

Ca' Foscari history



Ca' Foscari University, established on August 6th, **1868** as a **Business School** (the first in Italy and the second in Europe), is a public university based in **Venice**, in northern Italy.

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Ca' Foscari palace

The historical seat of the university is **Ca' Foscari**, a Venetian Gothic palace overlooking the widest bend of the Grand Canal (in Venetian dialect, *Ca'* is the abbreviated form of 'casa', which means 'house' in Italian). The palace lie in the 'sestiere' of Dorsoduro, one of the six large neighbourhoods that the city is divided into, and another building formerly stood there, the so-called '**Casa delle Due Torri**' (House of the Two Towers), which belonged first to Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, the Prince of Mantua and Vice-captain of the Serenissima Army, and then to Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Milan. In 1452 the House of the Two Towers was put up for auction and bought by the **doge Francesco Foscari**, who had it knocked down to build a more imposing building as a symbol of the prestige of the Foscari family (from which the university took its name).

Over the twentieth century the building underwent two important **restoration phases** at the hands of the Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa. In 1936 he worked on the entrance hall, the first floor hall and the great hall ('magna aula'), which was previously a product museum. In particular, in the entrance hall the visual connection between the 'water entrance' (access from the Grand Canal) and 'land entrance' (access from the street and courtyard) was renovated. In 1956 Carlo Scarpa was asked back to transform the great hall into a classroom, creating a corridor by using boiserie.

Finally, between 2004 and 2006 Ca' Foscari and **Ca' Giustinian**, the adjoining building which became part of the complex in 1942, were subjected to more restoration work, which among other things involved the creation of internal connections between the two buildings. During restoration work, remains from the ninth century were discovered beneath the external courtyard and a frescoed floor from the fifteenth century and gilded ceilings from the sixteenth century came to light in one of the second floor rooms.

Ca' Foscari is the oldest building in the world to have received **LEED EB: O&M certification**.

The external and internal spaces of Ca' Foscari palace can be visited thanks to the special **Ca' Foscari Tour**, a guided visit service that is available in Italian, English or Italian sign language and is organised by the **Information Centre (URP)**.



History of the university

From the very beginning the Business School integrated theoretical exploration with practical activity and the study of western and eastern languages, so as to provide students with a complete education in economics and business.

During the twentieth century the School progressively increased its educational and cultural activity, thus becoming an important reference point in the area.

In 1919, having survived the storm of the First World War and after the temporary transfer to Pisa, Ca' Foscari was authorised by law to extend its three-year programmes with a fourth year of study.

Nine years later the School came under the authority of the National Ministry of Education (which corresponds to the current Ministry of Education, University and Research) and in 1934 the title of School Director was replaced by that of Rector. Then in 1935, with the birth of the **Faculty of Economics and Business**, the school became a fully-fledged **State University**, while the following year it received official authorisation to issue Degrees in Modern Languages and Literatures.

Even during the Second World War Ca' Foscari continued its activity without interruption, helped by the fact that the historical centre of Venice was spared from the bombing. Then in 1954, the **Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures** was established (the first in Italy), while in 1969 the **Faculty of Humanities** and the **Faculty of Chemistry** were born, after the university attained legal status.

Between the Sixties and Seventies Ca' Foscari University undertook a path of organisational and structural growth that increased its prestige on both a national and international scale and equipped it with greater scientific and educational value, based on the far-sighted combination of two complementary principles: continuation of tradition and scientific and cultural modernisation.

In fact, in 1964 the Degree Programme in **Eastern Languages and Literatures** was established, and with this began teaching of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Indian, Turkish and Iranian; languages that had been part of Ca' Foscari University since its origins. All this encouraged the consolidation of the cultural relationships of Venice with the Near and Far East, just at a time when eastern countries regained centre stage on the world scene. Furthermore, in 1971, the Degree Programme in **Business Administration** was established alongside the Degree Programme in Economics and Business, so as to meet the need for growth on the part of small and medium

businesses in Triveneto. Finally, these were joined by Degree Programmes in **Letters, Philosophy and History**, nourished by a fruitful relationship with the city's immense historical and cultural heritage, and the Degree Programme in **Industrial Chemistry**, with a special focus on the characteristics and issues of the Venetian lagoon as well as themes of technological modernisation and environmental remediation.

During the Seventies and Eighties the university extended significantly within the Venetian area, through the acquisition of the Ca' Bembo, Ca' Bernardo, Ca' Garzoni, Celestia and San Sebastiano buildings, the former Santa Marta cotton mill and Ca' Foscari della Frescada (subsequently known as Bottacin), in addition to the historically owned buildings and those restored or bought during the Fifties and Sixties, such as the new wing of Ca' Dolfin, the second part of Ca' Giustinian de' Vescovi, Ca' Cappello and Ca' Bernardo. These buildings were then joined by Ca' Nani Mocenigo and Ca' Gritti, the former cinemas Italia and Santa Margherita, as well as various other structures.

In 1986 the town council committee granted San Giobbe to the university as well, a large area belonging to the Municipality of Venice. In the same period the idea of a settlement on the mainland was outlined, along the historical axis of the Salso Canal, in the area of the former slaughter house in Mestre.

Furthermore, towards the late Eighties, the university activated Degree Programmes in **Environmental Sciences, Information Sciences and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage**, the **School of Economics of Tourism** was set up at Villa Mocenigo in Oriago di Mira and the Interfaculty Centre for Research on Education and Teaching (CIRED) was established in Marghera. Then, in the early Nineties other Degree Programmes were established: **Social Work Studies, Information Sciences** in Via Torino in Mestre, **International Trade, Statistics and Computer Science for Business Management** and **Translation and Interpreting** at the Treviso branch campus.

This path of expansion was also confirmed by Ca' Foscari's fundamental contribution to the Venice Science and Technology Park (VEGA) and its participation in the Venice International University (VIU) on the island of San Servolo.



Ca' Foscari today

Today Ca' Foscari University of Venice teaches approximately 20,000 students and covers four large scientific and cultural areas (corresponding to the four Faculties in force until 2010): Economics, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Humanities and Sciences.

Since the academic year 2011/2012 the university has been organized into 8 **Departments** and 6 **Interdepartmental Schools**, responsible for research and teaching activities of First and Second Cycle Degree Programmes. Three university structures exist alongside these:

- **Ca' Foscari Graduate School**, which coordinates Research Doctorates;
- **Ca' Foscari Challenge School**, which organises Specialist Master's Programmes (1st and 2nd level) and other courses for continuing education;
- **Ca' Foscari School for International Education** which promotes intensive summer and autumn courses and other extracurricular activities for Italian and international students.

Ca' Foscari University of Venice also offers English-taught programmes and double/joint degrees, which along with numerous cooperation agreements with European and extra-European institutions and universities, enrich the international focus that has always been a feature of the university, increasing the mobility of students, researchers and professors.

Skills in the fields of teaching, research and innovation are integrated by a wide cultural programme, thanks to a busy calendar of conventions, exhibitions, film, theatre and radio dates, aimed both at Ca' Foscari community and the entire world.



Main book reference

Giannantonio Paladini, *Profilo Storico dell'Ateneo*, edizioni Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia, 1996.