



Consolato Generale d'Italia  
Johannesburg

## MOVING TO THE ITALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM A QUICK GUIDE

### 1. Foreword

Many students holding a South African Senior National Certificate (Matric) or a Bachelor's degree have expressed their interest in moving to Italy and enrolling in Italian public or private tertiary education institutions (i.e. universities, academies, masters courses, high schools, advanced specialisation schools)<sup>1</sup>.

This guide aims to clarify how to apply and the relevant conditions. This document does not refer to the visa application process.

Specific Italian laws regulate the enrolment of foreign students in Italian tertiary education institutions.

### 2. The Italian system in brief

The Italian tertiary system structure is quite complicated<sup>2</sup>, but for the purpose of this guide it can be simplified as follows:

University <sup>3</sup>		Other post secondary institutions <sup>4</sup>
<b>Laurea (Bachelor's Degree)</b> 3 years normally	<b>Laurea Magistrale a ciclo unico</b> (single cycle Master's Degree) 5-6 years normally	High school courses, post-secondary specialisation or training courses, private "masters" 1-3 years
<b>Laurea Magistrale (Master's Degree)</b> 2 years normally		
<b>Dottorato di Ricerca (Ph.D.)</b> 3 years	<b>Specializzazione</b> (Specialisation degree) 3-5 years normally - i.e. after a 6 year degree in Medicine and Surgery	

Please note that the Italian academic year formally starts on 1st October and ends on 30th September. Lessons start in autumn and end late spring. Each university defines its own calendar for courses and examinations.

<sup>1</sup> See International Standard Classification of Education: <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isc-ed>

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive description: <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ITA>

<sup>3</sup> Public or private universities recognised by the Minister of University and Research.

<sup>4</sup> These qualifications are provided mainly by private institutions and they often do not have an equivalence with university qualifications such as Laurea. Sometimes they are strongly labour market oriented.

### 3. Senior National Certificate and *Diploma di Esame di Stato* ("maturità")

The Italian secondary school ends with a national examination, the so called *Esame di Stato di secondo ciclo* (or "*maturità*"). Whoever wants to enrol in an Italian university or post-secondary institution, needs to obtain a Senior National Certificate, equivalent to the Italian diploma.

The Italian law states two basic conditions:

- your qualification must be obtained at the end of a 12 years education period, exactly like the Matric. In addition, the student must achieved positive marks at least for last two years of attendance;
- you can access a Bachelor's and single cycle Master's Degree, provided that your qualification allows access to similar universities in South Africa;

As a general principle, Italian higher education institutions will take into account the access requirements set up by foreign education systems, including any thresholds and/or minimum marks; the level of education and/or training achieved; the specific subjects/disciplines included in the applicant's curriculum studiorum<sup>5</sup>.

The Italian institutions of higher education will verify if the applicant meets all the conditions, taking into account the entire curriculum studiorum, the foreign qualifications, the current national and international legislations.

As per the university autonomy, Italian higher education institutions may establish additional admission requirements. For further information, you have to contact the chosen University or institution.

### 4. I hold a SNC and I want to enrol in a tertiary education institution in Italy

First, if you do not already have clear ideas, browse the website [www.university.it](http://www.university.it)

Orientation is crucial. In Italian universities you can study a broad range of subjects, from humanities to advanced science and technologies or new fields such as Artificial Intelligence.

If you decide to attend courses in Italian, you should master the language, at least at B2 level<sup>6</sup>. If you are choosing a course in English, you do not need to know Italian at this level.

The University website provides lot of information: i.e.g. which universities along the *Peninsula* offer what you feel is best for you; official courses structures; how to enrol, scholarships, etc.

Once you find the course that better suits you, please refer to the university website (normally also in English).

Holding a South African SNC means that you are eligible for enrolling in a Bachelor's degree (Laurea) course in Italy. Sometimes South African students move to Italy to study post-secondary non-tertiary courses, like *fashion*, offered by private institutions. These kind of courses are specific labour market oriented.

If you do not hold an Italian passport or a passport issued by a Schengen country <sup>7</sup>, you need a study visa. Please address the Embassy/Consulate closest to you. If your current residence (or the school where you achieved the qualification) is in the Free State, Gauteng (with the exclusion of the metropolitan area of Pretoria-Tshwane), KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West, browse the website<sup>8</sup> of the Consulate General of Italy in Johannesburg to get some basic information.

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<sup>5</sup> If you want to enrol, for instance, at Medicine and Surgery in South Africa and they ask you for certain final marks or subjects, you have to achieve the same marks and subjects to enrol in Italian similar courses.

<sup>6</sup> See CERF (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/>

<sup>7</sup> See [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-09/schengen\\_brochure\\_dr3111126\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-09/schengen_brochure_dr3111126_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://consjohannesburg.esteri.it/en/servizi-consolari-e-visti/servizi-per-il-cittadino-straniero/visti/>

The University or Institution you have chosen may require a Declaration of Value (DOV). Please see below for information.

### **5. You have a Bachelor's degree and want to attend a Masters degree (Laurea Magistrale) course in Italy.**

If you do not already have clear ideas, browse the website [www.university.it](http://www.university.it).

Once you find the course that better suits you, please refer to the university website (normally also in English).

Holding a bachelor's degree means that you are eligible for attending a Master's degree (Laurea Magistrale) course in Italy. Sometimes high rank Italian universities ask for a South African Honours' Degree to enrol in an Italian Laurea Magistrale (Master's degree). It is very important to ask in advance for information to the chosen university.

Sometimes Italian universities and other institutions offer the so called "*masters*". It could be a bit confusing. A *master* is essentially a one/two year long post-graduate course (1st level after a Bachelor's degree, 2nd level after a Master's degree) to specialise on some subjects or fields. If the institution offering a *masters* does not require a bachelor's degree, it may offer only a labour market oriented specialisation. Master courses do not necessarily begin at the beginning of the academic year (see point 2).

If you decide to attend courses in Italian, you should master the language, at least at B2 level (see note 6). If you are choosing a course in English, you do not need to know Italian at this level.

If you do not hold an Italian passport or a passport issued by a Schengen country <sup>9</sup>, you need a study visa. Please address the Embassy/Consulate closest to you. If your current residence (or the school where you achieved the qualification) is in the Free State, Gauteng (with the exclusion of the metropolitan area of Pretoria-Tshwane), KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West, browse the website<sup>10</sup> of the Consulate General of Italy in Johannesburg to get some basic information.

The University or Institution you have chosen may require a Declaration of Value (DOV). Please see below for information.

### **6. Declaration of Value (DOV)**

DOV is a document, provided by the Embassy or Consulates of Italy in South Africa, that describes the foreign qualifications achieved by the student and provides any useful element to enable Italian universities to properly evaluate them in accordance with the Italian current legislation.

If you reside within the jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Italy in Johannesburg, please check the specific page on our website: <https://consjohannesburg.esteri.it/en/italia-e-sud-africa/diplomazia-culturale/lingua-e-cultura-italiana>.

You can also contact the Education office at [scuola.johannesburg@esteri.it](mailto:scuola.johannesburg@esteri.it) for further information and assistance.

The DOV is often a mandatory document the University admission office asks for. Inquire in advance if you need it.

### **7. Contacts for assistance and further information**

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School Principal  
Education Office  
Consolato Generale d'Italia  
Johannesburg

[scuola.johannesburg@esteri.it](mailto:scuola.johannesburg@esteri.it)

011 7281392 ext. 2080

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<sup>9</sup> See [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-09/schengen\\_brochure\\_dr3111126\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=2020-09/schengen_brochure_dr3111126_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://consjohannesburg.esteri.it/en/servizi-consolari-e-visti/servizi-per-il-cittadino-straniero/visti/>