

CRUI Working Group on Promotion of the Italian University System

Ranking and Excellence

The Italian University system is highly inclusive, as explicitly stated in the Italian Constitution Art. 34: *‘Capable and deserving pupils, including those lacking financial resources, shall have the right to attain the highest levels of education. The Republic shall render this right effective through scholarships, allowances to families and other benefits, which shall be assigned through competitive examinations’.*

At the same time, higher education and research in Italy are very high quality. Based on a long-standing tradition dating back to the 11th century, with the oldest University in Europe, Italian Universities kept high-quality standards throughout their history. Considered as a group, they are ranked 3rd (according to Times Higher Education) or 4th (according to QS) worldwide in terms of number of universities in the top 500 for citations per faculty in international scientific journals¹. Considering the top 300 positions², they are ranked 5th. In the overall ranking of THE, Italian Universities are ranked 5th worldwide in terms of number of Universities (27) in the top 500.

As a result of this research-oriented education, graduate and post-graduate students find a stimulating, open-minded, interdisciplinary, curiosity-driven and tolerant study environment. Students graduating in Italian Universities can easily start PhD, or an academic carrier or play key roles in leading private and public enterprises or international organizations.

Granting high quality and accessibility together is the highest achievement of the Italian tertiary education system.

Humanities and Technologies: reading and learning about our Past is an action that ventures into the Future.

Italian Universities have a longstanding tradition in humanities and social sciences, ranging from classics to archaeology, from history to philosophy, from psychology to sociology just to mention a few. Being embedded in a humanistic tradition and projected into the future, the Italian higher education system is able to promote interdisciplinary skills that connect and stimulate the application of technologies to humanities, as it emerges for example in the cases of archaeology and conservation. These are fields of excellence for Italian Universities in their worldwide scientific presence abroad, from the Mediterranean through the Middle-East to Asia and beyond.

Archaeology is the perfect example of such interaction, as in several Italian university this field of study involves a diversity of disciplines from the humanities but also applied physics and chemistry, computer science, biology and anthropology, statistics along with an array of digital skills that are

¹ 38 and 31 universities according to Times Higher Education and QS University Ranking, 2020, respectively

² 14 and 17 according to THE and QS

now essential tools to be used in documenting the complexity of historical continuity and man-environment interaction.

An iconic example of this concept, impressive and fragile at the same time, is the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, the town at the foothill of the Vesuvius volcano, the life of which was interrupted by the catastrophic event of 79 AD. The site is, indeed, a unique research location for international teams, and a privileged space for students involved in training courses at different levels, practicing their skills in Archaeology, Anthropology, Paleobiology, Architecture and Geology and so much more. Our Future really has an ancient heart to be uncovered.

Excellences in ranking

The presence of centres of excellence in all the scientific fields and the strong links with European Research Networks makes Italian Universities an appealing and competitive learning environment to deepen from classic studies to new cross-field research topics.

Ancient and Classical Studies represent a flagship of the Italian Universities with 6 institutions in the Top50 (QS ranking). Italian Institutions have also a strong tradition on hard sciences from Galileo to Fermi, to Rubbia. Italy counts 8 Institutions in the Top100 for Physics (US News), 97 Highly Cited Researchers and a winner of the Fields Medal awards in Maths (2018). Students will be able to choose among 3 Renowned Polytechnic Schools, 5 Renowned International Doctoral Schools, 51 university departments top100 for Engineering and technology, Life sciences and Medicine, Natural Sciences (QS). Students will have access to International Laboratories and Large Research Infrastructures for nuclear and subnuclear physics and be part of the International Space Station, the planetary and universe exploration missions.

For students looking for cross-field hi-end research, Italy has 8 new Competence Centres as focal points for the Industry 4.0 national strategy and represents the 7th nation in the world for investment in space: Human Exploration, Solar System Exploration, study of the Universe, Launching Technologies. Top institutions are devoted to breakthrough sciences developing Robotics, Mechatronics, Artificial Intelligence, Biotechnology, Neurosciences, Nanotechnologies, Personalized Medicine.

Highly committed to SDGs and UN Agenda2030

Severe events are undermining the stability and social cohesion in the world.

The present societal challenges claim for new actions to tackle global issues such as poverty, inequality, quality education for all, gender equality, climate change, peace and economic.

Universities, powerful drivers of global, national and local innovation, economic development, and societal wellbeing, are getting out of the “Ivory Tower” and play their role of “anchor institutions” not limiting their actions to the places where they are located.

As influential and neutral players they are uniquely placed to lead the cross-sectoral implementation of the UN 17 SDGs of the Agenda 2030. International cooperation reinforces this role in a continuous exchange between local and global for better results.

Times Higher Education Impact measures how universities around the world are committing to the 17 SDGs. In 2020, 2 Italian Universities are top 100 in the global ranking and in the individual SDGs, 5 are top 5, 7 are top 25, 5 are top 50 based on THE. To confirm their commitment to the SDGs, Rectors of several Italian Universities signed in 2019 the “Adamello Charter”, a Memorandum of Understanding, where is confirmed their engagement in teaching and research on the topics promoted by the UN Agenda 2030.