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University of Pavia: Case Study

The University of Pavia (*website: www.unipv.it/; http://www.unipv.it/eng/home_eng.html*) is one of the oldest in the world. Its origins date back to 825 A.D. It became the official university of the Duchy of Milan, obtaining “Studium Generale” status from the Emperor Charles IV in 1361. Its alumni include Alexander Volta and (reputedly) Christopher Columbus. Today, it has 9 faculties: *Economics, Engineering, Humanities, Law; Physical, Natural and Mathematical Sciences, Medicine, Musicology, Pharmacy, Political Sciences*. The University has a *Central Administration and Decentralised Structures*, the latter articulated into 9 Faculties and 49 Research Departments. There are just over 1000 tenured members of staff teaching some 22,000 students. The University of Pavia is a state-supported university whose current head is the Rector, Prof. Angiolino Stella. It is affiliated to Coimbra Group and EUA and participates in the Socrates/Erasmus European Exchange Program and other International exchange programmes. The number of exchange students is, however, relatively small with an average of about 250-300 incoming Socrates/Erasmus students per year and a similar number of outgoing students. About half the students come from just 4 countries: Spain (about 25%), Belgium (10%), France (10%) and Germany (10%).

Catering for visiting and virtual mobility students: *Centralised information, Permesso di soggiorno, Codice fiscale and Collegi*

Much information for international students, whether visiting or virtual mobility students, can be obtained at a national level in such websites as *Study in Italy: Italian Higher Education for International Students* (<http://www.study-in-italy.it/>). Despite compliance with national guidelines, every University, in particular historic universities with a long tradition, have their own special features and strategies. The University of Pavia is no exception.

For instance, the University of Pavia has invested considerably in student mobility in order to ensure rapid integration into University life. Thus, in addition to the International Affairs Office (*Ufficio Affari Internazionali*) which deals with **non-Erasmus international students**, the University has a separate Student Mobility Office (*Ufficio Mobilità Studentesca*) for **Socrates/Erasmus students**. The website (http://www.unipv.it/erasmus/incoming/index_ING.htm) contains essential information in English for incoming students. Erasmus students enjoy the status of Erasmus students as provided for under their mobility programme. The office carries out the formal procedures for the registration of Erasmus students and helps with accommodation <http://www.unipv.it/eng/housing.html>. The *Student Mobility Office* provides considerable assistance in respect of the *permesso di soggiorno* (temporary residence permit) which all non-Italian students staying for more than 3 months must get (see the *After arrival: Police procedures* (http://www.unipv.it/erasmus/incoming/sito_inglese/police_procedures.htm section on the website).

The increasing use of the *codice fiscale* (tax code) in relation to goods and services in Italy in general creates an apparent problem for visiting and virtual mobility students (see below). Nevertheless, visiting students can apply for an Italian tax code which is issued free and is usually

made available in a matter of days. It does not automatically entail the need to file a tax return. Rather, it is a means of identifying an individual in relation to the provision of e-services and services in general in Italian society, in particular in the health and public utilities sectors. See: http://www.agenziaentrategov.it/ilwvcm/resources/file/eb112302f09d250/guida_inglese.pdf.

In Pavia visiting students are treated like local students. This translates into a high degree of integration into University life, as the campus is extremely compact (most students use a bike). The University is also a collegiate university (<http://www.unipv.it/campus.html>) which, somewhat unusually for Italy, as well as being Halls of Residence with their own catering, recreation and IT facilities, are also pastoral and teaching communities, each with their own Rector, as well as centres for information and contact. Many of the *collegi* are run by ISU, the Lombardy Region Authority catering for student welfare. For details on the *collegi* see the following page <http://www.isu.pv.it/documenti/Descrizione%20Collegi.htm> which has links to each of the ISU colleges, many with virtual tours (in Italian).

Management of teaching quality

Like all Italian universities, the University of Pavia has in the new millennium restructured its degree courses with the effect that the number of courses offered has increased considerably as has the number of postgraduate students. Implementation of the Bologna Declaration has led to the adoption of a credit system throughout the three-tier system. Courses may be searched for through the national website (<http://www.study-in-italy.it/cerca.html>) or through the University's English portal (go to http://www.unipv.it/home_eng.html and then click *Teaching Programs*).

Although it has its own e-service research and development plan (for example its joint venture for the development of a VLE), in general the University of Pavia, in keeping with the principle mentioned above, participates in European and Italian initiatives as regards the improvement of e-services, virtual mobility included. For example, it participates in the MICHAEL (*Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe*), Project which is concerned with providing a census of digital collections and with stimulating the process of digitalisation so that printed and multimedia records of documents and images whether manuscripts, books, photos, maps, musical scores and so on, can be made more easily available to both students and scholars (<http://www.michael-culture.org/en/home>).

At various times in the year, the University also organises the *Porte Aperte* (*Open doors*) initiative at which all students are able to meet the staff of the University or the representatives of companies. This is articulated into a series of stands reflecting the University's various functional units or specific companies. Increasingly, *Porte Aperte* (<http://cor.unipv.it/index.html>) is moving online.

The University' awareness of the need for ease-of-access to e-services is constantly growing. The University has invested in an Acrobat format brochure relating to ECT credits in English (http://www.unipv.it/erasmus/incoming/documenti_inc/ECTS%20INCOMING%20GUIDE%2006-07.pdf) and is a mine of updated information relevant to the visiting and virtual mobility students. Like all Italian Universities, quality management is entrusted to the *Nucleo di Valutazione* (<http://www.unipv.it/nuv/>) which publishes a yearly review of the University's performance which is available on the web in Italian and from which more detailed statistics can be gleaned. Similarly, the University has implemented the requirements relating to the *Diploma Supplement* and has translated the complete list of its courses and exams into English, though this is not as yet readily available online.

Library services

The University of Pavia now has a unified online catalogue <http://scu.unipv.it/> (in Italian) through which it is possible to access OPAC (<http://opac.unipv.it/>) and FLUXUS the automated book borrowing service. Journals in the OPAC catalogue can be accessed through the e-Journal section of OPAC (<http://opacdb.unipv.it/easyweb/nupv/index.php?search=opas>). Pavia has a very large stock of books and online access has been steadily improving with a big spurt in recent years. Indeed, there are so many libraries in the University of Pavia that rationalisation and modernisation (e.g. on-line access to all books) has entailed a major effort. The *Sistema Bibliotecario* can now be accessed directly from the University's Home Page. This is a well-articulated, highly functional site in Italian giving thorough coverage including online access to libraries at University, Faculty and Departmental level as well as links to libraries which though not part of the University of Pavia provide access to sister organisations in or around Pavia. PCs are available in the University's numerous libraries both for OPAC and general Internet surfing. Most of the major libraries (University and Faculty level) are open on a Monday-Friday basis usually from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Access is free but students must show an identity card, preferably a University identity document. In some cases, when using a computer, students are required to surrender their identity card in exchange for a computer session card that gives them the right to use this facility. In the University library, which is run by the *Ministero dei Beni Culturali*, students must fill in an access request form for each visit and leave personal property (e.g. bags) in a locker. Use of personal computers is normally allowed. Photocopying is usually not allowed except in the case of rare books. It is usually possible to borrow books for a maximum of 30 days.

E-learning

The University uses the ELMS (EuroLearning Management System). This is a VLE still under development (as a joint venture in which the University is participating). The University of Pavia has recently instituted a portal (<http://ecdl.multimediacampus.it>). Still in its initial stages, this allows students to enrol in ECDL courses and exams. As in many cases of access to e-services in Italy (see above), it is based on the student's tax code. Alternatively, as a special service for Erasmus students, the "Sportello ECDL" can be contacted to request a password. Students can also do this by writing either in English or Italian to ecdl@multimediacampus.it.

Computing: PC rooms, Email services

The University offers facilities for computing and electronic learning for all students, including Erasmus and other international students. Once a student has received their Student Identification Card, they are registered for access to all computer facilities, including access to the Internet and hence e-mail accounts. All students can obtain an @ateneopv.it address which is managed by Cineca. (See <http://www.cineca.it/> or the English version of this site <http://www.cineca.it/en/index.htm>). More detailed information, about the location and access to the University's 17 PC labs (~1000 PCs) called *aule didattiche informatizzate* can be found at <http://www.unipv.it/web/aula/adi/strutture.html>; some of these allow free printing services, providing students supply their own paper; in addition to libraries and *aule didattiche informatizzate*, most faculties have *aule studio* where students can plug in their own PC. The University is currently introducing wireless services throughout its campus and this is likely to be completed by the end of 2007.