

Educational system in ITALY

The Constitution establishes that the State has to provide for a state-owned education system, but it also establishes that also non-state school may exist.

All schools are granted teaching autonomy, organizing autonomy and research, experimentation and development autonomy.

Responsibility for school education lies within the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*), which works at central level, while regional and provincial education offices work at local level.

Also the universities have gradually gained administrative, financial and accounting autonomy. The Ministry is responsible for the allocation of funds, for monitoring and the evaluation of the system. According to university autonomy, each university establishes its courses organization in the respect of the qualifying formative objectives of the courses. Each university decides the teaching organization and structure of its degree courses in the teaching regulations which are approved by the Ministry.

1. Pre-primary education

Scuola dell'infanzia (nursery schools) Age 3-6

The *scuola dell'infanzia* is the first stage of the education and training system and it is not compulsory. Children who turn three within the 31st of December of the current school year can enrol in the *scuole dell'infanzia*.

Pre-primary education is offered free of charge. Families are asked to pay a sum for transport and canteen services. Families with low incomes are exempted.

2. Compulsory education

Primo ciclo di istruzione (first cycle of education)

Scuola primaria (primary school) Age 6-11

Scuola secondaria di primo grado (lower secondary school) Age 11-14

Secondo ciclo di istruzione (second cycle of education) Age 14-16

Education is compulsory from 6 up to 16 years of age. The right/duty to education and training for at least 12 years is fulfilled within the education system or up to the obtainment of a three-year vocational qualification (either at school or in the initial vocational training system) before reaching 18 years of age. Compulsory education covers the first cycle of education (8 years) and the first two years of the second cycle (upper secondary education).

Admissions criteria

Enrolment to the first class of primary school is compulsory for all children who have turned 6 within the 31st December of the current school year or, earlier, within the 31st April of the current school year. Enrolment to the first year of lower secondary school is compulsory for all pupils who have successfully completed the primary school. Enrolment and attendance are offered free of charge for the whole first cycle of education. Families are free to choose the school, within the limits of available posts.

Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises at least 200 days between the 1st of September and the 30th of June. Schools open five or six days a week. Compulsory annual teaching hours are 891 in primary school and 990 in lower secondary school; this amount is subdivided into 33 teaching weeks with an average amount of, respectively, 27 and 30 weekly hours. According to school autonomy, each

educational institution is responsible for the organization of its annual teaching time.

Class size/student grouping

Pupils are usually grouped according to their age. According to their organizational autonomy, schools can also organize groups with pupils of different ages. Each class is generally made up of maximum 26-27 and minimum 15 pupils, at primary level, and of maximum 27-28 and minimum 18 in the first classes at lower secondary level. At primary level teachers are generalist. At lower secondary level, teachers are specialist in one or more subjects.

Curriculum control and content.

Specific learning objectives at primary school level have been defined for the following subjects: Catholic religion, Italian, English language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technical education and ICT, music, art and drawing, and sport sciences. As for the lower secondary school, the specific learning objectives have been defined for the following subjects: Catholic religion, Italian, English language, a second foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technical education, information and communication technology, music, art and drawing, and sport sciences. Teachers are free to choose textbooks and teaching methods.

Assessment, progression and qualifications

At both educational levels, periodical and annual assessment of pupils' learning is carried out by teachers by assigning a mark from 0 to 10. At primary school level, also an analytic justified assessment is given together with the mark.

On completion of the first cycle of education, students take a state examination. The minimum mark required to obtain the first cycle leaving certificate is 6. The certificate is required to be admitted to the upper secondary education level. Pupils obtaining a mark lower than 6, assigned by all class teachers, cannot progress to the next grade and they are not admitted to the final state examination.

3. Post-compulsory education / upper secondary and postsecondary Level

Types of education

Secondo ciclo di istruzione (second cycle of education) within post-compulsory education

Liceo classico (general upper secondary school specialising in classical studies)

Liceo scientifico (general upper secondary school specialising in scientific studies)

Liceo linguistico (general upper secondary school specialising in foreign languages)

Liceo delle scienze umane (general upper secondary school specialising in human sciences)

Liceo musicale e coreutico (general upper secondary school specialising in music and dance)

Liceo artistico (general upper secondary school specialising in arts subjects) Age (14) 16-19

Istituto tecnico (technical school) Age (14) 16-19

Istituto professionale (vocational school) Age (14) 16-19

Istruzione e formazione professionale (vocational education and training system) Age (14) 16-17

Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore (higher technical education and training system) Age 19-21

The upper secondary level of education is called 'second cycle of education' (*secondo ciclo di istruzione*) and it is made up of the upper secondary school (called *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) offered by the *licei*, the technical institutes and the vocational institutes, and the vocational and training system.

The reform applied from school year 2010/11, starting from the first grades. The whole process will be completed in school year 2014/15, when the new organization will apply to all grades.

As indicated in the table, the current *licei* system foresees 6 *licei*. Further innovations introduced are

the following: the introduction of Latin as a compulsory subject in all licei except for the arts and the music liceo, where it is an optional subject; a foreign language as a compulsory subject for 5 years in all licei; more teaching hours for mathematics, physics and sciences; the introduction of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in the fifth grade which foresees the teaching of a subject through a foreign language.

As far as technical and vocational institutes are concerned, the reform foresees what follows: technical institutes offer studies referred to 2 sectors, economic sector (2 branches) and technological sector (9 branches); vocational institutes offer studies in 2 sectors, service sector (4 branches) and industry and handicraft (2 branches). For both technical and vocational institutes some changes occurred are the following: a weekly timetable of 32 teaching hours plus some hours dedicated to labs activities; increased teaching time for English language (technical institutes); more stages, apprenticeships and combined school and workplace courses (vocational institutes).

Higher technical education and training is offered through courses provided by the Higher Technical Institutes (Istituti Tecnici Superiori – ITS) and through pathways provided by the Higher technical education and training institutes (Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore – IFTS).

Admissions criteria

Enrolment and attendance are not free of charge. However, fees are modest and the amount is fixed at central level. Students enrolled at the first, second and third year of the second cycle are exempted from paying, as they are still fulfilling the right/duty to education.

Anyone (adults included) holding an upper secondary education leaving certificate, has access to courses offered by the High Technical Institutes (ITS) and to IFTS pathways. Access to IFTS pathways is also allowed to those in possession of a three-year vocational diploma, to those who have been admitted to the fifth year of the liceo, as well as to those who do not hold any upper secondary certification. These latter are required to hold a certification of competences acquired through previous training and working experiences undertaken after the fulfilment of compulsory education

Curriculum control and content

Central government determines basic curricula for each branch of general, vocational and technical upper secondary education and gives guidance on teaching methods. Core subjects common to all institutions are Italian, history, a modern foreign language, mathematics and physical education. The Higher technical education and training system (ITS courses and IFTS pathways) offer courses aiming mainly to develop professional specialisations at post-secondary level which meet the requirements of the labour market, both in the public and private sectors.

Assessment, progression and qualifications

Periodical and annual assessment of pupils' learning and behaviour is carried out by teachers by assigning a mark from 0 to 10. Admission to the following grade requires marks equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject and behaviour. Admission is suspended if a student obtains a mark lower than 6/10 in one or more subjects. In this case, students should fill in their gaps within the beginning of the following school year. The students' learning outcomes are assessed before the beginning of the school year. Students who obtain at least 6/10 are admitted to the following grade. At the end of general and vocational upper secondary education, pupils take the State examination; those who successfully pass the examination obtain an upper secondary school leaving diploma which allows them to continue their studies at higher level.

4. Higher education

Higher education is organized at university and non-university level. This latter is offered by the higher level arts and music education system (Sistema dell'Alta formazione artistica e musicale – Afam) and by other institutions

Only universities and Afam institutes issue officially recognized degrees.

Higher education, both at universities and Afam institutes, is organized in three cycles – Bachelor, Master and Doctorate – according to the Bologna process: the first cycle lasting 3 years; the second cycle lasting 2 years and the third cycle having a variable length. Courses in medicine and surgery, veterinary science, and dentistry are still organized in one single cycle lasting 5-6 years.

Access

Applicants must have the upper secondary school leaving certificate, or a foreign comparable qualification.

Admission to the degree courses in medicine and surgery, dentistry, veterinary medicine, architecture is regulated by numerus clausus at national level. However, selection procedures are defined by each institution.

Qualifications

Universities are autonomous for the planning of study courses, for which each university establishes the title, the objectives, the general framework of learning activities, credits attributed to each activity and the assessment procedures. Common objectives and general criteria are, however, defined at central level for all courses.

Universities issue the following degrees: first level *Laurea* (L) obtained after a 3-year course (180 credits); second level *Laurea magistrale* obtained after a 2-year course (120 credits) and a third level Dottorato di ricerca after a course which duration varies depending on the field of study.

5. Special needs

Students with special needs are integrated into mainstream education and specialist support is provided.

6. Teachers

According to the reform on the initial training of teachers, teachers at pre-primary and primary level must have followed a five years' university course of study, while teachers at secondary level, in addition to the attendance of a five years' university course of study, must follow a formative training of one year of length.

Universities offer in service training to teachers for their professional development.

Primary school teachers are generalist teachers, but are responsible for a specific subject area.

Secondary school teachers are specialist teachers. All teachers are civil servants.

LINKS:

<http://www.istruzione.it>

<http://www.indire.it>

<http://www.europass-italia.it>

<http://www.usr.sicilia.it>

<http://www.eun.org>

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

<http://www.ei-ie.org/>

<http://etf.europa.eu>