

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' GUIDE

2026

A Practical Vademecum for Your First Months



**UNIVERSITÀ
DI PARMA**

DIPARTIMENTO DI GIURISPRUDENZA,
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The Department of Law, Politics and International Studies of the University of Parma presents this International students' guide to help international students in their first months in Parma.

The guide, prepared in collaboration with the Department's International Student Tutor, Amir Hossein Bashiri, outlines both the administrative procedures and the practical challenges that international students may encounter during their experience in Parma.

Addressing these issues proactively is essential for ensuring a smooth academic, legal, and social integration into Italian university life.

What is this guide about? Here is a brief overview.

Section A) - ACCOMODATION

Section B) - ESSENTIAL SERVICES (Codice Fiscale, payments, connectivity, bank account)

Section C) - UNIVERSITY & ADMINISTRATIVE ESSENTIALS (Enrollment & Legal Identity)

Section D) - FIRST STUDENTS' STEPS: NAVIGATING UNIVERSITY DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Section E) - STUDENT LIFESTYLE & BUDGET MANAGEMENT IN PARMA

Section F) - STUDENT TRANSPORTATION: THE TEP BUS PASS

Section G) - STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

USE THESE GUIDELINES AS A CHECKLIST AND A ROADMAP TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE YOUR NEW LIFE WITHOUT FEELING OVERWHELMED. FOR ANY DETAILED INFORMATION, YOU CAN ALWAYS REACH OUT TO THE RELEVANT OFFICE FOR ASSISTANCE.

Welcome to the Department of Law, Politics and International Studies.

Welcome to Parma!

Section A) – ACCOMODATION

Initial Transition and Finding a Permanent Home

During your first few days, you will stay in temporary housing. However, after this short period, you must find permanent accommodation in Parma. This is crucial because all subsequent administrative procedures and official paperwork will be processed based on your permanent registered address. Therefore, your first priority is securing a room. The University of Parma can support you in this first step through its [“Finding Accommodation”](#) services. However, this alone may not be sufficient, so let’s look at some practical tips to help you continue your search independently.

Where to Look

Common platforms to find available rooms include:

- Facebook Groups: (e.g., *Affitti Parma*, *Cerco Casa Parma*)
- Dedicated Websites: (e.g., *Idealista*, *Immobiliare.it*, *Roomless*)

Understanding the Security Deposit (Deposito Cauzionale)

As an international student, the concept of a "deposit" is very important. In Italy, it is standard practice for landlords to request a sum equivalent to 2 to 3 months of rent as a security deposit. Example: If your monthly rent is €400, you will likely need to pay an upfront deposit of €800 (for 2 months). This deposit acts as a guarantee for the landlord. The full amount will be returned to you at the end of your contract, provided the property is maintained in good condition. If there are damages, the cost of repairs may be deducted from this amount.

Crucial Note for Scholarship Applicants (Regional Grant)

If you are applying for the provincial/regional scholarship (such as [ER.GO](#)), pay close attention to your contract duration. Your rental agreement must cover at least 10 months (typically valid until the following September). Warning: Failure to provide a contract of this length may result in receiving only 50% of your scholarship amount. Ensuring your contract meets this requirement is essential for your financial planning. Be sure to read all the rules and requirements on the ER.GO website carefully before proceeding.

Section B) – ESSENTIAL SERVICES (Codice Fiscale, payments, connectivity, bank account)

The Most Critical Step: Codice Fiscale (Tax Code)

While searching for a room, your absolute priority on day 1 or day 2 must be applying for your Codice Fiscale. In Italy, this code is your primary legal identity; without it, you cannot sign a rental contract or open a bank account.

- Where to go: Visit the [Welcome Point](#) located on P.le S. Francesco, 2, 43121 Parma - PR
- Process: Submit your documents there. There is a specific **support desk** there (<https://www.unipr.it/en/student-international-student%20desk>)
- Timeline: It typically takes about 10 days for your Codice Fiscale to be fully activated.

Pro-Tip: Do not delay this. If you find a perfect apartment but don't have an active Codice Fiscale, the landlord might legally offer the room to someone else. Acting early prevents this risk.

Banking and Financial Management

Once your Codice Fiscale is active, you can manage your finances:

- Online Banking: During the first few days, when you haven't received your student card yet (see Section C), it is better to use digital or online banks. They won't ask you for difficult documents, especially those you might not have in the beginning, such as a permanent housing contract.
- Depositing Cash: If you arrive with cash and use an online bank, you can deposit funds through authorized Western Union points throughout the city. If you open a traditional bank account, you can deposit cash at any local branch.

Navigating Your First Days Without a Bank Account

During this period, you will likely not have an Italian bank account yet. This presents a challenge for essential tasks like posting your “Permesso di Soggiorno” (residence permit) kit, paying university administrative fees, or buying bus tickets. Be aware that compiling this module can be difficult. You find a step-by-step information on this below.

For these transactions, you will rely heavily on a unique Italian institution: the **Tabacchi**.

What is a Tabacchi? A Tabacchi is much more than a convenience store, it is your Gateway to Services. In Italy, these shops hold state licenses for various services. They are easily recognizable by a large white 'T' on a black background.



You will find Tabacchi scattered all over Parma. The staff is usually proficient in English and accustomed to assisting international students. They can handle many services, including:

- Purchasing stamps (useful for legal documents).
- Payment of University taxes.
- Buying bus tickets (some Tabacchi have automatic ticket dispensers).
- Mobile top-ups (helpful for initial prepaid phone plans).

As discussed, the Tabacchi will be your "go-to" spot for many simple administrative tasks until you have a more permanent banking solution. Be sure to look for that large 'T' on a blue background! You can also use Tabacchi to purchase top-ups for your mobile phone.

Mobile Connectivity for International Students

Getting an Italian mobile number is a top priority. In Italy, you can easily top up your prepaid plan at any Tabacchi.

The Student Advice: There are numerous SIM card vendors and vending machines located throughout the city. They do not require complicated documentation to purchase a SIM card; having your **passport** and even a **temporary residential address** will be more than sufficient.

Important Note: Since you will be staying in temporary accommodation during your first few days, you can provide the address of your temporary lodging for this process. The registration and activation process is typically very fast, with your new SIM card becoming active in as little as 5 minutes.

Section C) UNIVERSITY & ADMINISTRATIVE ESSENTIALS (Enrollment & Legal Identity)

Finalizing Your University Enrolment

To complete your final registration, you must email your department's **Student Registry Office (Segreteria)**; the relevant link is provided below. This is crucial because there is a specific **deadline** for final enrollment and the payment of university taxes. Here you find students Segreteria information <https://www.unipr.it/en/student-registry-offices>

Student Card (Badge) & Benefits

After paying your university taxes at the Segreteria, immediately request the contact information for the office that issues Student Cards (<https://www.unipr.it/en/studentcard>).

- Timing: Issuance can take anywhere from one week to four months.
- Advantages: Your student card grants you discounts at various shops, museums, and cinemas (sometimes even free entry).
- Banking Integration: Specifically, having your student status confirmed allows you to open a dedicated student account at Crédit Agricole, a major Italian bank with strong ties to the university.

Legal Residency – The Permesso di Soggiorno Kit

Your study visa is typically valid for one year. To live and study in Italy legally beyond that (and as your primary ID during the year), you must apply for a Permesso di Soggiorno (Residence Permit). This permit replaces your visa and must be renewed annually.

Step-by-Step Guide: The "Yellow Kit"

1. Obtain the Kit (Day 3 or 4): Go to any major post office (Poste Italiane) and ask for the "Kit Giallo" (Yellow Kit) for the Permesso di Soggiorno. You can find the nearest post office by searching "Poste Italiane" on Google Maps.
2. Fill Out the Forms: Complete the required information carefully. This is your formal application for residency.
3. The Role of Tabacchi (Revenue Stamp): Before mailing the kit, you must visit a Tabacchi to purchase a "Marca da Bollo" (a legal revenue stamp, currently around €16). The post office will not accept your kit without this stamp attached to the form.

4. Submission: Once the kit is ready and the stamp is attached, return to a designated Poste Italiane office (look for the "Sportello Amico" sign) to mail it. And posting costs about 105 Euro.

What Happens Next? Upon mailing the kit, you will receive a Post Office Receipt.

Crucial: Keep this receipt safe! It is your only legal proof that you are waiting for your permit and allows you to stay in Italy even if your visa expires.

The receipt will also contain your appointment date for fingerprints at the Questura.

Please remember that the **University Welcome Point** can assist you with all the necessary procedures and keep you informed of **any updates to the process**.

Section D) – FIRST STUDENTS’ STEPS: NAVIGATING UNIVERSITY DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Once you have your academic credentials, you will primarily interact with two main platforms. While they are user-friendly, understanding their specific functions will save you time:

1. ESSE3 (ESSE3 – Parma – Cineca)

The Administrative Portal Think of ESSE3 as your official “Student Record.” This is where the legal and administrative side of your studies happens.

- Study Plan: Filling out your Piano di Studi. Where you can select your lectures for your study plan.
- Exams: Registering for exam sessions (Appelli) and viewing your official grades. (First you should go on esse3 then select exam sessions then you can see the exams which are open or not and after filling the Survey about the professors of your lectures, refresh the page and then you can book your exams)
- Certificates: Downloading enrolment certificates or tax payment receipts.
- Fees: Checking your tuition status and deadlines.
- Marks: After your exams once professors put your mark, the marks will be shown in career plan.

2. Elly (Elly’s teaching portals) The Learning Management System Elly is your “Digital Classroom.” This is where the daily academic activity takes place.

- Course Materials: Downloading slides, readings, and lecture notes uploaded by professors.
- Online Classes: Accessing links for virtual lessons (if applicable).
- Communication: Receiving updates directly from your professors regarding specific course changes or assignments.

Strategic Academic Planning for Scholarship Students

If you are a recipient of a regional scholarship (like ER.GO), your academic strategy is as important as your studies. To secure your scholarship instalments, you must reach a specific number of credits (CFUs) by a strict deadline (usually around February and August). A call is open every year containing the eligibility criteria, usually on this page <https://www.er-go.it/international-students/benefits/focus-on-scholarship>. You can check there for the specific deadlines to earn the required number of **credits (CFUs)**. This is very important because while the first installment is usually paid without any conditions, the subsequent installments require you to have completed a minimum amount of credits by a specific date.

1. Understanding Annual Courses (Corsi Annuali)

In Italy, many subjects are taught as “Annual” courses.

- Structure: Part 1 is taught in the first semester, and Part 2 in the second semester, often by different professors. The credits (CFUs) allocated to annual courses vary. By reviewing your study plan (Piano di Studi) or course chart, you will understand how these credits are distributed among different subjects and professors.
- The Catch: Even if you pass Part 1 in February, the credits often do not appear officially on your ESSE3 record until the entire course is completed at the end of the academic year. (which means after passing your second part of annual exam you can see your mark).
- Impact on Scholarship: Since the scholarship office only sees what is officially registered on ESSE3, these “pending” credits won’t count toward your immediate requirement for the next instalment.

Academic year: be aware that the exact period of the academic is published every year on the university website. After checking it you can decide when to take exams and how to program your schedule at best. You can find it easily on the university’s website by navigating your course lessons’ timetable.

For annual courses: for annual exams It is better to talk with professors maybe there is an opportunity to divide it for example instead of taking both part you take one of them in the middle of year (when your first part of your course is finished) and you can keep the mark and take the second part of course that is usually at the end of the courses usually from May. And the result will be an average of both part.

2. Priority: Non-Annual Courses

To ensure you meet your credit quota on time:

- First Step: Prioritize exams for subjects that are not annual. These credits are registered immediately upon passing.
- Strategic Move: Secure your scholarship status with these single-semester exams first. Once your funding is safe, you can focus on completing the annual subjects.

3. The “Multiple Calls” System (Appelli)

One of the best features of the Italian university system, which might differ from your home country, is the flexibility of exam sessions:

- No Single Deadline: You are not limited to one exam date. There are multiple “calls” (Appelli) for each subject throughout the year.
- Multiple Attempts: If you are not ready in December, you can take the exam in January or February. If you fail or want a better grade, you can usually retake the exam in the next call without penalty.
- Flexibility: Don’t panic if you miss a date. You have several opportunities to pass each exam within the academic year.

Managing Academic Resources: The University Library

Textbooks in Italy can be expensive, and purchasing every book recommended by your professors is often not necessary. The University of Parma provides an excellent library system to support your studies. [Access, consultation and loan – Parma – Biblioteche – Unipr](#)

How to Access Books

- **Check the Library:** Most required textbooks are available in the University libraries. You can search the library catalog online to see which branch holds your specific books.
- **Loan Services:** You can request a book through the online catalog system ([OPAC Parma](#)) or contact the library staff by email to check the availability of a book and reserve a copy. For further information, please refer to your Department Library.
- **Your ID (Matricola):** To borrow a book, you only need your Matricola Number (Student Identification Number). Unfortunately, the issuance of student can be time-consuming. This delay leads to restrictions on the bank account, specifically with Crédit Agricole, where the student ID functions as the bank card itself.

Borrowing Rules & Deadlines

- **Initial Period:** Legally, you can keep a borrowed book for 15 days.
- **Extensions:** If no other student has requested the book after your 15-day period, you can renew the loan in 7-day increments.
- **Important:** Always check if someone else is on the waiting list; if so, you must return the book on time to avoid penalties or restrictions on future borrowing.

Study Spaces & Other Public Libraries in Parma

Parma offers a wide network of high-quality libraries that are accessible to all students. Whether you need a quiet place for deep focus or a cozy atmosphere to read, you will find excellent facilities throughout the city.

In addition to the university facilities, you can also utilize the **Civic Libraries** ([Biblioteche Civiche](#)) located throughout Parma, which are open to all residents and offer quiet study spaces and a wide range of resources.

Furthermore, you should know that there are dedicated **university libraries in each Department** at the University of Parma. Whether you are studying Law, Economics, Medicine, or Engineering, your specific department will have its own specialized library with academic texts, journals, and study rooms tailored to your field of study. These are excellent places to find subject-specific materials and collaborate with fellow students from your course.

- ✓ The Atmosphere: It is known for being exceptionally quiet and having a focused “vibe” that is perfect for long study sessions.
- ✓ Quality: Like most libraries in Parma, it offers high-speed Wi-Fi and well-maintained study areas, providing a professional environment to manage your coursework.

Classes for those waiting or getting their visa and other adjustments/advice

To stay informed about your courses, you should check the official website for your specific degree program. By selecting your courses, you can view the professor’s materials, the total credits, and the lists of both mandatory and non-mandatory reading materials for the passing the exam (non-mandatory reading is for who wants to read more about courses). This section also provides essential details about the exam format, such as whether it will be oral, consist of open-ended questions, or use multiple-choice questions. If you have any remaining doubts or questions after reviewing these pages, you can send an email to the professors for clarification (you can find their e-mail in the same page).

Professors are generally very approachable and clearly list their office hours on their official webpages. If you need to discuss something—especially if you are experiencing delays with your visa—it is a great idea to reach out early. Simply send a polite email to make an appointment in advance; they appreciate being informed about your situation as soon as possible.

Section E) – STUDENT LIFESTYLE & BUDGET MANAGEMENT IN PARMA

Managing your finances during your first few months is essential. Here are some practical tips to help your budget go further:

1. Smart Grocery Shopping

In Parma, you'll find several popular and affordable supermarkets that are excellent for managing a student budget. Many of these local shops offer dedicated mobile apps that are worth downloading as soon as you arrive.

These apps provide weekly digital coupons and exclusive discounts—sometimes reaching up to **50% off** on specific items—which can significantly lower your monthly grocery expenses. Beyond the general weekly offers, these platforms often provide **individualized discounts** tailored to your shopping habits, helping you save even more on the products you buy most frequently.

It is a highly effective way to keep your living costs down while studying in the city.

2. Dietary Requirements (Halal & Kosher)

Parma is a diverse city that caters to various cultural and religious dietary needs:

- **Halal Shops:** If you are looking for Halal products, you will find specialized shops throughout the city. Many of these locations are easily searchable on Google Maps.
- **Dining Out:** Several sandwich shops and restaurants in Parma display specific labels or stickers indicating they serve Halal or Kosher food. Always look for these certifications at the entrance or on the menu.

Section F) STUDENT TRANSPORTATION: THE TEP BUS PASS

Navigating Parma is much easier with a student bus pass, and as a student at the University of Parma, you are eligible for a significant discount.

Generally, it is much cheaper than the normal fare, but you should check the official transport website (<https://www.unipr.it/en/servizi/oltre-lo-studio/mobilita-aziendale>) or the University portal for the most up-to-date prices and to see which discount applies to you.

- The Voucher: To access this rate, you must first apply for a Student Voucher through the official university or TEP channels.
- Payment Flexibility: typically is payable in two installments, making it more manageable for your budget.
- Annual Deadline: Every year, there is a specific deadline (usually at the beginning of the academic year) to request the voucher and finalize the payment.
- Action: If you miss this deadline, you may have to pay the full price or rely on more expensive monthly tickets. Always check the TEP Parma website or the university's announcement page.

Section G) STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

100-Hour Collaboration

For students looking to work part-time while studying, the University of Parma offers specific collaboration contracts (often referred to as "100 ore"). These positions are designed for students to assist in university offices, libraries, or international desks.

These positions are specifically designed to allow students to gain experience and earn money without compromising your academic schedule.

In addition to these collaboration contracts, you should regularly check the official University website for other opportunities, as different Departments often post calls for tutors or administrative support roles throughout the academic year.

The Golden Rule: Check Your Academic Email Daily

- Do not ignore emails from the University: What might appear to be a routine newsletter may, in fact, include a call for applications or other important notices.
- International Positions: Often, there are specific roles designated for international students to help with language support or international student orientation.
- How to Apply: Follow the instructions in the email strictly. These positions are competitive, and meeting the application deadline is crucial.

Employment & Language Skills: Working in Italy

Work Permit Regulations

As an international student in Italy, you are legally allowed to work up to 20 hours per week (read the information [here](#)).

However, there is a significant practical barrier: Italian Language is mainly required for the most kind of works. Outside of university-specific roles, finding English-speaking positions in Parma is extremely rare. To secure a job in the city, even in the service sector, a functional level of Italian is essential.

- Free Italian Language Courses (2026 Updates) Fortunately, 2026 is an exceptional year for language learning due to new funding initiatives.

- Municipal Courses (Comune di Parma): Traditionally, the city holds annual Italian classes for foreigners. You should check the Informastranieri office for their current schedule or go to municipality in person and ask them. (<https://informastranieri.comune.parma.it/en-US/home-informastranieri-en.aspx>)
- EU-Funded Private Centers (New for 2026): This year, the European Union has provided significant funding for integration. As a result, many private language schools and cultural centers in Parma are offering free Italian courses for international students and residents.
- Action: Keep an eye on local notice boards and the University's international office for a list of these funded private centers, as their locations and schedules change annually.

Final Advice and Best Wishes

To succeed in Parma:

- Read this guide carefully
- Act **early** on documents
- Monitor **deadlines strictly**
- Check your **e-mail daily**
- Prioritize **administrative tasks first**
- Learn **basic Italian**
- ... and **WELCOME!!!**