

# White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

## Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Italy

### Academia

- [Norms of Behaviour](#)
- [Applications and Registration](#)
- [Costs](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [PhD](#)
- [Beyond PhD](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Web Links](#)



### Norms of Behaviour

#### *Modes of address*

In class, it is appropriate to address professors (full, associate and assistant) by their title: *professore* (male) / *professoressa* (female), or *professore/professoressa* + surname. Teaching assistants are usually addressed by their first name. Unless stated otherwise, you should use the polite form ('Lei' form) when talking to a professor (and also teaching assistants). Unlike at British institutions, it is uncommon for students to address professors by their first name.

In academic and professional e-mails it is good practice to address tutors with one of the following expressions:

*Egregio Prof./Prof.ssa* + Family name

*Gentile Prof./Prof.ssa* + Family name

Moreover, there are other traditional forms of address. For example, a rector is usually addressed as *magnifico rettore* (magnificent rector), and for professors the expression *chiarissimo professore* may be used – although the latter is rarely used and either *Egregio* or *Gentile Prof.* is preferred.

Note that in Italy all people holding a higher education (either Bachelor's or Master's) degree are conferred the title of *dottore* (doctor). Holders of a Master's degree receive the academic title of *dottore magistrale*. Outside Italy, however, it is inappropriate for the holder of a new *laurea* (degree) to use the title 'Doctor.'

Other professional titles that can be used in e-mails according to the addressee's academic background are:

*Avvocato* – *avv.* (Lawyer, a *laurea specialistica* (masters) in law and a state-exam are both required)

*Ingegnere* – *ing.* (Engineer, a *laurea specialistica* in engineering and a state-exam are both required)

*Architetto* – *arch.* (Architect, a *laurea specialistica* in architecture and a state-exam are both required)

*Dottore di Ricerca* (holder of a Ph.D., literally "Doctor of Research")

[\[Source\]](#)

### *Dress*

Students are expected to wear casual attire (jeans, sweater, t-shirts, etc.) when attending classes. Smart clothes can be worn but they are not compulsory.

During oral exams casual attire is also accepted. Some people prefer to wear more formal clothes but, again, this is not compulsory.

During presentations, students are required to wear smart-casual clothes (jeans and a shirt, or smart trousers and a polo neck jumper).

During the viva, students are expected to wear smart clothes: not necessarily a complete suit for boys, but at least a shirt, trousers and smart shoes. It is not compulsory to wear a tie or suit jacket (particularly during summer when temperatures are high). Likewise, girls are expected to wear smart/business clothes (either a suit or an elegant jacket and skirt).

[Back to top](#)

## **Applications and Registration**

Admission to doctoral programmes is based on entrance examinations and student's experience. Doctoral programmes are open to all, regardless of age or citizenship, who hold a *laurea magistrale* (Master's degree) or a similar academic degree received abroad, which has been recognised as equivalent to an Italian degree by the Committee responsible for the entrance examinations.

Information regarding the number of places on offer each year and details of the entrance examinations are published in examination announcements, compiled by individual institutions, usually 5-6 months before the start of the programme.

By law, students cannot start a PhD (*dottorato di ricerca*) unless they have been awarded a scholarship. Scholarships are usually offered by the department to the students who achieved the highest marks in the entrance examination. Institutions usually offer a few fully-funded scholarships (fees + maintenance) and a few fees-only scholarships each year. For example, if a doctoral programme has six scholarships available, three of them would be fully funded, while the other three would be partially funded. Unlike in the UK, students who are considered suitable but do not receive a scholarship cannot start a PhD as self-funded students. There are, however, exceptional cases in which the student can start the programme even if a departmental

scholarship has not been awarded: if, for example, the student has received an award from a different body or a university from his/her home country.

Scholarships are offered both for projects for which funding has been secured by the university or for projects suggested by the student during the application process.

Partially-funded students have to pay a proportion of the course fees. The amount to pay usually depends on the student's family income, but it is not more than circa €2000 per academic year.

#### *Essential documents*

- Curriculum Vitae
- Applicants holding a foreign University degree must attach to their application a copy of their degree, including the list of exams taken, translated into Italian or English. Those who are awaiting their degree must attach the list of exams taken, translated into Italian or English.
- Research Project / Support Statement
- Letter(s) of recommendation
- Publications (if available)

Any other optional documents or qualifications, in Italian or English (Diploma Supplement, courses, programmes, exams, etc.), relevant to the application, can also be attached.

#### *Time scale*

The admission announcement is usually published by each university four or five months before the start of the course. It is a good idea to periodically check the websites of the individual universities for updates. Sometimes there is a separate announcement, and a different admissions process, for international students (information is published on the same website). PhD programmes usually start in September/October, but the start date can be flexible.

#### *Who to contact*

The admissions announcement usually includes the contact details of the designated faculty member, who is able to offer advice to applicants.

#### *Language requirements*

Foreign applicants, wishing to enrol on programmes delivered in Italian, must have a professional command of Italian. Language proficiency is usually verified during the oral exam. Italian language certifications are usually not required.

There is a list of Italian universities that offer MA and PhD programmes, entirely or partially in English on the [Ministero Affari Esteri](#) website.

#### *Application process*

The application process usually involves both a written and an oral exam. The written exam can be either in the form of a project prepared by the student or a timed test taken on university

premises. In the case of the latter, students usually receive instructions regarding the topics that they need to prepare for the exam. The oral exam usually takes place at the university, but for applicants residing abroad there are sometimes video-conferencing interview options.

After the written exam, rankings are published and a minimum score required to progress to the oral exam is agreed.

During the oral exam the panel comprised of professors usually asks questions regarding the written exam or the student's PhD project.

After the oral exams, a final ranking table is published and displays the points gained during the written and oral exams by each student.

### *Study visa / residence permit*

UK citizens do not require a visa or residence permit.

[Back to top](#)

## **Costs**

### *Tuition fees*

Fees need to be paid by partially-funded students only. The amount is generally lower than in the UK. Students from low-income families are usually entitled to a fee waiver or at least a discount.

According to a government bill approved in 2001, universities cannot charge more than ~2000 Euros per academic year. [\[Source\]](#)

Here are the PhD fees in several universities for the 2012/13 session (note that some PhD programmes might be more expensive than others):

University of Cagliari €266

University of Florence €300-2000 depending on family income

University of Padua € 400

University of Pavia €335

University of Perugia €200-1400 depending on family income

University of Trieste €500-1400 depending on family income

University of Venice €1063

### *Living Costs*

According to an [analysis](#) published in 2012 these are the most expensive cities in Italy (the UK cities rankings have also been included for comparison):

1. London (UK)
2. **Rome (Italy)**
3. Edinburgh (UK)
4. Belfast (UK)
5. Manchester (UK)
6. Liverpool (UK)
7. Glasgow (UK)
8. Aberdeen (UK)

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 9. Bristol (UK)           | <b>17. Milan (Italy)</b>   |
| 10. Leeds (UK)            | <b>18. Turin (Italy)</b>   |
| 11. Newcastle (UK)        | 19. Bradford (UK)          |
| <b>12. Sheffield (UK)</b> | 20. Leicester (UK)         |
| 13. Reading (UK)          | 21. Nottingham (UK)        |
| 14. Birmingham (UK)       | 22. Plymouth (UK)          |
| 15. Portsmouth (UK)       | <b>23. Naples (Italy)</b>  |
| <b>16. Genoa (Italy)</b>  | <b>24. Palermo (Italy)</b> |

It is clear that British cities are generally more expensive than Italian cities; Rome being the only exception.

Clothes and electronic goods services are more expensive than the European average. Conversely, transport (e.g. buses, trains) is usually less expensive in Italy than in many other European countries. Taxis are quite expensive. For more detailed information the website [expatulator](#) offers information regarding living costs in some of the major Italian cities.

The following table shows the monthly costs of living in several Italian cities [[Source](#)].

1. Rome	€1699	8. Bari	€1336
2. Naples	€1675	9. Pisa	€1318
3. Milan	€1637	10. Grosseto	€1271
4. Florence	€1532	11. Cagliari	€1255
5. Bologna	€1389	12. Bergamo	€1245
6. Genoa	€1387	13. Perugia	€1230
7. Ancona	€1340	14. Turin	€1224

[Back to top](#)

## Funding

### *Scholarships*

PhD scholarships are always open to foreign applicants as long as they can show an advanced command of Italian (with the exception of programmes that are taught in English).

All international students are entitled to the same student support services as Italian students, on basis of the same requisites of financial means and/or merit. This applies to scholarships, student loans, housing assistance, refectory meal tickets and fee waivers.

These services are managed by the DSU office (Diritto allo studio universitario).

Alongside scholarship and financial aid information, DSU offices will also provide other services such as counselling and information on extracurricular activities, sport, transport and other practical matters. You should contact the office at the university where you plan to study to find

out what services are available to you. Each region or university has a funding body that deals with the scholarship process in that particular area.

These bodies are called enti per il diritto allo studio universitario ('bodies for the right to university education'). These scholarships are not to be confused with PhD scholarships. DSU bodies are set up to help students in financial difficulty who could not otherwise be able to study due to lack of funds. It follows that students who have been granted scholarships cannot apply for these awards. Partially-funded PhD students are usually able to apply.

Scholarships offered by these bodies are awarded according to family income; they usually cover only course fees, though sometimes carry a small grant or accommodation allowance throughout the course of study. In order to keep the scholarship, each year the student needs to demonstrate that he/she has passed a certain number of exams or has a satisfactory overall average mark. In the case of PhD programmes, the student needs to have successfully passed the year of study as confirmed by his/her supervisors.

A separate call for applications is usually published for students applying from outside Italy during the summer preceding the start of the course.

[List of all the funding bodies for each region/institution](#)

List of major DSU offices:

**Piemonte (Piedmont)** - [EDISU Piemonte](#) (EN)

**Liguria** - [ARSUU](#) (EN)

**Lombardia (Lombardy)** - [ANDISU](#) (IT)

**Veneto** [ESU](#) (IT)

**Friuli-Venezia-Giulia** - [ERDISU](#) (IT)

**Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol** - [Opera Universitaria di Trento](#) (IT)

**Emilia-Romagna** - [ERGO](#) (EN)

**Toscana (Tuscany)** - [DSU Toscana](#) (IT but a few documents are available in EN)

**Umbria** - [ADISU](#) (IT)

**Marche** [ERSU](#) (IT)

**Lazio** [LAZIODISU](#) (IT)

**Abruzzo** - [ANDISU](#) (IT)

**Molise** - [ESU Molise](#) (IT)

**Campania** - [ADISU](#) (IT)

**Basilicata** - [ARDSU](#) (IT)

**Puglia** - [ADISU Puglia](#) (IT)

**Calabria** - [Calabria Istruzione](#) (IT)

**Sicilia** - [ERSU Sicilia](#) (IT)

**Sardegna** - [ERSU Sardegna](#) (IT)

There are also [scholarships offered by the European Union](#) to foreign students to take part in short- and long-term projects in Italian academic institutions:

Every institution/funding body has its own deadlines for receiving applications. Generally, applications are received during summer (July/August).

### *Student loans*

Financial support is offered in form of scholarships awarded by funding bodies to students in financial hardship, as described in Scholarships.

Financial support through banks is very rare, particularly for international students. Unlike in the UK, in Italy banks do not have agreements with universities to offer student loans. This is because less-wealthy students are exempted from paying fees or they are at least entitled to receive a generous discount.

[Back to top](#)

## **PhD**

### *Structure of a doctoral programme*

PhD programs in the Arts and Humanities last, unless otherwise specified, three years. Sometimes this can be extended if the student has been involved in mobility programmes.

PhD students need to submit their final examination request together with their finalised thesis by the end of the third year of study (unless otherwise stated). The departmental research committee (*collegio docenti*) needs to approve this request. The final examination needs to take place within three months of the final thesis being submitted. Failure to submit the request by the arranged deadline will result in the candidate's withdrawal from the doctoral programme. In case of mitigating circumstances the PhD candidate can apply for deferral.

Some programmes require students to attend modules or courses, usually during their first year of study. Otherwise the only condition is that the candidate passes the final examination.

### *PhD Support*

PhD students are asked to periodically submit abstracts and essays whose content they will discuss during meetings with their supervisors. Individual universities and departments have different regulations but, generally, a full-time student is required to send a research update at least once a month. The process is similar to that of UK institutions.

Supervisor input is the same as in the UK. Supervisors are available for guidance and support, but most of the research work needs to be carried out by the student. Students are required to have at least one supervisor. A second supervisor is usually assigned for support.

Seminars and workshops are periodically organised for all PhD students (not only in the first year of study) to enhance students' research and professional skills.

The main difference between the Italian and UK systems is that there is no 'upgrade' after the first year of study. At the end of both the first and second year the relevant research committee will

evaluate the progress of the candidate, usually through an oral discussion. If the student's performance is considered unsatisfactory, the committee has the right to reconsider the candidate's suitability to continue with the PhD.

### *PhD thesis*

There is no official regulation of the length of the PhD final thesis or regulations regarding its presentation.

Some universities offer students the possibility to publish their PhD thesis online after the course has been completed.

### *Viva*

Members of the Viva committee (called *commissione giudicatrice*) are nominated by the Dean of School (*rettore*) after consultation with the programme committee (*collegio docenti*). The committee comprises three members who have relevant academic qualifications and have undergone research activities relevant to the candidate's topic of research. At least two of the members need to be affiliated with an external university and cannot be part of the programme committee. Furthermore, up to two other experts can be invited to join the committee. They may be from either public or private academic institutions and/or research centres (including institutions situated outside of Italy).

All university oral examinations in Italy are open to the general public. Anybody may attend viva examinations.

### *Employment*

According to PhD regulations, students should undertake teaching duties during their doctoral degree. There are no official regulations on the amount of teaching hours that a student is allowed or has to undertake.

As a general rule, first-year students are usually required to attend some compulsory courses, seminars or workshops. Therefore, teaching duties are usually assigned starting from the second year of study.

PhD students can, with the formal consent of their supervisors and the relevant research committee, engage in part-time work (teaching, internship or any other external paid activity), provided that these activities do not interfere with the student's research activities.

Supervisors understand the financial need of certain students; therefore, it is common for partially-funded students to work part-time while studying. It is not common for fully-funded students to have part-time jobs, but they may have one if their supervisor agrees.

### *Visiting other institutions, exchange programmes and placements*

Italian universities often work in partnership with other European institutions as well as with institutions outside Europe. These collaborations often result in bilateral agreements that foster



student mobility. PhD students can apply to spend time abroad in research centres relevant to their field of study in order to enhance their research and future career prospects. Departments usually offer subsidies to PhD students who choose to study abroad during their PhD.

[Back to top](#)

## Beyond PhD

### *Jobs*

The first and only research aimed at discovering the rate of employment for Italian PhD graduates was completed in February 2010 by [ISTAT](#) (the Italian National Institute for Statistics).

These are a few interesting facts about the results:

- Three years after their viva (which took place in 2006), 92.8% of PhD graduates were employed, while 5.4% of them were still looking for a job; 29.7% of them had already found work before finishing their PhD.
- Employment levels depend on the discipline studied. Arts and humanities students had the lowest rate of employment three years from finishing their PhD course (89%).
- The following table summarises the areas of employment of PhD graduates in 2009:

Post-doc studies	6.6%
Non-tenured researcher ( <i>assegno di ricerca</i> )	16.2%
Contract work	10.3%
Self-employment	13.9%
Temporary contract	15%
Permanent contract	38%

Universities usually have a careers centre that can introduce graduates to the job market.

### *Career Progression*

The average age for obtaining a PhD degree is 31. The usual path of progression is as follows [\[Source\]](#):

1. PhD Candidate
2. Non-tenured Researcher (*assegno di ricerca*)
3. Contracted Professor (*professore a contratto*: hired to teach one or more courses)
4. Researcher (*ricercatore*)
5. Associate Professor (*professore associato*)
6. Full Professor (*professore ordinario*)

The entry level for an academic career is a normally the position of Researcher (*ricercatore*). The UK-equivalent position of postdoctoral researcher is not very common in Italy.

The position of *Ricercatore* is awarded to those who are successful in a “competition” (*concorso*) that consists of two written tests and an oral test. The procedure and requirements for a post are laid down in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (the Official Bulletin of the Italian Republic), where vacancies are announced. It is not necessary to have a PhD to complete the *concorso*. The examining committee is led by an Associate or Full Professor of the Faculty where the recruitment takes place and also comprises two nationally elected members. The committee announces the winner of the competition. Since 1999 competitions have been local; that is, they have been organised by the university that offers the vacancy. However, the Moratti Law (2005) established that permanent researcher contracts would be abolished and that they would be replaced by temporary contracts. The examining committees in charge of recruiting researchers are composed of one full professor, one associate professor and one researcher.

[Back to top](#)

## Glossary

### *Academic titles*

Teaching and Research titles [[Source](#)]

**Professore Emerito** - Full professor after retirement age whose achievements in an academic field have been credited by the faculty council and approved by the Ministry of Higher Education: although this is an honorary title, in some cases a Professore Emerito is allowed to keep his/her office for up to two years

**Professore Ordinario or Professore di I fascia** - Full professor; tenured position

**Professore Straordinario** - A professor taking his/her three years of training before being confirmed as full professor

**Professore Associato or Professore di II fascia** - Associate professor; tenured position

**Professore Associato non confermato** - Professore di II fascia taking his/her three years of testing before being confirmed as Professore Associato

**Professore aggregato** - A faculty researcher with a temporary appointment for a given course

**Ricercatore confermato** - Assistant professor or researcher; tenured position

**Ricercatore non confermato** - Assistant professor or researcher in a tenure-track post; a researcher taking his/her three years of testing before being confirmed as a researcher; following Italian university reforms in 2010 these positions are no longer offered, though those appointed before the reforms keep the right to be tenured after the first three years

**Assistente** - The former entry level of permanent positions before Ricercatore replaced it in the early 1980s. The position of Assistente has not been offered since the 1980s; some members of staff kept the title, though most of them became Ricercatore confermato

Non-faculty and temporary

**Professore a contratto** - Professor with a temporary appointment for a given course or series of lectures

**Professore incaricato** - Former name, before 1980, for Professore a contratto

**Assegnista di Ricerca** - Research fellow with a temporary position, usually holding a PhD title

**Dottorando di Ricerca** - PhD student

Administrative ranks

**Rettore** - Rector

**Prorettore** - Vice-Rector

**Presidente** - Dean of Faculty

**Presidente di Consiglio di Corso di Laurea** - Head of a Bachelor/Masters curriculum on a given topic

**Direttore di Dipartimento** - Head of Department

*Terms for institutes of higher education*

**Scuola superiore universitaria** - A Superior Graduate School is an independent institution, which either offers advanced training and research through university-type courses or is dedicated to teaching at [graduate](#) or post-doctoral level

**Istituto di alta formazione / di studi avanzati** - International, state supported, post-graduate teaching and research institute with a special statute. Similar to Superior Graduate Schools

*Key academic terms*

**Corso di dottorato di ricerca** - Doctoral degree (PhD)

**Relatore** - Supervisor of final dissertation/thesis

**Stage** - Internship on which students gain professional experience

**Tesi di laurea - Relazione finale** - Final dissertation/thesis

[Back to top](#)

## Web Links

[European University Institute](#) (EN) - Information about academic careers in Italy

[Ministero Affari Esteri](#) (EN) - List of Italian institutions that offer MA and PhD courses fully or partially in English

[Associazione Dottorandi e Dottori di Ricerca Italiani](#) (IT) - Italian association of doctoral students. Useful to find information, help and support regarding Italian PhD programs

[Alma Laurea](#) (IT) - Information about PhD programs in different Italian institution

[Normattiva](#) (IT) - The text of the last promulgated law regarding PhD programs in Italy

[Ministro dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca](#) (IT) - Official website of the Italian Ministry of Education with information regarding PhD programmes at Italian universities

[List of all the funding bodies for each region/institution](#) (IT)

[Ministero Affari Esteri](#) (IT) List of scholarships offered yearly by the European Union to foreign students to take part in short- and long-term projects in Italian academic institutions

[Italian National Institute for Statistics](#) (IT) The first and only study aimed at discovering the rate of employment for Italian PhD graduates (completed in February 2010)

[Xpatulator](#) (EN) Analysis of the cost of living in European countries

[Il dottorato in Italia, una storia recente](#) (IT) PDF file with the history of Italian PhD programmes

[Back to top](#)



Copyright © 2013 University of Leeds. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>.