Step-by-Step Guide for Foreign PhD Students:
Navigating Italian Bureaucracy

1 Finding Accommodation

Securing housing is your first priority, and it is mandatory to obtain a registered rental contract. Traditional platforms like Idealista or Immobiliare often yield low success rates for international students. Instead, focus your search on Facebook groups, local social media networks, or by searching "affitti [city name]" online.

2 Codice Fiscale (Tax Code)

While searching for accommodation, ensure your Codice Fiscale is activated. This is a unique alphanumeric code required for all official transactions in Italy, including signing a rental contract. You can ask locals, your university administration, or AI tools for guidance on how to complete this step at the local Agenzia delle Entrate (Revenue Agency).

3 Getting an Italian SIM Card

Having an Italian phone number is practically mandatory for navigating daily life, activating your SPID, and opening a bank account.

- **Providers:** You can choose traditional operators (TIM, Vodafone, WindTre) or low-cost virtual operators (Iliad, Ho. Mobile, Kena Mobile, Very Mobile). Low-cost operators generally offer around 100GB to 150GB of data for under €10 per month.
- **Requirements:** You will typically need your Passport and your official Codice Fiscale document to register a SIM card in your name.

4 Permesso di Soggiorno (Residence Permit) - The "Yellow Kit"

Once you have secured a rented room or apartment with a registered contract, you must apply for your residence permit.

- **Obtaining the Kit:** Go to a "Poste Italiane" (Italian Post) office and ask for the "Permesso di Soggiorno" or "Yellow Kit" (Kit Giallo). Picking up the blank kit is entirely free; do not pay anyone for it.
- **Filling out the Forms:** You must fill out the forms using a black pen only. Any other color may result in rejection. For guidance, search for tutorial videos on YouTube in your native language. Avoid using AI to help fill out the specific fields, as it often provides inaccurate form-specific data.

- **Submitting the Kit:** Return to Poste Italiane to submit the completed kit. Always bring every original document and photocopy with you, especially your registered rental contract (or proof of ownership).
- **Costs and Language:** English proficiency varies heavily by city and neighborhood, so always have a translation app ready. Submitting the kit is not free. You will need cash for the exact fees, which typically total around €116.46 (€16 for the Marca da Bollo stamp, €30 for the mailing fee, and €70.46 for the electronic card issuance).
- **The "Ricevuta":** After payment, the post office will give you a receipt called a Ricevuta. This document is crucial. It contains the time and date of your mandatory fingerprinting appointment at the immigration police station (Questura).
- **Questura Appointment:** Bring all your documents to this appointment, including your university certificate of enrollment, proof of tuition fee payments, and your official invitation letter.
- **Note on Travel:** If you have an urgent need to leave Italy before your actual card is issued, you can request a temporary paper Permesso from the Questura, usually valid for one month.

5 Residenza (Registered Address) and Carta d'Identità (ID Card)

Once you have your physical Permesso di Soggiorno card, you must register your address.

- **Residenza:** Go to the municipality office (Comune) of the area where you live and request your Residenza. Bring all your documents, including your Permesso card. The processing time is typically up to 45 days.
- **Carta d'Identità:** Once your Residenza is officially confirmed, you can apply for your Italian Identity Card at the Comune. This takes between 10 to 30 days to be issued, depending on your region.
- **Using the Ricevuta:** In some regions, the wait time for the Questura appointment can exceed six months. Depending entirely on your local Comune, you may be allowed to apply for both Residenza and the Carta d'Identità using just your postal Ricevuta instead of the physical Permesso card. It is always worth trying.

6 SPID (Sistema Pubblico di Identità Digitale)

After obtaining your Carta d'Identità, your next step is to activate your SPID.

- **What is SPID?** SPID is your official Digital Public Identity. It acts as a universal, secure login credential that allows you to access all online services provided by the Italian Public Administration (such as INPS, the Agenzia delle Entrate, healthcare portals, and university services) with a single username and password.
- **How to get it:** Many private providers offer SPID, but Poste Italiane offers it for free online via their "PosteID" mobile app.
- **Translation Tip:** The PosteID app is currently only available in Italian and employs security measures that prevent you from taking screenshots. To navigate the setup, you will need a second smartphone with a camera translation app (like Google Translate) to read the screen, or you will need to manually type the text into a translator on another device.

7 Opening a Bank Account (Conto Corrente)

To receive your fully funded PhD scholarship and easily pay your rent or utilities, you will need a bank account with a valid IBAN.

- **Initial Digital Accounts:** Upon arriving, you can easily open digital accounts like Wise or Revolut. To do this, you will need your entry visa, Codice Fiscale, and an Italian phone number.
- **Activating Scholarship Funds:** You can provide your Wise or Revolut IBAN directly to your university's doctoral office, along with your INPS code, to activate your funds as soon as possible.
- **Traditional Italian Bank Account:** Later on, after you have obtained your Carta d'Identità (Identity Card), you will be able to open a traditional Italian bank account at physical branches (such as Intesa Sanpaolo or UniCredit), which often offer free accounts for students and young adults.

8 INPS (National Institute of Social Security) Registration

In order to receive your PhD scholarship funds, you must register with INPS (Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale), which is the Italian national social security and pension system.

- **Getting your INPS Code:** Go to your local INPS office and request an INPS code. You will need to fill out a registration form.
- **The 16-Digit Code:** Upon processing, you will be issued a 16-digit code. The last 8 digits will be printed on the physical document given to you at the office, while the first 8 digits will be sent to your phone via SMS.
- **University Doctoral Office:** Keep this 16-digit code secure and provide it to your university's doctoral office (along with your bank IBAN) as soon as possible so your scholarship funds can be disbursed without delay.

9 Tessera Sanitaria (Health Card) via ASL

Regardless of which university you attend, once you are registered with INPS, you are legally eligible to obtain a Tessera Sanitaria (Health Card) from the ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale) office.

Legal Framework for Free Health Coverage

This right to mandatory and free registration in the Italian National Health Service (SSN) for PhD students is supported by the following regulations:

- **Law 210/1998 – art. 4:** "PhD students with a scholarship are subject to social security protection provisions."
- **Ministerial Decree 226/2021 – art. 11:** Doctoral scholarships are paid inclusive of social security contributions.
- **INPS Circular no. 103/2003:** PhD scholarships are subject to contributions to the "Gestione Separata INPS".
- **Legislative Decree 286/1998 – art. 34 and Ministry of Health Circular no. 11/2011:** Foreign citizens legally residing in Italy and enrolled in INPS or subject to social security contributions have the right to mandatory and free registration in the SSN.

Applying at the ASL Office

- **Required Documents:** Go to your local ASL office to request your Tessera Sanitaria. Normally, providing your 16-digit INPS code, your tax document (Codice Fiscale), and your university admission letter is sufficient. However, in some regions, the process is stricter and may require additional documentation (it is advisable to read the INPS manual or check regional requirements).
- **Choosing a Doctor:** During registration, some ASL offices allow you to choose your general practitioner immediately, while others will assign one to you. If you are unsatisfied with your assigned doctor, you have the right to change them after 30 days.
- **Regional Healthcare Apps:** Healthcare management (like viewing your digital health card, prescriptions, or booking appointments) has a dedicated mobile application. Keep in mind that each Italian region uses a different app (for example, the "Campania in Salute" app), so you will need to find and download the specific app for the region where you reside.