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The following types of institution offer higher education in Italy:

- Universities (polytechnics included)
- High level Arts and Music Education institutions (Alta formazione artistica e musicale - Afam)
- Higher schools for language mediators (Scuole superiori per mediatori linguistici - SSML)
- Higher technical institutes (Its)

Universities are autonomous bodies; they adopt their own statutes, establishing their own governing bodies (such as the rector, senate, and board of management) as well as their teaching and research structures.

Universities issue the following qualifications, corresponding to the Bologna Process structure (cycles):

- Laurea, corresponding to a CFU);
- Laurea specialistica/magistrale, corresponding to a second-cycle qualification, issued at the end of a two-year course of study (120 credits - CFU) or to a 5-6-year single course (300-360 credits - CFU);
- Dottorato di ricerca, corresponding to a third-cycle qualification.

In addition, universities may organise courses leading to the following qualifications:

- Master universitario di primo livello (first-level University master). Courses are addressed to holders of a laurea and lead to a second-cycle qualification outside the Bachelor and Master structure.
- Diploma di specializzazione (Specialisation diploma) and Master universitario di secondo livello (Second-level university master). Courses are addressed to holders of a laurea specialistica/magistrale and lead to a third-cycle qualification outside the Bachelor and Master structure.

The Afam institutions are the following: Academies of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Drama, Higher institutes for Artistic Industries (ISIA), Conservatoires, the National Dance Academy and officially recognised music institutes. Afam institutions have legal status and statutory, teaching, scientific, administrative, financial and accounting autonomy.

Afam institutions issue the following qualifications, corresponding to the Bologna Process structure (cycles):

- Diploma accademico di primo livello (First-level academic diploma), corresponding to a first-cycle qualification, issued at the end of a three-year course of study (180 credits - CFA);
- Diploma accademico di secondo livello (Second-level academic diploma), corresponding to a

second-cycle qualification, issued at the end of a two-year course of study (120 credits - CFA);

- Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca (Research academic diploma), corresponding to a third-cycle qualification;

In addition, Afam institutions may organise courses leading to the acquisition of the following qualifications:

- Diploma accademico di specializzazione I (Specialisation academic diploma I) and Diploma di perfezionamento o Master I (In-depth diploma or master I). Courses are addressed to holders of a first-level academic diploma and lead to a second-cycle qualification outside the Bachelor and Master structure.
- Diploma accademico di specializzazione II (Specialisation academic diploma II) and Diploma di perfezionamento o Master II (In-depth diploma or master II).

Courses are addressed to holders of a second-level academic diploma and lead to a third level qualification outside the Bachelor and Master structure.

All qualifications are described in the NQF. Qualifications issued by universities and Afam institutions are also described in the Italian qualification framework of Higher education ([QTI](#) ^[1]).

Each university or Afam institution establishes the organisation of the academic year. In general, the academic year starts on the 1st of November and ends on the 31st of October of the following year. In general, it is organised in two semesters.

Higher technical institutes (ITs) are highly specialised technical schools established to meet the demand of new and high level competences coming from the labour world, in particular from the technical and technological sectors.

ITs offer short-cycle non-university higher education, which is part of the education system since 2011/2012. Courses are accessible to holders of an upper secondary education qualification. In general, courses last 4 semesters and lead to the qualification of 'Higher technician' (Diploma di tecnico superiore).

Besides universities, Afam institutions and ITs, also other specialised institutions offer tertiary education in specific fields. In general, access to courses requires an upper secondary education qualification and an entrance examination. The number of posts available is limited and fixed annually. In some cases, also a previous relevant training is required. These institutes issue qualifications recognised within the education system and refer to national authorities other than the Ministry of education, university and research, therefore, the following articles do not describe the offer into details. Among the specialised institutions offering tertiary education there are: Scuola nazionale di cinema (National School of Cinema), Scuole di archivistica, paleografia e diplomatica (Schools for the archive systems, palaeography and diplomatics), Military academies (Air Academy of Pozzuoli, Revenue Guard Academy, Military Naval Academy of Livorno, Military Academy of the army of Modena), Istituti superiori di scienze religiose (Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences), the Foundation for the preservation and restoration of books.

Legislative references

Ministerial Decree of 8 February 2013, no. 45 (accreditation of doctoral courses)

Decree of the Ministry of education and the Ministry of labour of 7 September 2011 (ITs qualifications)

Law of 30 December 2010, no. 240 (organisation of universities)

Financial law of 2007 (Higher technical education and training system)

Decree of the President of the Republic (DPR) of 8 July 2005, no. 212 (organisation of the Afam sector)

Decree of the President of the Republic (DPR) of 28 February 2003, no. 132 (autonomy of Afam institutions)

Ministerial Decree of 22 October 2004, no. 270 (organisation of universities)

Regulation of 3 November 1999, no. 509 (autonomy of universities)

Law of 21 December 1999, no. 508 (Afam)

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[1] <http://www.quadrodeititoli.it/Index.aspx?IDL=1>