

SUPSI

Conservation - Restoration University Study Program



Department for Environment Construction and Design

The Conservation-Restoration University Studies are carried out within the Department for Environment Construction and Design (DACD) of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI).

The objective of DACD is to provide education, qualified expertise and to carry out research combining technical and design aspects. DACD, with the scientific support of its units, actively contributes to the enhancement and sustainable management of both natural and built heritage within Switzerland and abroad.

DACD's presence in several research networks and its collaboration with national and international academic institutions result in it being a reference center for scientific research and specific technical expertise.

The training activities are characterized by the integration of a scientific academic approach and practical working experiences.

Bachelor of Arts in Conservation

Master of Arts in Conservation - Restoration

Giacinta Jean
Head of Studies

In Switzerland, university studies in conservation-restoration are structured according to the 3 + 2 model, which provides a three-year degree (Bachelor's degree in Conservation) followed by a two-year specialization (Master's degree in Conservation-Restoration).

The courses are set up according to a defined curriculum at the federal level within the Swiss Conservation-Restoration Campus (www.swiss-crc.ch), a structure which coordinates the activities of teaching and research in the protection of cultural heritage, formed by the four locations that offer this training at university level: SUPSI in Canobbio-Lugano, the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, the Haute École Arc Conservation-Restoration (HE-Arc CR) in Neuchâtel and the Hochschule der Künste in Bern (HKB).

Every school is a center of teaching and research with interdisciplinary teams of teachers and professionals specialized in a particular field of conservation-restoration work: from mural

paintings to textiles, from sculptures to archaeological and ethnographic objects, from paper to mechanical objects.

The Swiss CRC collaboration benefits from the skills and specializations of colleagues in different fields, with the aim of ensuring a high quality of training, a uniformity of curricula, compliance with European standards and the facilitation of mobility of students and teachers.

The program at SUPSI is specialized in wall paintings, stuccowork and architectural surfaces. The students are able to use the science lab of the university and a full range of IT services, including wireless networks across the campus and networked computers which are available for student use. Ongoing collaboration with heritage authorities, research institutes and other training and research institutions within Switzerland and abroad allow the students to actively participate in cultural and interdisciplinary exchanges.



Bachelor of Arts in Conservation

Skills and professional profile

Conservator-restorers work on the protection of objects of different natures and from diverse historical periods. They must be able to:

- recognize cultural and social values;
- examine the condition and consider the risks to which a work is subjected;
- consider its environmental context;
- plan and implement the necessary measures to block or mitigate the degradation phenomena in progress;
- carry out regular maintenance procedures and monitoring of condition over time;
- collaborate with art historians, archaeologists, architects and scientists;
- document and disseminate the results of their work.

A conservator-restorer must act with a strong work ethic and always be aware of the uniqueness of the objects taken under consideration.

The Bachelor of Arts in Conservation trains students to be professionals capable of analyzing and documenting the material and cultural characteristics of a work, to assess its condition and to execute and document conservation-restoration treatments.

Admission requirements and procedures

In order to be admitted to the Bachelor program, the candidate must pass an aptitude test aimed at assessing his or her manual, artistic and observational skills.

Candidates who have a Federal Certificate of Capacity (AFC) and a diploma from an artistic high school (MPA) or a diploma from a five-year art school are directly admitted to the aptitude test. Candidates with other qualifications need to do a one-year internship with a professional conservator or to study for a year at an art school (the preparation program has to be approved by the head of studies).

Admission is possible for candidates over 25 years of age who are deemed by the direction of DACD to have equivalent training and experience.



Organization of courses

The BA training lasts three years and is full-time. Attendance is obligatory.

Formal lectures

A series of interactive lectures helps build the theoretical and methodological foundations for working as a conservator.

Block courses

These partly theoretical but mainly practical courses give the students the opportunity to get hands-on training in historical techniques (e.g. fresco painting, stucco work, gilding, oil and tempera painting).

Laboratory and worksite activities

During these periods of practical activity in the studio and on external worksites, the students are given the opportunity to combine the interdisciplinary dimension and operational aspects of the profession. Students study the objects, assess the conservation problems and consider preventive and conservation measures.

Internships

The internships are conducted in public or private institutions or with qualified independent professionals. During these periods of work, the student has the opportunity to put the knowledge acquired during the studies and practical experience into practice, enabling him or her to experience first-hand the relationship between theoretical teaching and practical aspects.

Study trip

During the optional study trip, the students participate in guided tours of conservation-restoration projects with teachers and experts to learn about, compare and discuss working methods used elsewhere.

Classes are held mostly in Italian, but a student can write their exams, reports and Bachelor thesis also in French or in English.

The classes are composed of a limited number of students in order to ensure a high-quality educational approach and to give each student the opportunity to work directly on original objects.

The scientific laboratories and IT services provide the teachers with high-quality teaching tools and the students with an excellent technical infrastructure. Students are assisted by an interdisciplinary and international faculty (conservator-restorers, architects, art historians, chemists, geologists and physicists). Some of them are active as researchers in the Institute of Materials and Construction (www.imc.supsi.ch), which is equipped with laboratories and scientific instrumentation.



Educational content

Students are offered training that combines scientific and humanistic disciplines, theoretical aspects and practical experience. While in the first and second year classes and practical activities are equally divided, in the third year the latter becomes predominant. The first and second years are suitable not only for students who plan to specialize in the conservation of wall paintings, architectural surfaces and stucco-work, but also for those who would like to go on to specialize in paper, wood or easel painting conservation at the other institutions within the Swiss Conservation – Restoration Campus.

The basic sciences, art history, ethics of restoration, methods of inventory and cataloging, image processing, collections management and practical and theoretical knowledge of the materials and historical techniques of art are taught in the first year.

In the second year the focus is on condition assessment and understanding of the causes of deterioration, diagnostics and direct and indirect strategies for the preservation of cultural heritage.

In the last year, students deepen their knowledge by choosing one of the areas of specialization offered within the Swiss Conservation-Restoration Campus. At SUPSI, lectures and hands-on lab exercises provide the students with the skills needed in the conservation of wall paintings, architectural surfaces and stucco-work.

Learning Italian

Before the beginning of every autumn semester a two-week intensive Italian course is offered. During the semesters it is possible to take "Italian for Beginners" or "Advanced Italian" courses which both meet once a week in the late afternoon.

Prospects after the Bachelor

At the end of the triennium, the students obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree in Conservation. As required by European professional associations (www.ecco.org), this degree enables the graduate to:

- work on conservation projects in museums, collections, archives or conservation-restoration studios, operating under the supervision of a professional conservator-restorer;
- continue with Master's studies in conservation-restoration, according to the European framework, which enables the graduate to work autonomously and independently as a professional conservator-restorer.



The SUPSI Master course offers the opportunity for high quality, multidisciplinary teaching where scientific rigor and the importance of being continually up-to-date is emphasized. The fieldwork, which allowed students to be in direct contact with the works of art and the chance to do applied research, was an extremely positive experience.

Chiara Pasian, Conservator-Restorer, PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London

The years spent at SUPSI allowed me to acquire good skills for the development of my profession. I found the combination of theoretical lectures and practical experience and the international contacts particularly useful.

Karin Catenazzi, Conservator-Restorer

Master of Arts in Conservation-Restoration

Skills and professional profile

The Master of Arts in Conservation-Restoration trains students to become professionals capable of planning, implementing and managing their own interventions in the field of conservation-restoration of wall paintings, stuccowork, and architectural surfaces.

Students develop the knowledge acquired during the Bachelor, considering in detail the methods, materials and techniques of conservation-restoration. In their training, students are encouraged to integrate applied research into field practice.

Admission requirements and procedures

To be accepted to the Master program of studies, it is necessary to pass an entrance examination.

Applicants need to have a Bachelor's degree in Conservation or an equivalent title and must demonstrate that they have developed, parallel to their theoretical studies, good practical and manual skills.

Candidates older than 25 who do not have the degrees indicated above may be admitted to the program if the direction of DACD considers that the applicant possesses adequate motivation and equivalent training and experience.



Organization of courses

The training course is two years full-time or four years part-time with obligatory attendance. The modules are divided into three integrated and complementary areas: theoretical courses, practical work and research work (Master thesis).

Theoretical courses

The theoretical modules include courses with formal lectures given on a regular basis during the semester, special seminars carried out in concentrated blocks on a specific theme in which scientific, historical, technical and methodological lectures are alternated with practical exercises.

Practical work

The activities on the worksite have the aim of putting the theoretical and methodological knowledge acquired into practice and to develop a critical approach in dealing with new problems. The students participate in research and conservation on worksites in progress, gradually acquiring the ability to conduct different conservation-restoration operations on their own in a conscious and systematic way.

Study trip

During the optional study trip, the students participate in guided tours of conservation-restoration projects with teachers and experts to learn about, compare and discuss working methods used elsewhere.

Master Thesis

The thesis is the final and most significant period of the training process. Students are encouraged to develop their Master research in topics of particular interest, applying what they have learned in the previous years of study. The Master thesis may focus on a complex conservation-restoration project or it may be aimed at developing a particular problem.

The Master program is conducted in Italian and English. The students may write their exams, reports and Master thesis in Italian, French or English. The bibliography is multilingual and students are encouraged to take advantage of the multilingualism that characterizes the Swiss Conservation-Restoration Campus.

The classes are composed of a limited number of students in order to ensure a high-quality educational approach and to give each student the opportunity to work directly on original objects.

The scientific laboratories and IT services provide an excellent technical infrastructure. Students are assisted by an interdisciplinary and international faculty (conservator-restorers, architects, art historians, chemists and geologists). Some of them are active as researchers in the Institute of Materials and Construction (www.imc.supsi.ch), which is equipped with laboratories and scientific instrumentation.



Educational content

The Master's program at SUPSI is specialized in the conservation of wall paintings, stucco-work and architectural surfaces. Students are taught how to manage and plan the different phases of a project, from the research and analysis of an object and its condition to the choice and implementation of conservation measures and the development of a long-term program.

During the first two semesters, different techniques of intervention are presented from a methodological and practical point of view, from those most widely used to those which are more innovative. Their strengths and weaknesses are discussed in relation to the technical characteristics of the object and its condition. Students are provided with a wealth of basic knowledge but also the ability to critically evaluate each new situation.

At the end of the second semester, each student proposes a topic of study that will become the subject of the thesis.

In the third semester the students work with a SUPSI supervisor on a worksite in Switzerland or abroad, allowing them to address the cognitive and application aspects and to put their knowledge into practice. This important period of training, leading to the Master's thesis, is intended to develop self-learning skills and encourage experimentation with tra-

ditional and new methodologies. Emphasis is placed on teaching the student to document and convey the results of their research, a methodological aspect of the fundamental discipline of managing relationships with clients, institutions, the scientific community and other professionals with whom the conservator-restorer will collaborate.

The fourth semester is almost entirely devoted to the thesis, a work of applied research that is carried out under the direction of a supervisor and the help of the interdisciplinary teaching staff.

Learning Italian

Before the beginning of every autumn semester a two-week intensive Italian course is offered. During the semesters it is possible to take "Italian for Beginners" or "Advanced Italian" courses which both meet once a week in the late afternoon.

Prospects after the Master

At the end of the biennium, the students obtain a Master of Arts degree in Conservation-Restoration. As required by European professional associations (www.ecco.org), this degree enables the graduate to:

- work as a professional conservator-restorer of cultural heritage both in public and private sectors and to be able to manage projects and execute the work independently;
- register for PhD studies.

Structure of the Bachelor and Master

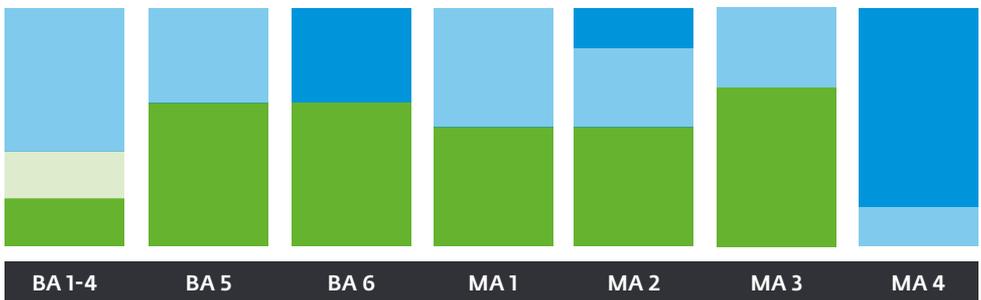
Didactic areas



The modules are divided into four areas of teaching: formal lectures (FL), practical work (PW), internships (INT) and thesis work (TH).

At the end of the Bachelor of Arts in Conservation-Restoration (BA) 180 ECTS credits are obtained. Each semester consists of 10 weeks of teaching (lectures and practical work), 5 weeks of internship and 2 weeks of exams.

At the end of the Master of Arts in Conservation-Restoration (MA) 120 ECTS credits are obtained. Each semester consists of 17 weeks. One of these weeks is dedicated to a "common course", during which students of the Swiss Conservation-Restoration Campus are reunited in one of the four schools to address a subject of shared interest.



Semesters

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