

# CampusOne

## Italy

### Language Training



## Good Practice Executive Summary

The file is about the language learning actions foreseen by the general structure of the “CampusOne” Programme, which took place in Italy from 2001 to 2004. The programme involved the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Conference of Italian University Rectors and all universities. The main objective was to support the application of the university reform over the national territory, as specifically stated by the Decree n. 509/99, and enhance the experimentation of system and training activities at a university level, presenting innovative approaches containing references to issues such as: attention to the labour market and new economy needs, network services, evaluation and accreditation methodologies, personalization, information and communication technologies, language learning.

On a national level, several actions were carried out especially as regards: technical assistance to universities in order to correctly implement all procedures; training for university personnel; specific training related to the operational management of the actions; evaluation of the training activities; communication plans about the reform, its objectives and its final results. Locally, each university arranged a series of actions according to its internal regulation about: ICT services (network and multimedia support for learning, enhancement of ICT skills); training management for the single degree courses; stages and job placement for the students; adoption of an internal methodology to evaluate the quality of the training activities; relations with the local political entities and the social and economic parties; the certification of the students’ language skills according to international standards.

As regards the certification of the students’ language skills, the Conference of Italian University Rectors drew up a partnership agreement with some international language examinations boards, such as *Cambridge UCLES*, *Trinity College, London*, *Alliance Française*, *Goethe-Institut*, *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*, and so on, in order to provide Italian university students with internationally recognized certifications according to the competence level descriptors of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), set out by the Council of Europe. It was then left to each university the decision about which board to choose in order to delivery the certification exams.

The action we observed was carried out by the Language Learning Centre of the University of Basilicata in Spring 2003, in cooperation with the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Faculty of Engineering, and The Faculty of Sciences. Not all degree courses were involved, but just one per Faculty: Agricultural Technologies (AT); Communication Science (CS); Computer Science (CoS); Environmental and Territory Engineering (ETE).

The target language chosen was English. After an entry test, students were allowed to attend three language courses which lasted 50 hours each and were arranged in the multimedia laboratories of the Language Learning Centre. The overall amount of selected students was 77 (2 for AT, 16 for CS, 41 for CoS, 18 for ETE). They were divided into three classes having respectively: 26, 25 and 25 participants.

To summarize the project was carried out by the University of Basilicata; it was focused on language training activities and was targeted to 77 university students from March to May 2003.

As pointed out in the various sections of the dossier file, we observed the CampusOne Project for the University of Basilicata section. It is characterized by the following elements:

1. It is based upon a complete and up-to-date needs analysis.
2. It is focused on the acquisition of competencies identified on needs analysis.
3. Its objectives resulted to be realistic if compared with the final results in terms of, for instance, project indicators, language competence acquisition, number of trainees.
4. It is based on an updated didactic framework.
5. It incorporates some element of retroaction.
6. It takes into account a maximal number of constraints: absence, diversity, time and place.
7. The programme allows for multi-regional transfer, in principle, to any region within the EU, because of the planning in coherence with the European Lisbon strategy

Phases of the Basilicata CampusOne Project (Universit

Phase 1	Initial promotion of the language activity	Actor: All the involved Faculties
Phase 2	Definition of the entry level and the assessment tools	Actor: Mother Tongue University Teachers and Professors
Phase 3	Selection of the participants	Actor: Language Learning Centre
Phase 4	Language training courses	Actor: Language Learning Centre
Phase 5	Individual language empowerment	Actor: Mother Tongue University Teachers and Professors
Phase 6	Final assessment for the language skill acquisition	Actor: Mother Tongue University Teachers and Professors
Phase 7	International Language	Actor: Trinity College London

	Certification (not compulsory)	
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Moreover, the Language Learning Centre of the University of Basilicata provided with a continuous coordination, monitoring and control action along the whole project phases. The Centre had a staff composed of: the President, the Didactic Manager, two specialized language and computer technicians, some mother tongue university teachers and professors.

The project has not been repeated since the objectives and the procedures of the CampusOne Project were finally adopted by the Italian universities as a whole in their legal training courses. These objectives and procedures regarding initial selection of the students, language contents and timetable of the language training activities, final assessment, the recognition of all international certifications become the standard for the University of Basilicata language approach.

In our opinion this is an example of capacity building action as regards language training at a university level.

## 1. The needs analysis is based on a complete, up-to-date conceptual framework.

The need analysis was carried out during the Phase 3 “Selection of the participants” and referred to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). This choice allowed the training action to be provided with certified entry and exit competences in coherence with the key principles both of the European Union training and of the Council of Europe language training strategies.

The exit level had been already established by the Language Learning Centre of the University of Basilicata after planning the training action with the four Faculty Boards. It was decided that the students had to have at least to be certified with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) level *B1 - Threshold*, as a minimum language competence exit level, at the end of their university studies, for non-foreign language learning degree course students. This was also due to the analysis of the Italian secondary school system, whose exit level generally changes on the basis of the course of studies and to the fact that not all schools foresee the same language in their curricula. For this reason, an entry level test was arranged according to the A1 and A2 CEFR levels, in order to select the students having the right pre-requisites to access to the courses and successfully attend the lessons. The test had two papers: the first one was about grammar and the second one about reading comprehension. The subjects of the test have been attached to this dossier file (attach. 1).

## 2. Training is focused on the acquisition of the needed competencies identified through the needs analysis.

The university reform over the Italian territory, on which the CampusOne Programme was based, pointed out the importance for the students to be able to speak, at a threshold level, at least one foreign language, except for the foreign language degree course students, of course. For this reason, at least one exam in foreign languages had to be considered compulsory for all degree courses. The choice of the target language and the exit levels were left to every single university according to their internal regulations.

The CampusOne course syllabus at the University of Basilicata was arranged in order to achieve the language goals belonging to the CEFR B1 level, but also to give the students a sort of “language tools” to be used in their future jobs (Phase 5 of the CampusOne Project “Individual language empowerment”). As a matter of fact, together with activities for general English, other actions were dedicated to ESP (*English for Specific Purposes*), in this case, as essential part of the whole syllabus. The latter was conceived in strict connection with the students’ university studies.

This strategy satisfies two of the target needs:

1. transfer competences that could be immediately used in the students’ future jobs;
2. certify competences and individual learning actions according to European standards.

### 3. Training objectives are realistic within the timeframe.

The courses took into account both the initial and the target level of trainees in the language/culture considered along with the number and frequency of training sessions. Objectives were attained within the specified timeframe. Moreover, it has to be considered that the Italian University systems outlines each subject of study into hours, corresponding to a number of “training credits” (the Italian acronym is CFU) and hours dedicated to home study. The proportion would be 1 hour of class equivalent to 2 hours of homework. Thus, each course consisted of 150 hours which were considered quite enough to achieve the language goals for the CEFR - B1 level for those selected students already owning, at least, an A2 starting level.

#### 4. Training is based on an updated didactic framework.

Trainers were provided with adequate didactic training based on the latest research. The main point of reference was the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), in particular the level descriptors. Thus, special attention was dedicated to enhance communicative skills and develop other specific competences, in order to allow the students to be able to use them in the labour market.

Time was also dedicated to check on trainees' work, comment on it in the classroom and listen to their training needs, especially as regards the parts of the syllabus in which they felt to be quite weak. Reinforcement activities were also arranged for those unable to achieve the scheduled language skill targets. Moreover new technologies were used to strengthen the teaching methodology in class, since all lessons were held in multimedia laboratories provided with Internet connection and specific language software.

The importance given to communicative skills was also due to allow students to think upon how language structures behave. So that to enhance their meta-cognitive procedures and language awareness. On a didactic point of view, teachers and professors based their classroom actions on the most recent theories of language learning, especially those referring to intercultural language competence, learning by doing, natural approach.

## 5. Training incorporates some element of retroaction.

The CampusOne Programme also scheduled some monitoring actions both for the students and for the trainers in order to check the real effectiveness of the planned activities.

Then at the end of the training period the students were provided with frequency certificates identifying the achieved competences. Moreover they were also provided with the possibility to take for a test with an international language examination board.

The University of Basilicata chose the *Trinity College, London*. The test was the ISE (*Integrated Skills in English*) which contained exercises for the four language skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking). The grading for each candidate, in order to choose the suitable ISE level to be taken, was conducted by the trainers during a session after the end of the lessons. The following chart summarizes the numbers of the students involved, compared to the overall number of the students who attended the lessons. As it can be seen, about 60% of the students decided to take the Trinity exam.

Degree Courses	Number of Candidates	
	Enrolled	Passed
Agricultural Technologies	1	0
Communication Science	7	5
Computer Science	24	14
Environmental and Territory Engineering	14	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46 over 77</b>	<b>30 over 46</b>

## 6. Training takes into account a maximal number of constraints: absence, diversity, time and place.

The courses were arranged in order to allow students to attend them and the lessons of their normal university curriculum during the second term of the A.Y. 2002/2003 (Spring 2003), that is to say: the timetable was totally free from lessons overlapping.

Even though the CampusOne Programme flowchart also scheduled the realizations of self-learning systems through online training modules, the English lessons at the University of Basilicata were integrated with the use of a network language learning software, *English Discoveries LAN 2.1*.

This tool had to be used into the laboratories and had several functions. The most interesting was the possibility for the trainer to arrange all multimedia materials (about 1200 hours of training) of the software according to the different needs of the students, especially in order to reinforce their weak language abilities. The trainers used it to create personalized lessons, thanks to a “management system” tool, and “sent” them to the students which worked autonomously on their computers. These activities were co-arranged by the trainers and the students according to their needs and interests.

## 7. Transferability assessment

The project has not been repeated since the objectives and the procedures of the CampusOne Project were finally adopted by the Italian universities as a whole in their legal training courses. These objectives and procedures regarding initial selection of the students, language contents and timetable of the language training activities, final assessment, the recognition of all international certifications become the standard for the University of Basilicata language approach.

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### 7.1. Evidence of transfer

The transfer possibility is quite high because the CampusOne programme has been applied over the whole Italian territory and universities. The programme involved 70 universities, 270 degree courses, 9.000 professors and 50.000 students (source: <http://www.campusone.it/link/?ID=59>).

### 7.2. Innovation

The innovation of the policy could be identified in the attempt to standardize the acquisition of language skills all over Italy for university students and to start spreading the “culture of language learning”, in terms of communicative competences to be owned by the LS/L2 speaker, expressed in the “can-do” statements of the CEFR level descriptors.

### 7.3. Dependence on political context

The action we observed was mainly linked to the Italian political and educational context, since it was directed to better prepare the students to the innovation of the university reform. On the other hand the didactic strategy of the Italian university system aimed at making Italian students more prepared to become better European citizens. This objective had to be achieved through vocational training for lifelong learning, certified exit language levels multi-disciplinary contents, attention paid to competences, especially in foreign language learning

### 7.4. Flexibility

This training programme was developed within a specific context, but had some elements of flexibility since the goals above described were mainly linked to the European strategy outlined in Lisbon in 2000 and, for this reason, widely recognized all over Europe. Anyway it could be necessary to define transversal plans of adaptation in order to make it fully flexible.

### 7.5. Multi-region transfer

The programme allows for multi-regional transfer, in principle, to any region within the EU.