

The Italian University System

The Italian university system is organised in three cycles, according to the Bologna structure: the main academic degrees are the *Laurea* (1st cycle), the *Laurea Magistrale* (2nd cycle) and the *Dottorato di Ricerca* (3rd cycle). The system also offers other study programmes and related qualifications.

First cycle. This cycle consists exclusively of *Corsi di Laurea*. These degree programmes provide students with an adequate command of general scientific methods and contents as well as with specific professional skills. The general access requirement is the Italian school leaving qualification awarded after completion of 13 years of schooling and passing the relevant State examination; comparable foreign qualifications may also be accepted. Admission to some degree courses may be based on specific course requirements. The studies last 3 years. The *Laurea* is awarded to students who have gained 180 ECTS credits (called *Crediti Formativi Universitari – CFU*) and satisfied all curricular requirements, including the production of a final written paper or equivalent final project. The *Laurea* gives access to the *Corsi di Laurea Magistrale* as well as to other 2nd cycle study programmes.

Second cycle. The main degree programmes in this cycle are the *Corsi di Laurea Magistrale*. They provide education at an advanced level for the exercise of highly qualified activities in specific areas. Access is by a *Laurea* degree or a comparable foreign degree; admission is based on specific course requirements determined by single universities. The studies last 2 years. The *Laurea Magistrale* degree is awarded to students who have gained 120 ECTS/CFU credits and satisfied all curricular requirements, including the production and public defence of an original dissertation. Some programmes (namely, those in dentistry, medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture, construction engineering/architecture, law, primary education) are defined "single cycle programmes" (*Corsi a ciclo unico*); for these programmes access is by the Italian school leaving qualification (or a comparable foreign qualification); admission is based on entrance exams. The studies last 5 years (6 years and 360 ECTS/CFU credits in the cases of medicine and dentistry). A *Laurea Magistrale* degree is awarded to students who have gained 300 ECTS/CFU credits and satisfied all curricular requirements, including the production and public defence of an original dissertation. A *Laurea Magistrale* degree gives access to *Corsi di Dottorato di Ricerca* as well as to other 3rd cycle study programmes.

Third cycle. The main degree programmes in this cycle are *Corsi di Dottorato di Ricerca* (research doctorate programmes); the students/young researchers enrolled in these programmes will acquire methodologies for advanced scientific research, will be trained in new technologies and will work in research laboratories, wherever appropriate. Access is by a *Laurea Magistrale* degree (or a comparable foreign degree); admission is based on a competitive exam; studies last at least three years and include the completion and public defence of an original research project.

Other programmes

- *Corsi di Specializzazione*. These are 3rd cycle programmes intended to provide students with the knowledge and skills required for the practice of highly qualified professions, mainly in medical, clinical and surgical specialities. Admission is by a *Laurea Magistrale* degree (or by a comparable foreign degree) and is based on a competitive exam; studies may last from 2 (120 ECTS/CFU credits) to 6 years (360 ECTS/CFU credits) depending on the discipline. The final degree awarded is a *Diploma di Specializzazione*.
- *Corsi di Master Universitario di primo livello*. These are 2nd cycle programmes intended to provide students with further specialization or higher continuing education after completion of the

first cycle. Access is by a *Laurea* degree (or a comparable foreign degree); admission may be subject to additional requirements. Studies last at least 1 year (60 ECTS/CFU credits). The qualification awarded (*Master Universitario di primo livello*) does not give access to *Corsi di Dottorato di Ricerca* or to any other 3rd cycle programme, since this type of course does not belong to the general requirements established at national level, but it is offered under the autonomous responsibility of each university.

- *Corsi di Master Universitario di secondo livello*. These are 3rd cycle programmes intended to provide students with further specialization or higher continuing education studies after completion of the second cycle. Access is by a *Laurea Magistrale* degree (or a comparable foreign degree); admission may be subject to additional requirements. Studies last at least 1 year (60 ECTS/CFU credits). The qualification awarded (*Master Universitario di secondo livello*) does not give access to *Corsi di Dottorato di Ricerca* or to any other 3rd cycle programmes, since this type of course does not belong to the general requirements established at national level, but it is offered under the autonomous responsibility of each university.

Credits: degree courses are structured in credits (*Crediti Formativi Universitari - CFU*). University credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Each credit corresponds to 25 hours of student workload, including independent study. The average workload of a full time student is conventionally fixed at 60 credits per year. Thus, the CFU fully coincide with ECTS credits

Classes of Degree Courses: all degree programmes of *Laurea* and *Laurea Magistrale* sharing general educational objectives are grouped into “*classes*”. In developing the specific learning outcomes of single programmes, Universities have to comply with some national requirements for each class concerning the types (and corresponding amount of credits) of teaching-learning activities to be included. Degrees belonging to the same class have the same legal value.

Academic Titles: Those who receive the *Laurea* are entitled to be called “*Dottore*”, the holders of a *Laurea Magistrale* have a right to the title of “*Dottore Magistrale*”, the *Dottorato di ricerca* confers the title of “*Dottore di Ricerca*” or “PhD”.

Joint Degrees: Italian universities are allowed to establish degree programmes in cooperation with Italian and foreign partner universities, on completion of which joint or double/multiple degrees can be awarded.

Further information:

Italian Qualifications Framework (Quadro dei Titoli Italiani – QTI)

<http://www.quadrodeititoli.it>