Roma Tre there are two Specialization School: the Specialization School for the Secondary Education Teachers’ Training (Scuola di Specializzazione all’Insegnamento Secondario-SSIS) and the Specialization School for Legal Professions (Scuola di Specializzazione per le Professioni Legali). Students have to pass successfully a specific admission test whose announcement shows the available places per year in order to gain access to the Specialization Schools. The attendance to the courses of the Specialization Schools requires a relevant grant.