

UNIVERSITY SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Title IV, Article 60, Paragraph 1 of the Statute of the University of Padua states: “The University promotes in-depth studies, guaranteeing the maximum possible accessibility to services scientific and didactic aspects of the University as well as arranging premises suitable for personal and collective study”

In the last two years, the University of Padua has experienced a significant increase in enrolments, also due to the changed methods of teaching (e.g. dual teaching). However, this growth in enrollment has not been accompanied by an expansion and adaptation of spaces and services, or, at least, there has not been an immediate response. The return to massive attendance wanted for this academic year has precisely highlighted this deficiency: spaces are not sufficient, both from the point of view of quantity, and from that of the quality of the structures.

To already implemented long-term measures, which can lead to a definitive – or almost – resolution of these problems, emergency measures must be added that can meet current and urgent needs of students.

- STUDY ROOMS

Study rooms are an essential support instrument for the student community. In the last few years, some measures have already been taken to extend opening hours and increase the number of seats, but they are insufficient given the increase in new enrollments in recent years. It is still necessary to take action to avoid and prevent overcrowding, especially when these spaces are used the most, such as during the exam session.

One solution could be to renew the call for spaces to be used as study rooms, open to public and private entities, as in 2018 and 2021. This call has already led to the opening of the Centro Universitario Padovano in Via Zabarella and of the Arcella center in Via Guernieri.

Alternatively or together with this call, it would be possible to turn classrooms usually used for lectures into study rooms during those periods of high request (i.e. the exam session). The identification of such places, to be destined to individual study (in absence of other planned activities, such as exams) in the University buildings would result in a significant reduction of the load on libraries and study rooms. It is vital to remember, in this regard, that the gap between available seats for studying in Padua and in the other cities where UniPd is present (counting both libraries and study rooms) and the total number of students is enormous: for around 70,000 students fewer than 6,000 seats for studying (both individually and in groups) are available.

To facilitate the access to study rooms that require the university badge, it would be ideal to replace the current magnetic readers with barcode readers. Physical badges often take a long time to arrive, while the badge on the MyUniPD app, which can be immediately activated, has a barcode.

- CLASSROOMS

It is indisputable that the management of classrooms is problematic. It is enough to consider the lack of space to accommodate an ever-growing number of students and the overcrowding of available places. Having considered these issues, the University is already

working to improve the situation with vast and structured interventions (e.g. investing in new buildings), but it is evident that they will take a long time to be finished.

While waiting for these interventions to be finished, it is possible to put in place solutions of easier implementation that will allow to improve the conditions of students. With an ever-growing use of devices as tools for studying it is necessary to have power plugs close to where students are seated. Nearly all University buildings, with the exception of the Statistics, Mathematics and Psychology departments, do not have power plugs in the classrooms; for this reason we propose to implement all classrooms with a reasonable amount of easily accessible plugs. This measure would be easily feasible and would for sure be gladly welcomed by all students.

- LIBRARIES

We firmly believe that libraries are by definition the place for the student community to study: consulting additional material and working in a peaceful and quiet environment are key factors to succeed in studying and researching.

The opening hours of libraries, nonetheless, continue to be deficient: in all of Padua, the only University libraries open on weekend are the Liviano library (from 9.30 to 18.30), the Beato Pellegrino library (from 9.00 to 18.00), the Pinali library and the Metelli library (both open only on Saturdays from 9.00 to 14.00). The situation does not improve if we consider the opening hours from Monday to Friday: few libraries stay open until 20.00 and many close early on Fridays, often immediately after lunch hours.

We believe that extending opening hours is a necessity for the entire student community, especially for off-site and working students. This is why we aim to increase and standardize the opening hours of libraries.

Concerning weekend openings, it would be sufficient to identify some libraries in strategic areas, to reduce crowding in the few study rooms open on weekends.

Finally, it is time to recognize the importance that collective has in the effectiveness of the learning process. We therefore ask the University to set up some spaces for group work and study in correspondence with the bigger libraries. In case it is impossible to open new spaces, we will ask to convert already existing spaces into co-working rooms (without eliminating seats in libraries or study rooms).