Online Master in Electoral Policy and Administration

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How do I apply for the Master Programme or for individual modules and what are the admission requirements?**
   The application procedure will open on 15 May 2016. Starting from this date, you can apply any time and you will be informed about the result within eight weeks. Once admitted, you will receive an Admission Letter and you will have up to six months to secure enough funding and start attending the courses.

   The admission requirements are:
   (1) Three-year (at least) university degree in a relevant field, combined with some working experience (ideally at least six months) in the field of electoral policy and administration or related areas. Students expecting to graduate within a period of three months from the application are also eligible.
   (2) Fluency in English – at least at level C1 (please refer to: CEFR for Languages, CoE, www.coe.int/ lang-CEFR).

2. **Is the online Master Programme accredited?**
   The online Master in Electoral Policy and Administration, as well as individual modules, are accredited in the same way as on-campus courses. There are no differences between the qualifications you will gain online and those delivered on-campus, and strict quality assurance procedures are applied to our online Master Programme and individual modules. On completion of the Master Programme you will be awarded a Master Degree from Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna. If you decide to purchase and attend individual modules you will receive a Certificate of Completion and the respective academic credits for each module. Qualifications will be released only to those who will have settled the tuition costs and have passed the exams as requested.

3. **MEPA is based on which curriculum?**
   The MEPA curriculum was developed by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Int IDEA) in collaboration with the Scuola Sant'Anna by well-known electoral practitioners and academics. It is designed to equip its graduates with solid knowledge and skills to handle complex professional challenges.

4. **Do I have to provide a certificate validating my English skills?**
   A certificate is not compulsory but it would be very much appreciated and we encourage to enclose it to the online application. Please be aware that in order to attend the courses you shall be fluent in English and the required level is at least C1 (please refer to: CEFR for Languages, CoE, www.coe.int/ lang-CEFR). Please consider also that all modules will be taught in English and you will be required to take exams

and to write a final thesis of 15.000-20.000 words in English, or of 7.000-10.000 words, always in English, if you choose to undertake an optional internship.

5. When will the first modules be available?
The first modules will be available online starting from 1 October 2016. Applications procedures open on 15 May 2016. If interested, you can apply any time and you will be informed about the result within eight weeks. Once admitted, you will receive an Admission Letter and you will have up to six months to secure enough funding and start attending the courses.

The courses do not have to be attended in a pre-defined order, however we strongly suggest that the ideal path would be 1-18.

6. When can I start the Programme?
You can start attending the Programme at three different times per year:
  - ➢ 1 October,
  - ➢ 15 January or
  - ➢ 1 April

In this way, for each module, you will have three different possibilities per year to attend virtual group sessions and take the module exam.

Similarly, individual modules are available three times per year according to the calendar.

The starting point of your Master Programme corresponds to the closest starting date available following the payment of the first tranche of the tuition fee. For example, if you pay the first tranche of the tuition fee on the 1st of December, you will be able to start attending the online modules on the 15th of January. The 15th of January is also the date from which the two years available to complete the Master Programme are calculated.

7. How long does the Programme last?
The average duration of the Programme is 1 year:
  - ✓ Eight months - Online component
  - ✓ Three months - Preparation of the thesis
  - ✓ Up to three weeks - Optional residential component

You may opt to complete the degree within a longer timeframe. However, the maximum duration of the Programme shall not exceed 2 years.

The optional residential component will take place twice a year, in autumn and in spring, to give you the possibility to discuss your thesis in front of an academic panel and to participate to events organised ad hoc, such as workshops and seminars. The optional residential component will be offered with a minimum of ten participants. Please note that you also have the possibility to discuss your thesis via online means, such as Skype.

Individual modules correspond to two to four academic credits. Please consider that an academic credit corresponds to 15 to 20 hours of study and if you choose to purchase and attend individual modules, each of them shall be completed in six months.

8. **How much learning time does the Master Programme entail and when and how can I access the platform to do my modules?**

The Master Programme is composed of 18 modules and each module corresponds to two to four academic credits. Please consider that an academic credit corresponds to 15 to 20 hours of study.

The average length of the Master Programme is one year, however, in order to give you enough flexibility, you will have up to two years to complete the Master Programme.

You can access the platform anytime, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Through online learning you will be able to access the platform anywhere that has an Internet connection when it is more convenient for you.

9. **Do I have to come to the Scuola Sant'Anna in Pisa, Italy to do my courses?**

Not necessarily, the residential component at the Scuola Sant'Anna in Pisa, Italy, is optional. It will take place twice a year, in autumn and in spring, to give you the possibility to discuss your thesis in front of an academic panel and to participate to events organised ad hoc, such as workshops and seminars. The optional residential component will be offered with a minimum of ten participants.

However, all 18 modules composing the MEPA Programme are available online and you can discuss your final thesis via online programmes, such as Skype.

10. **I am required to do an internship in order to earn the Master Degree?**

No, internships are encouraged but they are not compulsory in order to earn the Master Degree. The Master's Secretarial Staff is available to provide assistance to students in finding placements, although an active collaboration by the students is required.

If you wish to undertake an optional internship, at the end of the internship, you shall produce a Master Thesis of min. 7.000 max 10.000 words, including references and appendices, related to the content of the internship or related to the Master Programme.

If you do not wish to undertake an internship you shall produce a Master Thesis on a topic of interest related to the content of the Master Programme. The Master Thesis must be of min 15.000 max 20.000 words, including references and appendices and must be approved by a Committee appointed by the Rector of the Scuola.

11. **How much does it cost? Are there scholarships available?**

The tuition fee for the Master Programme is 10.000,00 Euro. It covers: academic and tutorial costs, course materials, access to e-library and participation in webinars.

Individual modules are also available. The fee for each MEPA module is 850,00 euro Starting from the second module, a 10% discount on the fee of the second and third module is applied and a 15% discount is applied from the fourth module onwards.

To foster diversity within the programmes, the Scuola and UNITAR may award partial scholarships to talented students in need of financial aid based on merit, distinctive competences and academic excellence. Scholarships are subjected to availability of funds, please be aware that the number of scholarships is very limited.

In order to be eligible for the scholarship, you must apply to the Master Programme. In the online application form there is a whole section dedicated to the scholarship: please explain in details the reasons why you should be awarded the scholarship and enclose all the requested documents, in particular a copy of your last payslip.

The Scuola and UNITAR are also establishing agreements with financial institutions around the world to offer students attractive loan packages to finance tuition. Finally, the Scuola and UNITAR provide information on scholarships offered by external institutions, such as national or local governments, foundations, non-profit organizations or professional associations. Please note that these scholarships are dependent on third parties, therefore we encourage to apply as soon as possible. On the MEPA website, in the Fee & Scholarships section, you may find information on scholarships and funds from outside sources.

Once admitted, you will receive an Admission Letter and you will have up to six months to secure enough funding and start attending the courses. The fee shall be paid in two tranches: the first within six months from the notification of admission to the MEPA and the second within four months from the starting of the courses.

If interested, you shall fill in the online application form available of the MEPA website and attach your CV.

12. **How is online learning different?**
The online Master programme in Electoral Policy and Administration is of equal value to on-campus programmes in terms of entry criteria and overall workload. The only difference is in the way the course is delivered.

As an online learning student, you will:
- ✓ earn an internationally recognised Master Degree
- ✓ be able to study anywhere that has an internet connection
- ✓ have the flexibility to study when it's most convenient for you
- ✓ be taught by academics working at the leading edge of your field
- ✓ become part of a rich and varied online community
- ✓ have access to University support services
- ✓ earn up to 67 ECTS-credits (European Credit Transfer System)

13. **How are online modules taught and assessed?**
MEPA adopts an approach that highlights experiential and collaborative learning, allowing participants to share knowledge and experiences and contribute dynamically to the learning process. This approach focuses on your learning needs, interest and

expectations to ensure the relevance and retention of content and puts particular emphasis on your active participation through practice-oriented learning activities (both during the online and residential components).

While delivering the modules, lecturers and assistants will devote particular attention to enduring: interactivity, participation, links with practical examples and real experiences.
With specific reference to the online component, modules are designed to foster synergies between theory and practice. Taking advantage of the opportunities of technology-enhanced learning, the learning materials are presented through various means, such as text, graphs, images and video material, which contribute to better retention and to enhance the learning process.

In order to create collective knowledge and to facilitate interaction and experience sharing among participants, working groups and discussion forums are organized. In particular, working groups are a recurring feature of the Programme as they are used to carry out different learning activities.

At the end of each module there will be a final exam with different modalities (ex. multiple choice exams, essays, open questions, interviews, etc.)

14. **Do I have the possibility to enter in direct contact with lecturers and other students?**
Yes, you will always have the possibility to contact lecturers and other students directly.

You will have the possibility to ask your questions on the platform and you will receive an answer in a very short time. Also, during the Master Programme, several "live" activities will be organised, such as live webinars, group works and simulations in a virtual classroom.

15. **What supports are given to me as online student?**
The full range of Scuola Sant'Anna services offered to on campus students are also offered to online students. These include an online access to our library to consult e-journals and the database from distance, career counselling and job search or internship assistance. You will be able to communicate directly with lecturers and other students, and you will be assisted by a Tutor throughout the entire Master Programme.

Also, you will also have access to UN libraries (physical and online libraries) and access to the UNITAR Community of Practice (COP). UN libraries constitute a strong network that shares expertise, best practices and resources. These libraries have become important actors in the Organization's information strategy. The UN Libraries are gateways to knowledge, thought and culture, facilitating the decision-making process within the Organisation.

16. **Do I need to have much experience with computers or online learning?**

All of our courses require a basic competency with computers. However, we do not expect you to know how to use the online platform before you start, and full orientation will be given before the course commences. Many of our students have never studied online before, and being motivated, self-disciplined and an independent learner are key skills.

17. **What type of computer do I need?**

Minimum hardware and software requirements:

Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; MacOS 9 or MacOS X.

Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space.

Software:
(1) Adobe Acrobat Reader (download for free at http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html).
(2) Adobe Flash Player (download for free at http:/get.adobe.com/flashplayer)
(3) Microsoft Office (Windows or Apple version) or Open Office (download for free at http://www.openoffice.org)

Browser: Internet Explorer 8 (download for free at http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internetexplorer/worldwide-sites.aspx); works better with Firefox 3.6 or higher (download for free at http://www.mozillaeurope.org/en/firefox). Note JavaScript & Cookies must be enabled.

Modem: 56 K