

**MINISTRY FOR UNIVERSITIES AND SCIENTIFIC AND
TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

Decree no. 509 of 3 November 1999

**Regulations setting out the norms concerning the teaching autonomy of
universities**

Published in the Official Journal No. 2 of 4 January 2000

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 168 of 9 May 1989;

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 400 of 23 August 1988, and in particular paragraph 3 of article 17;

HAVING REGARD TO paragraph 95 of article 17 of Law no. 127 of 15 May 1997, as amended;

HAVING REGARD TO Presidential Decree no. 25 of 27 January 1998;

HAVING REGARD TO Decree no. 142 of the Ministry of Labour of 25 March 1998;

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 210 of 3 July 1998;

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 264 of 2 August 1999;

HAVING REGARD TO the opinions of the National University Council (Consiglio Universitario Nazionale or CUN) and the Conference of Italian University Rectors (Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane or CRUI), given respectively on 6 May 1999 and on 15 April 1999;

HAVING HEARD the opinion of the Council of State given by the Section responsible for consultations with regard to legislative acts at its meeting on 7 June 1999;

HAVING REGARD TO the opinion of the VII Commission of the Chamber of Deputies given on 13 October 1999;

CONSIDERING that the VII Commission of the Senate has not given an opinion;

HAVING REGARD TO the communication to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in accordance with paragraph 3 of article 17 of the aforementioned Law no. 400 of 1988 (note no. 2020/III/6.99 of 29 October 1999) as evidenced by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, through note of 3 November 1999, protocol no. DAGL 1.1.1.4/31830.4.23.36);

A D O P T S
the following Regulations

Art. 1

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Regulations:

a) Ministry (Ministero) or Minister (Ministro) shall mean the Ministry or the Minister for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research;

b) decree (decreto) or ministerial decree (decreto ministeriale) shall mean any one or more decrees issued pursuant to and in accordance with paragraph 95 of article 17 of Law no. 127 of 15 May 1997, as amended;

c) General Academic Regulations of the University (regolamenti didattici di ateneo) shall mean the regulations referred to in paragraph 1 of article 11 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990;

d) Degree Programme Regulations (regolamenti didattici dei corsi di studio) shall mean the regulations referred to in paragraph 2 of article 11 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990;

e) degree courses/programmes (corsi di studio), first degree courses/programmes (corsi di laurea), second degree courses/programmes (corsi di laurea specialistica) and specialisation courses (corsi di specializzazione) shall have the meanings ascribed to them by article 3 hereof;

f) academic degrees (titoli di studio), first degree (laurea), second degree (laurea specialistica) and specialisation diploma (diploma di specializzazione / specialista) issued at the end of the corresponding degree programmes shall have the meanings ascribed to them by article 3 hereof;

g) class of degree courses/programmes (classe di appartenenza di corsi di studio) shall mean the degree programmes, irrespective of how they are called, classified together pursuant to article 4 hereof;

h) discipline groups (settori scientifico-disciplinari) shall mean the groupings of disciplines set out in Ministerial Decree of 23 June 1997, published in Official Journal no. 175 of 29 July 1997, as amended;

i) discipline area (ambito disciplinare) shall mean a set of discipline groups that are culturally and professionally similar, defined by ministerial decrees;

l) university educational credit (credito formativo universitario) shall mean the learning workload, including individual study, required of a student (equipped with adequate initial preparation) to acquire the knowledge and abilities in the educational activities envisaged by the degree course;

m) educational goals (obiettivi formativi) shall mean the body of knowledge and abilities that characterise the cultural and professional profile which the degree course is aimed at conferring;

n) degree course programme (ordinamento didattico di un corso di studio) shall mean the body of norms that regulate the curricula of the degree course, as specified in article 11;

o) educational activity (attività formativa) shall mean any activity organised or envisaged by the university for the purposes of ensuring the cultural and professional education of the students, including among other things taught courses, seminars, practical or laboratory exercises, didactic activity in small student groups, tutorials, orientation, internships, projects, theses, individual study and self-taught activities;

p) curriculum (curriculum) shall mean all the university and extra-university educational activities specified in the Degree Course/Programme Regulations as being necessary for the purposes of awarding the relative qualification.

Art. 2

Aims

1. Further to paragraph 95 of article 17 of Law no. 127 of 15 May 1997, as amended, this Regulation sets out the provisions concerning the general criteria for the organisation of university studies and establishes the types of academic qualifications conferred by the universities.

2. For the purposes of realising the curricular autonomy referred to in article 11 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990, the universities may, in accordance with the procedures laid down by law and their own statutes, regulate their degree course programmes in a manner consistent with the provisions of this Regulation and successive ministerial decrees.

Art. 3

Qualifications and Degree Programmes

1. Universities confer the following first and second cycle qualifications:

- a) first degree (L)
- b) second degree (LS).

2. Universities may also confer a specialisation degree (DS) and a research doctorate (DR).

3. The first degree, the second degree, the specialisation degree and the research doctorate are awarded at the end, respectively of first degree, second degree specialisation and research doctorate programmes instituted by the universities.

4. The first degree programme is aimed at guaranteeing the student an adequate command of general scientific methods and contents as well as specific professional skills.

5. The second degree programme is aimed at providing the student with an advanced level of education for the exercise of a highly qualified activity in specific areas.

6. The specialisation programme is aimed at providing the student with knowledge and abilities for functions requested in the exercise of particular professional activities and may be instituted exclusively in application of specific laws or European Union directives.

7. Research doctorate programmes and the award of the relative degree are governed by article 4 of Law no. 210 of 3 July 1998 save as provided for by paragraphs 5 and 6 of article 6 hereof.

8. The provisions of article 6 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990 in relation to final training and supplementary educational services shall remain unaltered. In particular, by way of implementation of paragraph 15 of article 1 of Law no. 4 of 14 January 1999, the universities may - in accordance with the General Academic Regulations of each institution - after first and second degree programmes organise advanced scientific courses as well as higher continuing education courses, upon the completion of which first and second level masters degrees may be awarded.

9. Further to agreements in this regard, Italian universities may confer the qualifications referred to in this article also in conjunction with other Italian or foreign universities.

Art. 4

Classes of Degree Programmes

1. Degree courses of the same level, irrespective of the name given to them by the universities, having the same defining educational goals and consequent indispensable educational activities referred to in paragraph 1 of article 10 hereof are classified together in what are hereinafter referred to as classes.

2. Classes are identified on the basis of one or more ministerial decrees. Once a three year period has passed since the issue of said decrees, modifications to or the establishment of new single classes can be proposed by the universities and, after having heard the opinion of the CUN, decided by decree of the Minister together with associated provisions in the matter of defining educational goals and consequent educational activities.

3. The qualifications awarded at the end of degree courses of the same level belonging to the same class have identical legal value.

Art. 5

University Educational Credits

1. The university educational credit, hereinafter referred to as a credit, corresponds to 25 hours of work per student. By means of ministerial decree the quoted number of hours for single classes may be increased or decreased within a 20% limit for stated reasons.

2. The average annual learning workload of a full time university student is conventionally fixed at 60 credits.
3. Ministerial decrees may also for each class of degree courses fix the fraction of the overall amount of time to be set aside for personal study or other individual type educational activities. This fraction can not in any case be less than half of the overall time save for cases in which educational activities with a high experimental or practical content are envisaged.
4. The credits corresponding to each educational activity are acquired by means of the student passing an examination or other form of valid test provided that testing is carried out in accordance with the procedures set forth in letter d) of paragraph 7 of article 11 hereof.
5. The partial or full recognition of the credits acquired by individual students for the purposes of continuing their studies in another programme of the same university or in the same or other programme of another university is up to the educational institution which accepts each student concerned, in accordance with predetermined procedures and criteria laid down in the General Academic Regulations of the University.
6. General Academic Regulations of the University may provide for a form of periodic checks of the credits acquired, in order to evaluate whether the knowledge contents are obsolete or not, and to assess the minimum number of credits to be acquired by the student in predetermined periods, diversified for students engaged full time in university studies or contemporaneously engaged in working activities.
7. In accordance with predetermined criteria, universities may recognise as university educational credits the professional knowledge and abilities certified pursuant to the applicable law in that regard as well as other skills and abilities obtained as a result of post-secondary school level educational activities whose planing and implementation the university contributed to.

Art. 6

Admission Requirements for Degree Programmes

1. In order to be admitted to a first degree programme it is necessary to hold an upper secondary school diploma (diploma di scuola secondaria superiore), or other academic qualification awarded abroad, recognised as being suitable. Without prejudice to the orientation activity co-ordinated and carried out further to letter g) of paragraph 7 of article 11 hereof, the General Academic Regulations of the University shall require also the possession or acquisition of an adequate initial preparation. In this regard, the said General Regulations shall define the knowledge required for access and shall establish where necessary the means of testing, also upon the conclusion of any preparatory educational activity, carried out possibly in collaboration with upper secondary education institutions. If the outcome of the testing is not positive, additional specific educational tasks to be satisfied during the first year of the course shall be specified. These additional educational tasks shall be assigned also to students of first degree programmes with restricted access where such students have been admitted to such programmes with a grade lower than a predetermined minimum grade.

2. In order to be admitted to a second degree course it is necessary to hold a first degree, or other academic qualification awarded abroad, recognised as being suitable. For second degree programmes in which no provision is made for a restricted number pursuant to the applicable current law on access to university programmes, it is however necessary to be in possession of the curricular prerequisites and to have the adequacy of personal preparation verified by the universities.

3. By way of derogation from paragraph 2, ministerial decrees may make provisions for holders of upper secondary school diplomas to be admitted to second degree courses but solely as regards those programmes that are regulated by European Union rules which do not require first level university qualifications for admission; this condition is applied without prejudice to testing the adequate initial preparation referred to in paragraph 1.

4. In order to be admitted to a specialisation programmes it is necessary to hold at least a first degree, or other academic qualification awarded abroad, recognised as being suitable. In compliance with the norms and directives referred to in paragraph 6 of article 3, ministerial decrees shall establish the specific admission requirements for a specialisation programmes, including any additional university educational credits with respect to the academic qualification already held, provided that the limits prescribed by paragraph 3 of article 7 are respected.

5. In order to be admitted to a research doctorate programme it is necessary to hold a second degree, or other academic qualification awarded abroad, and recognised as being suitable.

6. Recognition of the suitability of academic qualifications awarded abroad solely in the context of admission to degree courses and research doctorate programmes is decided upon by the individual university concerned, in observance of the international agreements in force.

Art. 7

Awarding of Academic Qualifications

1. To obtain a first degree a student must have acquired 180 credits including those concerning the compulsory knowledge of a language of the European Union other than Italian, without prejudice to some special rules to safeguard linguistic minorities. The knowledge must be tested in accordance with procedures laid down by the General Academic Regulations of the University with reference to the level required for each language.

2. To obtain a second degree a student must have acquired 300 credits including those already acquired by the student and recognised as being valid for the relevant second degree programme.

3. Ministerial decrees shall fix the number of credits that a student must have acquired to obtain a specialisation degree. That number must be between 300 and 360 credits, including those already acquired by the student and recognised as being valid for the

relative specialisation programme. The foregoing is without prejudice to the various provisions envisaged by specific laws or European Union directives.

4. To obtain a university master's degree a student must have acquired at least 60 credits over and above those already acquired by the student for the award of the first degree or the second degree.

Art. 8

Normal Duration of Degree Programmes

1. Each degree programme has a normal duration expressed in years, in proportion to the total number of credits set out in article 7 and taking into consideration that a year corresponds to sixty (60) credits pursuant to paragraph 2 of article 5.

2. The normal duration of first degree courses is three years; the normal duration of second degree programmes is a further two years after the first degree.

Art. 9

Institution and Introduction of Degree Programmes

1. The procedure for instituting degree programmes is governed by Presidential Decree no. 25 of 27 January 1998.

2. By autonomous resolution universities introduce or cease the degree programmes instituted further to paragraph 1, giving notice thereof to the Ministry. In the case of cessation of degree courses, universities shall in any case guarantee that the students already enrolled in the programmes concerned may conclude their studies and be awarded the corresponding degree; universities shall establish rules governing the right of the students to opt for enrolment in other degree programmes which have been introduced.

3. A university may institute a second degree programme on condition that it has introduced a first degree course comprising a curriculum whose university educational credits are fully recognised towards the second degree programme in question, with the exception of the courses referred to in paragraph 3 of article 6. The first degree programme may be introduced at another university on the basis of an agreement between the universities involved.

4. At the time of instituting a first degree programme, the Degree Programme Regulations shall establish which of the credits acquired will be valid for a future continuation of university studies in other degree programmes set up at the same university or, on the basis of specific agreements, at other universities.

Art. 10

Educational Goals and Activities qualifying the Classes of Degrees

1. Ministerial decrees shall preliminarily establish the educational goals and the required educational activities qualifying every class of degree programmes, classifying them on the basis of six typologies:

- a) educational activity in one or more discipline areas relative to basic education;
- b) educational activity in one or more discipline areas characteristic of the class;
- c) educational activity in one or more discipline areas which are similar to or supplementary to the characteristic ones, with particular regard to the cultural context and interdisciplinary education;
- d) educational activity autonomously chosen by the student;
- e) educational activity related to the preparation of the final examination for the award of the academic degree and, with reference to the first degree, the checking of the knowledge of the foreign language;
- f) other educational activity, not covered by the foregoing letters a) - e), aimed at acquiring further linguistic knowledge as well as computer, telematic and relational skills or, in any case, skills useful in entering the labour market; educational activities aimed at facilitating professional choices through direct knowledge of the business sector that the academic degree can grant access to, in particular, the internships referred to in Ministry of Labour Decree no. 142 of 25 March 1998;

2. Ministerial decrees also establish for each class the minimum number of credits that the Degree Programme Regulations of individual institutions assign to each educational activity and each discipline area referred to in paragraph 1, complying with the following limits expressed as a percentage of the total credits indispensable to the awarding of the academic degree concerned:

- a) the total sum of credits reserved may not exceed 66 per cent;
- b) the sum of the credits reserved for the activities referred to in letters a), b), c) and letters d), e), f) of paragraph 1 may not exceed 50 per cent and 20 per cent respectively;
- c) the credits reserved, relative to the activities of each of the typologies referred to in letters a), b), c) and d), e), f) of paragraph 1 may not be less than 10 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

Art. 11

General Academic Regulations of the University

1. Universities shall regulate their own Degree Programme Regulations in their General Academic Regulations of the University that are drawn up in compliance, for every degree programme, with the provisions of the present Decree and successive ministerial decrees, and that are approved by the Minister pursuant to paragraph 1 of article 11 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990.

2. The General Academic Regulations of the University and any amendments thereto are issued by rectorial decree and are published also in accordance with the procedures laid down by letter b) of paragraph 95 of article 17 of Law no. 127 of 15 May 1997. The entry into force of the programmes is fixed in the relevant rectorial decree.

3. Individual Degree Programme Regulations shall establish:

a) the names and the educational goals of the degree programmes, indicating the classes to which the programmes belong;

b) the overall framework of the educational activities to be inserted in the curricula;

c) the credits assigned to each educational activity, relating them - as regards those envisaged in letters a), b), c) of paragraph 1 of article 10 - to one or more of the discipline groups as a whole;

d) the characteristics of the final examination leading to the award of each academic degree.

4. The decisions referred to in letters a) and b) of paragraph 3 are made by universities subject to consultation with representative organisations at local level of the business and professional world.

5. The award of a second degree (Laurea Specialistica) must envisage the presentation of a thesis done in an original manner by the student under the supervision of a supervisor.

6. The General Academic Regulations of the University may envisage more degree programmes belonging to the same class.

7. The General Academic Regulations of individual universities, in compliance with the university Statutes, shall also regulate the organisational aspects of the teaching activities common to more degree programmes, with particular reference to:

a) the objectives, the time and the manner in which the competent university structures collegially arrange the planning, co-ordination and testing of the results of the educational activity;

b) the procedures for attributing annual teaching tasks to professors and university researchers including supplemental didactic activities, orientation and tutoring;

c) the procedures governing the holding of exams and other valid forms of testing as well as the final examination leading to the award of the academic degrees;

d) the way in which individual students are assessed; the judgement related to subject exams must be in the form of a grade expressed as a fraction of 30, that concerning the final degree examination must be a grade expressed as a fraction of 110, with the possibility of a mention of distinction (con lode);

e) the evaluation of the initial preparation of the students to be admitted to first degree and second degree programmes (Corsi di Laurea, Corsi di Laurea; Specialistica);

f) the organisati

on of preparatory educational activities in connection with the evaluation of the initial preparation of the students to be admitted to the 1st degree programmes as well as the arrangements for the additional educational tasks referred to in paragraph 1 of article 6;

g) the introduction of a university service to co-ordinate orientation activities to be carried out in association with upper secondary schools as well as the introduction of a tutoring service for students;

h) the possible introduction of suitable arrangements organising educational activities for students not engaged in full time study;

i) procedures for identifying a structure or the person responsible for each activity ;

l) the evaluation of the quality of the activities carried out;

m) the way in which the proceedings and decisions made therein shall be publicised;

n) the procedures for the award of the joint qualifications referred to in paragraph 9 of article 3.

8. The General Academic Regulations of the University shall govern the way in which the universities issue - as a supplement to the academic qualification - a certificate which outlines the specific educational activities done by the student to obtain a certain degree; said certificate has to be in line with the pattern adopted by most European countries.

9. By means of appropriate regulations the universities shall reorganise and regulate the administrative procedures of their students' careers in accordance with the provisions of the present ministerial decree, successive ministerial decrees and the General Academic Regulations of each university. In order to allow for the drawing up of homogeneous statistical evaluations on the careers of university students, through appropriate decrees the Ministry shall establish the essential data which must be contained in computer systems on the careers of students of all the universities.

Art. 12

Degree Programme Regulations

1. On the basis of paragraph 2 of article 11 of Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990, the Degree Programme Regulations, adopted by the competent university structure in compliance with the General Academic Regulations of the University, in due respect of the teaching freedom as well as of the rights and duties of both teachers and students, shall regulate the organisational aspects of each degree programme. The regulations shall be approved in accordance with the procedures laid down by the General Academic Regulations of the University.

2. The Degree Programme Regulations shall in particular set out:

- a) the list of all subject courses, indicating the pertinent discipline groups and how individual subjects may be divided into modules, and also specifying any other educational activities involved;
- b) the specific educational goals, the credits and the prerequisites for every subject course and of any other educational activity;
- c) the curricula offered to students and the rules for submitting, where necessary, individual study plans;
- d) the types of teaching modalities, distance learning included, of exams and other forms of testing;
- e) the provisions concerning compulsory attendance requirements.

3. The provisions of the Degree Programme Regulations that concern consistency between the credits assigned to educational activities and the planned specific educational goals are approved by a resolution adopted by the competent university structures, subject to the favourable opinion of bilateral university commissions or other analogous student representative body. The opinion must be given within thirty (30) days from request; failure to give the opinion within the prescribed period causes that the resolution is adopted regardless of the opinion itself. Should the opinion given not be favourable, the resolution shall be passed by the university Senate.

4. The universities shall periodically review the Degree Programme Regulations, in particular as regards the number of credits assigned to every subject course or other educational activity.

Art. 13

Transitional and Final Provisions

1. Universities shall adapt the structure of their degree programmes and related curricula to the provisions of the present Decree and the ministerial decree that sets out the classes of the aforesaid degree programmes within eighteen (18) months from the publication of said decree in the Official Journal.

2. With respect to students already enrolled at the date of the entry into force of the new Degree Programme Regulations, universities shall guarantee the completion of the degree programmes and the award of the corresponding academic degrees in conformity to the regulations currently in force; they shall also regulate the right of students to opt for enrollment in degree programmes established in compliance with the new regulations. For the purposes of allowing such an option, universities shall reformulate in terms of credits the existing degree programme regulations as well as the careers of the students already enrolled.

3. Studies undertaken for the purposes of obtaining the 1st university degrees (DU) on the basis of the pre-existing regulations shall be restructured in credits and evaluated by the universities towards the award of the Laurea, i.e. the 1st degree referred to in the paragraph 1 of article 3 hereof. The same rule applies to studies undertaken to

obtain degrees from the special schools set up by universities (SDAFS diplomas), regardless of the duration of the corresponding degree programmes.

4. The establishment by a university of the first and the second degree programmes referred to in the paragraph 1 of article 3 hereof (Corsi di Laurea, Corsi di Laurea Specialistica) having the same name as the DU or the Laurea programmes already introduced in the 1996-97 academic year, or instituted pursuant to paragraph 4 of article 2 of Presidential Decree no. 25 of 27 January 1998, constitutes the fulfilment of the objective of the university system plan for the 3-year period 1998-2000 as per letter d) of paragraph 1 of article 1 of the Ministerial Decree of 6 March 1998 published in issue No. 83 of the Official Journal of 9 April 1998, and does not involve any recourse to the procedure referred to in paragraph 1 of article 9 hereof.

5. Further to and in accordance with paragraph 105 of article 17 of Law no. 127 of 15 May 1997 as amended by letter b) of paragraph 15 of article 1 of Law no. 4 of 14 January 1999, the provisions of the previous paragraph 4 hereof also apply to DU or Laurea programmes introduced on an experimental basis in the academic years 1997-98 and 1998-99, provided the favourable opinion of the regional co-ordinating committee has been obtained.

6. Without prejudice to the university schools in which the specialisation programmes referred to in paragraph 6 of article 3 hereof have been introduced, the schools of specialisation currently existing shall be ended by the third academic year following the one in which the present Decree enters into force. The corresponding specialised education will be guaranteed by 2nd degree courses (Corsi di Laurea Specialistica) or research doctorate programmes as well as by programmes of finalized and supplementary education & training referred to in paragraph 8 of article 3 hereof.

The present Decree, bearing the State Seal, shall be inserted among them official collection of legislative acts of the Italian Republic. It is the duty of all to observe it and ensure that it is observed.

Rome, 3 November 1999

THE MINISTER