

# Building Beauty

Ecologic Design and Construction Process

First Level Master in Architecture

UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
SUOR ORSOLA  
BENINCASA



## NAPLES

Located in southern Italy, Naples is a major port city in the centre of the ancient Mediterranean region. Its origins go back to its foundation as *Parthenope* or *Palaepolis* in the 9th century B.C., subsequently re-established as *Neapolis* (New City) in 470 B.C. It is therefore one of the most ancient cities in Europe, whose current urban fabric preserves a selection of outstanding elements of its long and eventful history, as expressed in its street pattern, its wealth of historic buildings and parks, the continuation of many of its urban and social functions, its wonderful setting on the Bay of Naples and the continuity of its historical stratification.

The city's setting on the Bay of Naples gives it an Outstanding Universal Value which has had a profound influence in many parts of Europe and beyond. Naples has exerted great influence on the rest of Europe ever since the antiquity, as a major centre in *Magna Graecia* and of the Roman Republic. Its role as one of the most influential cultural centers in the Mediterranean region was reconfirmed in the Middle Ages and again from the 16th to 18th centuries, being one of the major European capitals, and exerting important influences in many cultural fields, especially related to art and architecture, Naples and its surrounding have a lot to offer, such as The World Heritage property of the Historic Centre of Naples, museums, Palazzo Reale, Certosa di San Martino, etc..





## UNIVERSITY "SUOR ORSOLA BENINCASA"

The University Suor Orsola Benincasa (UniSOB) is homed in an old monastic fortress, situated on the slopes of the Sant'Elmo hill overlooking Naples and its gulf; it spreads across a compact complex of buildings in the heart of the dense historical center of Naples. UniSOB was founded in 1864 and hosts three faculties: Education Sciences, Law and Humanities. Such unique history gifts identity to UniSOB, which has performed a central role in the cultural development of the surrounding territory. At UniSOB educational activities are integrated with broader cultural activities. UniSOB tries to develop and interpret its scientific and cultural tradition in the light of the contemporary challenges.



The university offers a wide range of programs:

### Faculty of Education Sciences

**Bachelor Degree** in: Communication Studies | Education Sciences | Social Work Sciences | Technological and Scientific Fundamentals of Cognitive Psychology

**Master** in: Business and Public Communication | Pedagogy and lifelong learning school, community, territory | Planning, Administration and Management of the Policies and the Social Services | Psychology: Human Resources, Cognitive Ergonomics, Cognitive Neuroscience

### Faculty of Humanities

**Bachelor Degree** in: Modern Languages and Culture | Cultural Heritage Sciences | Tourism, Art, Archaeology  
**Degree (5 years)** in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage

**Master in:** Archaeology and History of Art | Foreign Languages for International Communication and Cooperation

### Faculty of Law

One long cycle degree course (5 years) in Law





## SCHOOL OF SPECIALIZATION

UniSOB includes three postgraduate Schools of Specialization:

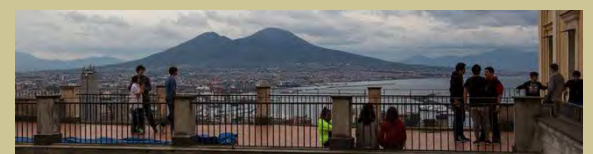
- Archaeological Heritage,
- Historical and Artistical Heritage
- Legal Professions.



## RESEARCH AT UNISOB

Research is carried out in the twelve Laboratories and Research Centres, in the Research Centre on the European Institutions (CRIE), and the European School of Advanced Studies (SESA). **Building Beauty** is part of the **Interdepartmental Research Centre Scienza Nuova**. It aims at integrating humanities and sciences with the most advanced technologies. Scienza Nuova homes six state-of-the-art research laboratories:

- **SIMULA**: data visualization, modelling and social simulation, HMI and human factors.
- **Ludolab**: industrial, interactive and game design.
- **Intrecci**: new media design and content development.
- **Heritage 2.0**: cultural heritage diagnosis and intervention.
- **Bacone**: data digitalization and research in humanities.
- **Explora**: human behaviors analysis including driving behavior.



# BUILDING BEAUTY

## ECOLOGIC DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

First Level Master in Architecture  
Naples, Italy | October 2017 – May 2018

### BACKGROUND

The program is a “University 1st Level Master” in the Italian Qualification System. Sitting in the second cycle of the Bologna framework, the 1st Level Master can only be delivered by Institutions holding University status over a minimum period of one year. In the English-speaking world, it is equivalent to a post-graduate specialist program.

The idea underpinning Building Beauty is that of a different, both holistic and scientific approach to architectural education, one that poses the ordinary living environment to centre stage, focuses on the adaptive process of building and change and the role of design in it, where life is respected and enhanced in all its forms and “beauty” becomes a tangible objective of social and ecologic pursuit as well as a matter of rigorous scientific investigation. The program is shaped to offer a profound experience of designing and making, revolving around the exploration of the reality of feelings and an evidence-based approach to the architectural process.

Building Beauty is founded on Christopher Alexander intellectual and practical work, and designed in close collaboration with Maggie Moore Alexander and some of Alexander’s life-long collaborators. This legacy is most evident in our thirteen founding principles and in a few taught modules in our curriculum. The program emphasizes the generation of beauty by means of the practical work of making; it is offered to all those willing to explore that beauty which makes a difference in the world.



### ENTITLEMENT TO APPLY

The course is open to individuals holding a Laurea (Bachelor) or equivalent experience in architecture or indeed any other area of knowledge in Science, Humanities and the Arts.

### QUALIFICATION

The course is accredited by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). It offers 60 credits (or European Credits Transfer System), equivalent to 120 UK/USA credits, over 24 teaching weeks running from mid October to end of May.

### FEES STRUCTURE AND ACCOMMODATION

**EU (+ Switzerland) students: €10,000; Extra EU students: €16,300**

Five to ten placements are offered in the University dorms close to the Benincasa Monastery at €250-300/month including services and cleaning. Similar rates apply to privately rented decent accommodations in the area.



## PRINCIPLES

### 1. Beauty

There exists in the natural, cultural and physical world, a class of phenomena that are beautiful, the beauty of which has essentially to do with our everyday material and spiritual life. We want to understand what characterizes such phenomena, how they occur and change, and how, as makers, we can help in the process.

### 2. Cosmology

The context in which we approach problems to develop solutions acknowledges and embraces the complexity, uncertainty and change that are ever more prevalent in our world. We explore a non-conventional agenda in education and research for making, which poses beauty and its generative process centre stage.

### 3. Day-To-Day, Minute Functionalism

We acknowledge that life takes place by continuously adapting the surrounding environment in an uninterrupted everyday process of adapting by making. We intend making as an adaptive process of change that predominantly occurs in the dimension of the ordinary.

### 4. Objective Nature of Beauty

Beautiful ordinary spaces have a quality whose value, once explored at the appropriate level, belongs to all human beings, and is good for everyone. Because that quality exists, makers can, at each step in the process of change, add to and expand—rather than detract from and reduce—the original quality. We define and measure the objective quality of space that emerges at the level where human beings share a common canon of values.

### 5. Holistic Nature of Space

Space is essentially grounded on our individual and collective self, where functionality, ornament and beauty are just different names for the same thing. We explore our individual and collective self in space as a fundamental way to understanding how to make things.

### 6. Quality of Space Comes Prior to Function

Beauty emerges, in the physical world, as an inner order that is spatial. Good functionality, and the sense of belonging and wellness are by-products of that. We focus on the order of space that recurs in phenomena of beauty: what it is made of, and how we can help it to emerge and expand over time.

### 7. Testing The Quality

The quality of space can be tested through understanding the authentic feelings that connect us to the place and others in a profound way. We pursue the ability to recognize, trust and develop our own feelings as a reliable ground for testing the quality of space.

### 8. Making With Exquisite Care

The quality of spaces does not come by design: it can only emerge during the process of making. We experience beauty in space when we see that everything around has arisen by careful choice and restless consideration of both the place and our own self. We are interested in the process of fine-tuning that creates a place: in a short-term “project” scenario, and in the longer-term, and truly “evolutionary.”

### 9. The “Unfolding” Nature of Beauty Generation

Essentially a process of adaptive transformation, making beauty happens in steps whereby each step expands the pre-existent beauty and, in itself, is complete and makes full sense. We test and explore the unfolding nature of beauty generation both in the process of making and in that of teaching how to make.

### 10. The Healing Nature of Making

Reunifying what was previously separated is central to the process—in space, in communities, and in ourselves as makers and citizens. Conventional separations (between actors, places and times of decision) are overcome and reunified at each step in a fully integrated healed/whole. We explore how to reunify self, community, design and construction at each step of the process of making.

### 11. The Reality of The Land and That In Ourselves

Making has to do with understanding the order of the space (existent in the land) and that of what we want to make (existent in ourselves), and then with reunifying the two in a coherent whole. We investigate all means to make such two orders explicit, and then reinforce each other.

### 12. Mocking Up

In a conventional building process, the means of most separations is the drawing. People make decisions, separately, by looking at drawings. We use drawings as an integral part of making: a physical, on-site, trial-and-error process based on the use of full-scale physical mock-ups. We practice full-scale mocking-up as the core system of decision-making in the building process.

### 13. Construction

Direct hands-on construction is essential to making. That is where and when everything happens; the building yard and the actual act of construction are the place and moment where the healing reunification occurs. We practice direct construction as the all-encompassing environment of making.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The student's experience will be in three main axis of activities:

**1. Construction; 2. Seminars,** and **3. Self, Community and Space.**

### CONSTRUCTION

Hands-on construction is the backbone of the Building Beauty. Students engage in **direct construction** from the first to the last day of the program. In the first semester they study and map the monastery's historical building techniques, ornament and materials, to then engage in a full-scale in-lab reconstruction of some elements of it, for example a wall, a vault, an arch, a window frame, or a combination of those. In the second semester, students work in the "Camellias courtyard", an open space located right in the heart of the monastery, the program's "home"; here they design and build a project for the regeneration of the courtyard and the adjacent service buildings. Finally, as an integral part of their construction experience, students **cultivate the land** in the historical gardens of the monastery, in collaboration with UniSOB's established Research Laboratories of Mediterranean diet and Botanic.

### SEMINARS

Seminars follow a "cenacolo" ("dinner circle") format: world leading scholars and professionals from a range of different areas of science and arts come and first work with the students in the building site; then they reflect on what building means from their own point of view, and finally sit and share dinner with students, staff and external visitors in one of the marvellous monastery's indoor halls or outdoor terraces (depending on the weather). The aim is to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere that allows guest staff and students to exchange ideas and feelings in the most appropriate way, and to inform networking at a deeper level.

### SELF, COMMUNITY AND SPACE

A series of workshops aimed at raising our awareness of our own individual and collective feelings. Feelings will be explored in relation to space, the body-mind, and the way they interact in the hands-on physical work of making artefacts. This line of activity is meant to provide the knowledge required to observe, understand and act within a complex system where elements have both individual and interrelated value, and where observation, understanding and action are related to our experience of such elements and their interrelation. Feelings are the gateway that connect our deep self to the external world: learning to name and recognize them, trust them, and live with them, is crucial to our ability to work with others and with the structure of the land.

Finally, two major *events* will conclude the program:

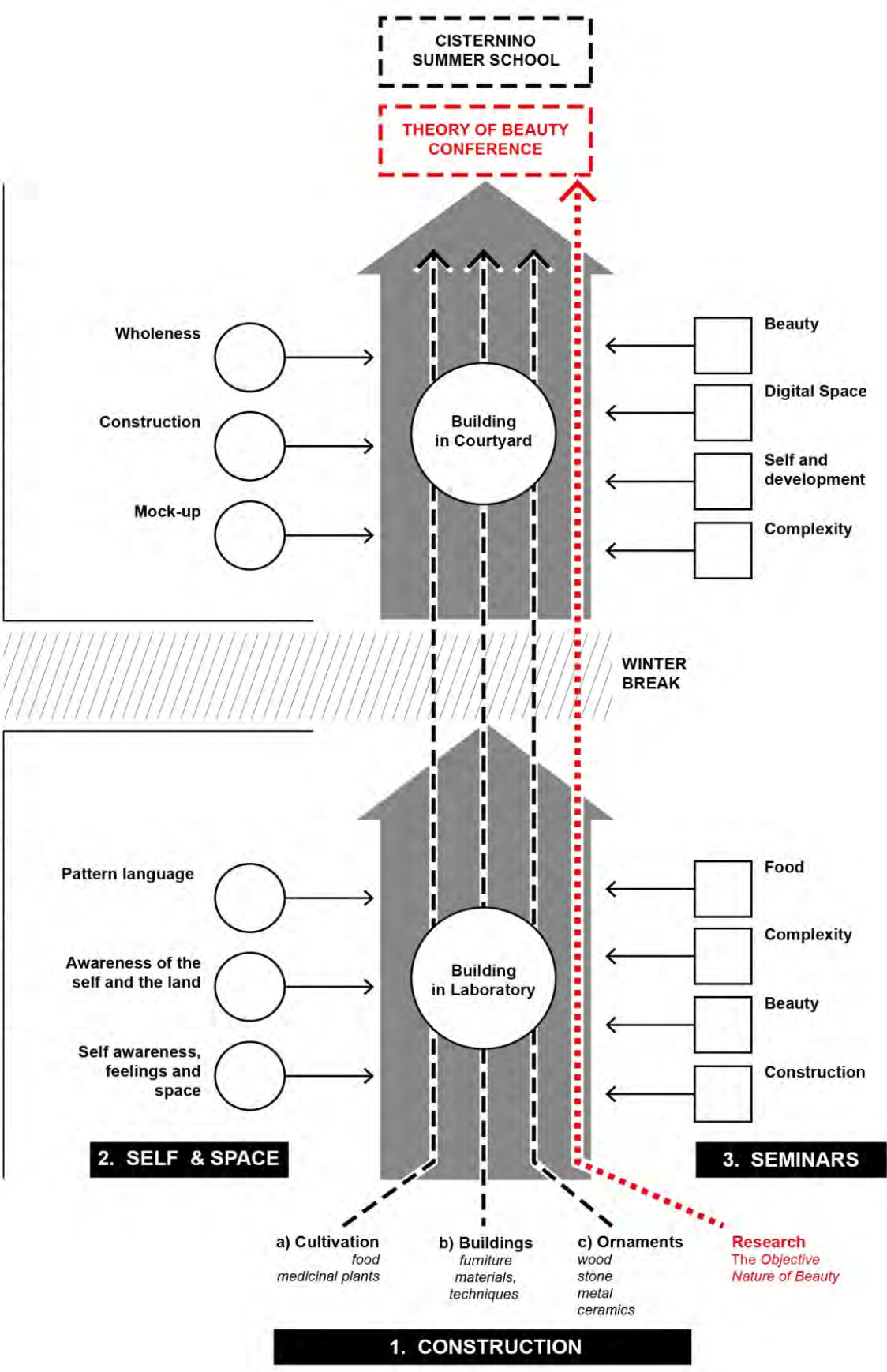
- a) In the "*Theory of Beauty Conference*" students discuss their experience with world leaders from academia as well as the profession in an international and interdisciplinary conference;
- b) In the "*Cisternino Summer School*", a two-weeks residential stage in an old "*masseria*" (country house) close to the village of Cisternino in Puglia, students will learn from a local master-builder the construction technique of the traditional "*trulli*" houses .



LEARNING STRUCTURE

**SEM 2**  
EXPANDING BEAUTY  
IN THE MONASTERY

**SEM 1**  
LEARNING FROM  
THE MONASTERY





## CREDITS BY TAUGHT MODULES AND CLASSES

TAUGHT MODULES	Nr	MIUR CODE	CLASS	CREDITS (ECTS)			
				by Class	by Module		
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE, CONSTRUCTION SYSTEMS AND DESIGN (Construction 1)	1	ICAR/18 Architectural history and Theory	History of Architecture of the Monastery and Naples since 1500	1A	4	17	
		ICAR 17 Drawing	Design and Laboratory of Ornament in Architecture	1B	6		
		ICAR 12 Architectural technology	Design Studio. Construction Systems, Structure and Materials	1C	7		
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND THEORY (Beauty 1)	2	ICAR/14 Architectural and urban design	Theory and practice of the Geometry of Beauty	2A	1	4	
				2B	2		
				2C	1		
NETWORK SCIENCE (Complexity 1)	3	ICAR 20 / Urban and regional planning (Tecnica e Pianif. Urbanistica)	Network Systems and Urban Analysis	3A	2	2	
CULTIVATION AND MEDITERRANEAN FOOD (Garden 1)	4	BIO/03 - Environmental and applied Botany	Urban Gardening, Cultivation and Food	4A	2,5	3	
			The Mediterranean food system	4B	0,5		
ART-THERAPY (Self, Community and Space 1)	5	ABCO/11 Art Therapy	Awareness of self and land	5A	0,5	2	
				5B	0,5		
				5C	0,5		
				5D	0,5		
<b>SECOND SEMESTER</b>							
GARDNERING AND URBAN FARMS	6	BIO/03 - Environmental and applied Botany	Urban Agriculture	6A	3	3	
DESIGN STUDIO (Construction 2)	7	ICAR/14 Architectural and urban design	Designing and Building the courtyard	7A	8	8	
SCIENCE OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS, LIFE AND CITIES (Complexity 2)	8	FIS /01 EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICS	Network Science in socio-economic and physical systems	8A	0,5	5	
			Physics of Living Systems	8B	0,5		
			ICAR/21 Urban Design Theory	Network Science and City	8C		2
			Urban Morphology	8D	2		
ISSUES IN THE ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES AND ETHICS (Self and Development)	9	SPS/10 Urban and Regional Sociology	Architecture and the production of Space in Socio-Economic transformation's Time	9A	1	2	
			Development, humanitarianism and responsible professionalism	9B	1		
DIGITAL TOOLS IN ARCHITECTURE AND CITY (Digital/Physical)	10	ICAR/11 Building production	Building Production WikiHouse 3D	10A	1	2	
		SPS/10 Urban and Regional Sociology	Smart Cities and interaction man machine	10B	1		
ART THERAPY (Self, Community and Space 2)	11	ABCO/11 ART Therapy	Feeling, Body and mind: how they interact	11A	0,7	2	
				11B	0,8		
				11C	0,5		
WHOLENESS IN MAKING: TOWARDS A THEORY OF BEAUTY	12	ICAR/14 Architectural and urban design	Wholeness, Centres and Built Environment	12A	1,5	2	
			Wholeness, Life and Beauty	12B	0,5		
THESIS	13	ICAR/18 Architectural history and Theory	Building Beauty: from practice to theory	13A	4	4	
CISTERNINO SUMMER SCHOOL	14	ICAR/11 Building Production	The Trulli experience: building in the land of myths	14A	4	4	

TOTAL OF CREDITS (ECTS): 60

TOTAL OF CREDITS (UKUSA SYSTEM): 120

TOTAL OF STUDY HOURS  
(INCLUDING INDEPENDENT AND TUTORED): 1500



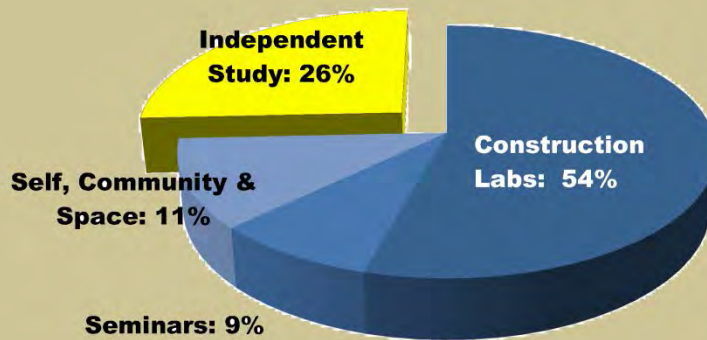
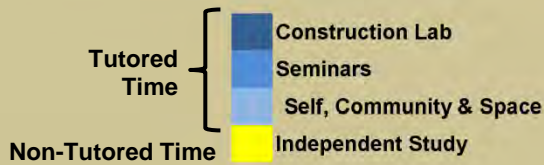
## TYPICAL STUDY WEEK BY SEMESTER

FIRST SEMESTER: OCTOBER 2017 / JANUARY 2018 (12 WEEKS)

TIME		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
I	09:00 - 09:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
II	10:00 - 10:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
III	11:00 - 11:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
IV	12:00 - 12:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
V	12:45 - 14:00	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
VI	14:00 - 14:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab
VII	15:00 - 15:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab
VIII	16:00 - 16:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab

SECOND SEMESTER: FEBRUARY / MAY 2018 (12 WEEKS)

TIME		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
I	09:00 - 09:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
II	10:00 - 10:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
III	11:00 - 11:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
IV	12:00 - 12:45	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Construction Lab	Self, Community & Space	Construction Lab
V	12:45 - 14:00	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
VI	14:00 - 14:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab
VII	15:00 - 15:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab
VIII	16:00 - 16:45	Construction Lab	Independent Study	Independent Study	Independent Study	Construction Lab



Typical study week by axis





## SUMMER SCHOOL AND CONFERENCE

The Program includes a **Summer School** in an ancient “masseria” (“country house”) in Cisternino (Puglia), where students learn the traditional “trulli” construction technique from an experienced local master-builder.

The Summer School is the final event for the program, an intensive building experience as much as a celebration of one year of achievements and intense life. A joyful farewell to Building Beauty.



## ITALIAN LANGUAGE COURSE

The program includes a basic course of Italian language, so to improve student’s experience in Italy and Italian culture. Italian is the fifth most taught foreign language in the world, it is spoken as a native language by 13% of EU population, or some 65 million people.

Italian language is the closest to Latin and 60 percent of the English vocabulary also comes from Latin. Most of the world’s cultural heritage sites are in Italy, and... Italian is recognized as one of the most beautiful spoken languages on the planet.



## STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE AND LOCATION

The University sits in the heart of the city of Naples, homed in the extraordinary 17<sup>th</sup> century Benincasa monastery. The historical complex is located on the top of a hill behind the popular "Spanish Quarters" in the heart of the old city of Naples. The complex, which has grown in time into a walled "cittadella" (small town) enclosing courtyards, terraces, annexes, gardens, vineyards and cultivated land, offers a unique overview on the city of Naples and its renown gulf, crowned by the magnificent silhouette of the Vesuvio volcano. In such stunning venue, blessed by a magic Mediterranean climate, at one-hour travel distance from major jewels of art and nature such as Rome, Capri, Sorrento, Amalfi, Pompei, Ercolano, to name just a few, staff and students share a one-year, intensive, memorable experience of studies, team work and life.

## ACCOMMODATION

Five to ten students are offered accommodation in state-of-the-art University Residence, located only a few minutes walk from the monastery. The residence is close to via Toledo and the vibrant historic heart of the city of Naples, and well connected to the main public transport hubs, including subway, Central Rail Station and International Airport. A special rate of €250-350/month is reserved to Building Beauty students for a shared double room with en-suite bathroom. The rate includes heating, daily room cleaning, weekly room bedding change, access to fully equipped communal kitchen and 24/7 overall surveillance.

Agreements are also in place with Collegio Universitario Villalta ([www.villalta.it](http://www.villalta.it), females only) and Collegio Universitario Monterone ([www.monterone.it](http://www.monterone.it), males only).

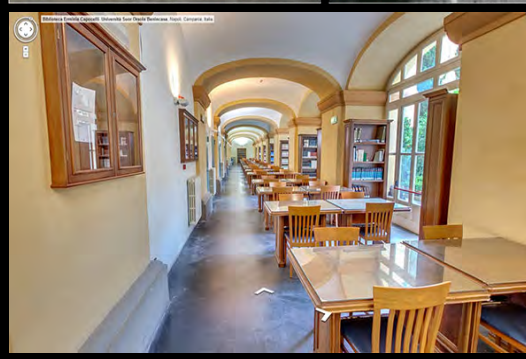
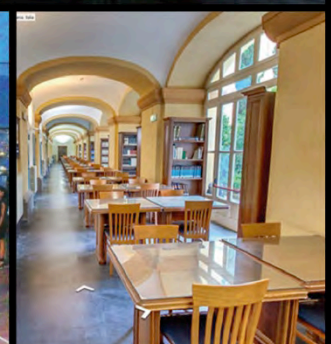


UniSOB offers accommodation at the University Residence (A.Di.S.U. Suor Orsola Benincasa)



Two diner/bars are available on campus, one of which is panoramic. Central location guarantees handy reach to a wealth of external opportunities.









### Contacts

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