

My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

Preface

From the Office for International Relations

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Educational exchange can turn nations into people, contributing as no other form of communication can to the humanizing of international relations

Senator J. William Fulbright, 1983

I have been working in Ca' Foscari University of Venice International Office, where I am currently responsible for the Welcome Unit, since 2010. I deeply love my job, for a number of different reasons, which I shall attempt to briefly outline here.

One of the most satisfying moments in the daily activities in the office is seeing the growth and change in students. Before leaving for an international experience, they have different approaches: you can see them electrified, or scared, or hesitant. But whether their experience has been a wonderful time or not, in any case you will clearly see the difference upon their return.

A period abroad, alone, far from home, teaches you that you can go out from your comfort zone and thus discover new aspects about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses.

The human experience of mobility transcends the academic one: and the *My Mobility* writing competition perfectly reflects this reality. The International Office is proud to have contributed to the funding and organisation of the initiative, and to the prize giving ceremony which was held in June 2018.

The staff of the International Office support hundreds of incoming and outgoing students, who every semester live an international experience. The numbers keep growing: in the last five academic years, incoming students (i.e., exchange students, enrolled in a partner university, who spend a semester or academic year in Venice thanks to international agreements or networks) went from 407 in the A.Y. 2013/14 to 675 in the A.Y. 2017/18; while outgoing students went from 578 in the A.Y. 2013/14 to 1204 in the A.Y. 2017/18. Degree seeking students (i.e., students enrolled in a BA or MA with an international diploma, to be evaluated and accepted by the International Office before the enrolment) showed a significant increase as well: from 194 in the A.Y. 2013/14 to 329 in the A.Y. 2017/18.

The increase in numbers followed changes to the International Office, which in the last five years has become bigger and better organised. The office is now divided in three units, each responsible for a different aspect of the internationalisation of higher education: the Welcome Unit works with the international users of the university (either students, professors or staff); the Mobility Unit works with the creation of international agreements and it manages outgoing mobilities (either of students, professors or staff); the Projects Unit works for the creation and management of international projects aimed at getting international fundings. Moreover, in 2018 another office has been created, the Global Engagement Office, with the main aim of international branding, marketing and recruiting.

Most procedures have been automated, specific softwares for higher education procedures have been introduced, such as the website apply.unive.it, which made it possible to digitalise and speed up the whole process for degree seeking students, and, thanks to the cooperation with other offices inside and outside the university, many procedures have been simplified, for example automatised Transcript of Records, management of *prospective degree seekers* with CRM, file sharing in Drive, digital signatures on most documents.

Welcome services have been improved, among them: a dedicated desk at the airport of Venice during the Welcome weeks, support to obtain the stay permit and for other immigration issues, a Chinese front office, the creation of tutorials in English language for the main administrative procedures, and a personalised Welcome Kit for all international guests (students and staff).

These are the facts: behind them, the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff, who work every day ‘to the humanizing of international relations’, supporting the international (human) experience of the university community.