

## UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONALISATION QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended as a practical reference tool for those teaching or technical-administrative staff who carry out activities relating to the internationalization of the University and more specifically in relation to those figures who deal with international students.

The document, although not prescriptive, recalls the regulatory provisions, illustrates the procedures in place, shares the working methodology and provides suggestions for the management of the aspects described above, according to the Quality Assurance (QA) principles of the university system (AVA ref. DM 987/2016, AVA 2 ref. DM 6/2019, AVA 3 ref. DM 1154/2021).

Considering that UPO adopts a global approach to QA, the AVA system (Self-Assessment - Periodic Assessment - Accreditation) is also introduced and launched with reference to the University Internationalization.

The first point of attention identified in AVA 3 and referred to the Quality of Teaching, Research and Third Mission specifies, among the aspects to be considered, that "The University identifies its reference context (local, national and international) and the main stakeholders (internal and external)" (cf. AVA3, Scope of Evaluation A, point of attention A.1, aspects to be considered A 1.1, p. 5), attributing to internationalisation a role characterizing the University's activities.

Paragraph 2 identifies the definition of international students shared by the MUR in the annual document [Procedures for the admission, stay, enrolment of international students and related recognition of qualifications, for higher education courses in Italy, valid for the academic year 2023-2024](#).

Paragraph 3 describes the main procedural differences concerning the admission and enrolment at UPO of international students differentiated on the basis of their country of origin.

Paragraph 4 describes the authorities responsible for the admission of EU and non-EU students to Italy and their respective competences.

Paragraph 5 describes the entry procedures in Italy for international students.

Paragraph 6 describes the activities carried out by the relevant offices and teaching staff in support of international students.

As a conclusion there are some appendices that are essential for the operational implementation of the above arguments.

## 2. DEFINITION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Every year, the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research (MUR) publishes the document [Procedures for the admission, stay, enrolment of international students and related recognition of qualifications, for higher education courses in Italy, valid for the academic year 2023-2024](#). It

contains definitions and operating procedures useful for the management of international students. It should be noted that this document is drawn up each year and that the operational guidelines may be subject to change or modification.

International students are defined as those who have obtained degrees and/or qualifications, including Italian citizenship or citizenship of an EU country, as per the ministerial document mentioned above.

The main distinction is between students coming from EU or non-EU countries, divided into the subcategories listed below:

- international students of EU origin: these are students' resident in EU countries who apply to enroll at the University and have obtained their previous degree abroad;
- international students of non-EU origin: these are students' coming from non-EU countries, who apply to enroll in University's Bachelor, Italian Master, Single Cycle Degree, Doctoral Degree, and I and II level Master courses that require a study visa issued by the Italian consular representation in the student's country of residence as an admission requirement.
- Mobility students: all students, whether from EU or non-EU countries, who are undertaking a mobility period at the University.

### **3. NECESSARY DOCUMENTS FOR THE ENROLLMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

This section examines the documents required for international students to apply and then enroll at the university.

#### **3.1 Definition of documents required for enrolment in Study Courses and Doctorates granting legal qualifications for EU students**

This paragraph lists and defines the documents that international students with EU citizenship must deliver to the University:

- Legalized copy of the diploma of the access title in original;
- Any legalised translation of the original admission qualification;
- Diploma Supplement (DS): the DS is a document supplementing the official qualification obtained on completion of a course of study at a university or higher education institution. The DS provides a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies undertaken and completed by the student. The DS contains the Transcript of Records (ToR), i.e. the complete list of examinations taken by the student;
- Any other specific documents required by the Course of Study.

#### **3.2 Definition of documents required for enrolment in University Courses and Doctorates granting legal qualifications for non-EU students**

This paragraph lists and defines the documents that universities need in order to proceed with the verification of the qualifications previously obtained by students and assess their eligibility for enrolment in university courses:

- Declaration of Value
- Certificate of Comparability
- Certificate of Verification

3.2.1. *The Declaration of Value (DOV)* is a document of informative value, which does not have the value of recognition of the qualification, that diplomatic-consular representations issue in order to assist universities, training institutes and competent administrations in the process of recognising the qualification.

➤ **Focal point**

**The DOV contains information such as:**

- **type and level of the institution that issued the foreign qualification;**
- **legal duration of the course of study;**
- **requirements for access to the course;**
- **any grade obtained with reference to the assessment system in force;**
- **value of the qualification in the country of origin for the purposes of pursuing studies and, where appropriate, exercising a profession;**
- **any other information deemed useful for its assessment in Italy.**

3.2.2. *Certificate of Comparability and the Certificate of Verification.* These are two certificates that have no formal value in terms of recognition of qualifications, but which are functional for universities, training institutes and competent administrations in the process of recognizing qualifications.

The Certificate of Comparability indicates the level of the qualification obtained abroad with reference to the levels established by the European Qualification Framework (EQF), a European framework of qualifications that facilitates the recognition and understanding of qualifications and the qualifications of those who move abroad for work or study, and by [Bologna Process](#), which since 1999 has aimed to create the European Higher Education Area through an Intergovernmental Agreement between the signatory countries.

The Certificate of Verification indicates the authenticity of the qualification awarded abroad and information on its actual award by the reference institution located abroad.

The two certificates are issued by the [CIMEA](#) (Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche - Centre for Information on Academic Equivalences), a body entrusted by the Italian State with the role of information and notification centre on the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, in accordance with the provisions of the "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the

European Region", known as the [Lisbon Convention](#), deposited by the Council of Europe and approved by the signatory states on 11 April 1997.

#### **4. AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR ENTRY INTO ITALY OF EU AND NON-EU STUDENTS**

Having assessed the different types of international students, considering the essential documents that students must deliver to the University for the verification of qualifications previously obtained and necessary for enrolling in study courses, it is now necessary to analyze the subjects responsible for the enrolment process.

As far as international EU students are concerned, their access to study courses in Italy is subject to the verification of qualifications by the individual Athenaeum, through the analysis of the documents listed in the previous paragraph. The Athenaeum is therefore the main and only actor called upon to operate on this matter.

A completely different context is represented with reference to non-EU international students, whose entry into Italy involves a multiplicity of actors acting autonomously, not necessarily coordinated among themselves, which makes the reference context articulate and complex.

The MUR identifies the competent actors for each moment of the process leading to the entry of non-EU students into Italy. These are in particular the following bodies

- the diplomatic-consular representation
- the Higher Education Institutions;
- the Ministry of the Interior and the CIMEA information centre.

##### **4.1 Authorities' competences for the entry of non-EU students into Italy**

*4.1.1 Competence for issuing visas for study purposes.* The diplomatic-consular representation. The diplomatic-consular representation has sole jurisdiction over the final decision to issue a study visa. The validation of the application for pre-enrolment in a course of study and the relative documentation produced by higher education institutions is to be considered in support of the procedures for assessing a study visa, and does not automatically imply its issuance, since the diplomatic-consular Representations, in addition to verifying that the student meets the requirements for the issuance of a study/enrolment visa, are also obliged to assess the absence of the student's migration risk (D.I. 850/2011 art. 4 par. 2).

*4.1.2 Competence for academic recognition of qualifications and eligibility for enrolment.* Higher Education Institutions. The evaluation of foreign qualifications aimed at enrolling in Italian higher education courses is the exclusive competence of higher education institutions, as established by Article 2 of Law 148/2002. The documentation referring to a

qualification and possibly produced by diplomatic-consular Representations, including the Declaration of Value (DOV), is not compulsory and is not binding for assessment decisions falling within the competence of individual higher education institutions regarding admission to the chosen course. As an alternative to the DOV, it is possible to apply to the CIMEA for the Certificate of Comparability and the Certificate of Verification, as presented in par. 3.2.2, which in the same way as the DOV are neither compulsory nor binding documents for admission to the University.

#### *4.1.3 Competence for issuing and renewing residence permits: Ministry of the Interior.*

The administrative procedure for the issuance and renewal of residency permits is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and is governed by the Consolidation Act of provisions concerning the regulation of immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners (legislative decree n° 286 of 25 July 1998), by the relative implementation regulations (presidential decree n° 394 of 31 August 1999) and by Law n° 68 of 28 May 2007 relating to the regulation of short-term stays of foreigners for visits, business, tourism and study.<sup>1</sup>

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR THE ENTRY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

Having analyzed what has been described in the previous paragraphs, with reference to the definition of students and the identification of the competent authorities and their respective roles, it now becomes important to outline the procedures for the entry of international students into Italy.

The procedures for the entry of international students, described below, are briefly outlined in APPENDIX 2: FLOWCHART OF ENTRANCE AND ENTRY PROCESSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

### **5.1 Procedure for students NOT requiring an entry visa, but with a foreign degree**

Those who are Italian citizens with a foreign qualification, or EU citizens wherever they reside, or non-EU citizens who regularly reside in Italy or in a European Union country, have unlimited access to university courses. For access, it will be necessary to produce suitable documentation as described in par. 3.1 of this LG.

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<sup>1</sup> [Procedures for the admission, stay, enrolment of international students and related recognition of qualifications, for higher education courses in Italy, valid for the academic year 2023-2024](#) p. 4

## 5.2 Procedure for Extra european students

The procedure for those who hold foreign qualifications and are non-European citizens involves some additional steps, which are summarised below:

*5.2.1. University.* In order to gain access to a higher education institution, the non-EU citizen must independently register through an initial university pre-enrolment phase on the [University](#) online portal. The candidate enrolls by entering all his or her personal details and attaching the necessary documents: passport photo, passport, high school diploma or degree, translation of the same, certification of knowledge of Italian or another vehicular language (B2) and Declaration of Value or CIMEA Certificate and any other document that the University deems necessary to be assessed for eligibility for enrolment. The deadlines for enrolment are set by the Athenaeum and may vary depending on the course of study to which the student wishes to enrol. With regard to registration for the admission tests for Master's degree courses in Medicine and Surgery and the Health Professions, candidates must always register through University to take the admission test.

*5.2.2. Study Visa request procedure.* Students who pre-register regularly on University, inserting the necessary documentation required in the application, will receive validation by UPO. The diplomatic-consular Representations are in charge of issuing a type "D" national study visa for "University matriculation" with a duration of 365 days, subject to verification of requirements such as: economic means of subsistence for the planned stay, availability of the necessary sum for repatriation, suitable accommodation in the national territory, adequate insurance coverage. Subsequently, the candidate must apply for:

- I. Fiscal Code (FC). If the Italian Consulate/Embassy in the country of origin of the VIs offers the service of issuing a CF, the VIs may apply for it before leaving for Italy. Alternatively, after arrival in Italy, the CF can be requested at a local branch of the Agenzie delle Entrate (Italian Revenue Agency). In order to issue the CF, the University has drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding with the Piedmont Region Revenue Agency which introduces a number of procedures to simplify the process of issuing the CF. For the CF request it is necessary to introduce an internal coordination within the University in order to identify the subjects in charge at each Pole to fill in Form AA4/8, to be sent to the Central Administration UPO (International Relations Area, Staff Development and Quality of Higher Education Didactic Projects and International Mobility and/or Staff Coordination of Career Services for Students) who will send it;
- II. Residence permit for study. Request to be forwarded within 8 working days of entry into Italy with a type 'D' national visa for study at the relevant Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione. Once the documentation has been obtained and filled out, it can be sent by going to a Post Office, which will fix an appointment at the competent Questura (Police Headquarters) to have fingerprints scanned. The Questura will then issue a receipt proving the validity of the student's stay on Italian territory and will indicate when to go back to the competent offices to collect the residence permit.

*5.2.3. Enrollment.* International students, once they have arrived in Italy, must go to the Student Office of the Pole to which the course they have enrolled for the delivery of the

necessary documentation (presented in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2) in order to proceed with online enrolment on the UPO Student Portal.

## 6. THE RELEVANT OFFICES AND THE ROLE OF TEACHING STAFF

The competent offices of the Poles and the Central Administration support students in the pre-enrolment phase

- They reply to emails sent by international students
- They analyse the applications uploaded onto University by non-EU international students, check the correctness of the documents uploaded, request integrations in the case of incorrect documentation uploaded, indicate to international students the timetable for the B2 Italian language tests provided by the University;
- They work with the Agenzia delle Entrate for the issue of the Tax Code for international students;
- They verify, in the presence of international students at the Student Secretariat of the relevant Campus, the formal correctness of the documentation required for online enrolment.

The teaching staff support international students by fulfilling the function of teaching contact person, advising on the most suitable pathway for international students to pursue their university career at the University.

The University's International Relations area (now called UPO Staff Development and Quality of Higher Education Teaching Projects and International Mobility) provides continuous support to University lecturers and international students, with reference to the topics covered by these Guidelines and supports the Poles on a daily basis in the same issues.

Finally, the creation of a dedicated administrative support service for international students is being planned/experimented at the Novara Campus, called Well.com Office, which operates in close synergy and coordination with the University's International Relations area.

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## **APPENDIX 1: REGULATORY AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *Regulatory provisions and related documents of a general nature*

[Procedures for entry, stay, enrolment of international students and recognition of qualifications, for higher education courses in Italy, valid for the academic year 2023-2024;](#)

"[Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region](#)", known as the Lisbon Convention, deposited by the Council of Europe and approved by the signatory states on 11 April 1997;

[Law no. 148 of 11 July 2002](#) - Ratification and execution of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, signed in Lisbon on 11 April 1997, and rules for the adaptation of the internal system;

[Consolidated text of provisions concerning immigration regulations and regulations on the condition of foreigners Legislative Decree 286/98;](#)

[DECREE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC of 31 August 1999, no. 394](#) - Regulations containing norms for the implementation of the Consolidated text of provisions concerning the discipline of immigration and norms on the condition of foreigners, in accordance with article 1, paragraph 6, of legislative decree no. 286 of 25 July 1998;

[Law n° 68 of 28 May 2007](#) - Discipline of short-term stays of foreigners for visits, business, tourism and study.

[Decree no. 850 of 11 May 2011 \(G.U. no. 280 of 1-12-2011\)](#) - Definition of the types of entry visas and the requirements for obtaining them;

The principles of quality, from which this document is inspired, can be found on the web page dedicated to the AVA system, at the [ANVUR website](#).

## APPENDIX 2: FLOWCHART ENTRY AND ENROLMENT PROCESSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

