

# 450 Years of the University of Olomouc

1573  
—  
2023





Palacký University  
Olomouc



Welcome  
Office



On the cover: view of the historical center of Olomouc from the west. Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2022.

# Introduction

The long history of the University of Olomouc dates back to the 16th century. Today's Palacký University Olomouc is a modern university with more than **23,000 students** and over **800 study programs** at **eight faculties**: the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Law, the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, the Faculty of Physical Culture, and the Faculty of Health Sciences. Palacký University produces more than **4,000 graduates** each year.

The university is exceptional, not only due to its high academic standards, excellent research results, and international cooperation, but also thanks to its location and connection with the **City of Olomouc**. Thanks to the well-preserved Baroque monuments and the buildings in which the university still operates to this day, there is a unique symbiosis of centuries-old tradition and modern scientific and research institutions, creating a very special **genius loci**.

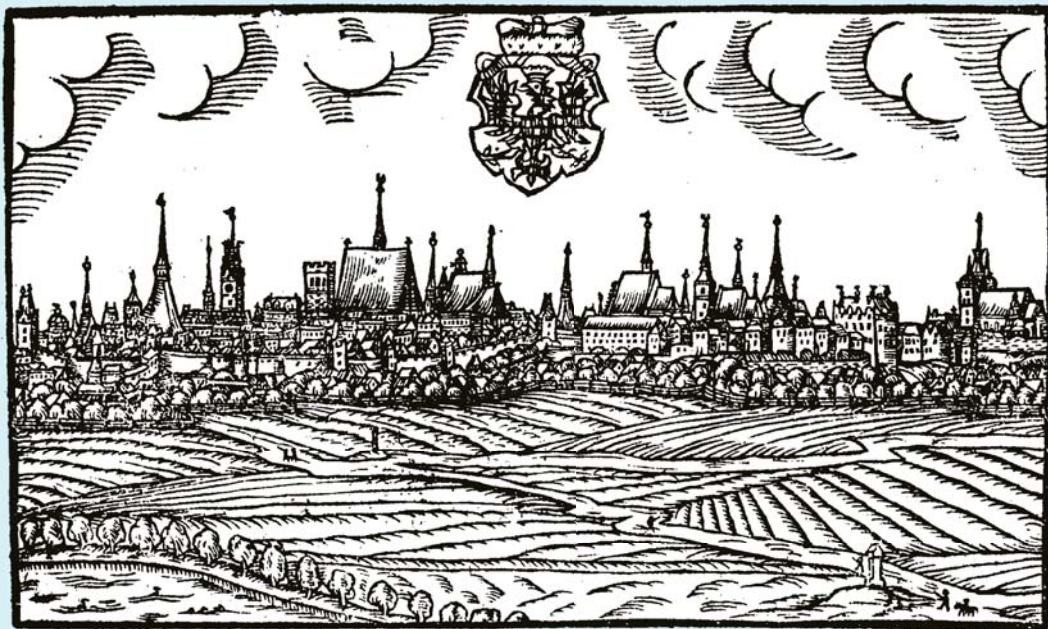
The oldest, late Renaissance mace of the University of Olomouc, 1780s.  
Photo: Markéta Lehečková and Zdeněk Sodoma, 2022.



# The Jesuits and the University of Olomouc: 1573–1773

1566

During Easter 1566, the first members of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit Order) arrived in Olomouc upon the invitation of the local bishop, Vilém Prusinovský of Víckov. With the permission of Pope Pius V, they established a college here and began missionary, preaching, and teaching activities. Thus, a six-class Latin lyceum was established, and later also the convictorium (dormitory) to accommodate scholarship students and aristocratic paying students.



Cityscape of Olomouc in the 16th century. Woodcut by Jan Willenberger, 1593.

1573



English seafarer and privateer Francis Drake reached the Isthmus of Panama, where he spied the Pacific Ocean and also seized a treasure worth 200,000 pesos after ambushing a Spanish mule train.

1573

On 22 December 1573, Emperor Maximilian II granted the Olomouc Jesuit College graduation rights. A full-fledged university was thus established and two faculties – the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Philosophy (later Arts) – were created. Spaniard Hurtado Pérez became its first rector. In 1576, the first student enrollments were recorded in the university registry.



The founding charter granting graduation rights to the Olomouc Jesuit Academy by Emperor Maximilian II on 22 December 1573. Moravian Regional Archives in Brno.

1587

In 1587, Emperor Rudolf II expanded the graduation rights of the Jesuit Academy also to students from other universities, if they underwent comprehensive examinations in Olomouc.

In the same year, the oldest university insignia was made – the rector’s mace. It was commissioned by Bishop Stanislav Pavlovský and crafted in a goldsmith’s workshop in Olomouc. After the closure of the university in the 19th century, it was transferred to the University of Innsbruck (founded in 1669). The University of Innsbruck symbolically donated a faithful replica to the Palacký University in 1998.

1573  
1636



Harvard University, the oldest university in the USA, was founded. In 1641, Czech educator Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) was invited to be Harvard’s president. He declined in favor of an offer from Sweden’s Queen Christina to reorganize the school system there.

1642

The flourishing of the university town was replaced by eight years of decline after 1642, due to the occupation of the Swedish army during the Thirty Years’ War. In October 1643, the Jesuits closed their schools and left town. The functioning of the university was interrupted until after the departure of the Swedish garrison in 1650. Only then could higher education in Olomouc begin to develop anew.



The Jesuit College with the Church of Our Lady of the Snows. Copperplate designed by F.B. Werner, State Regional Archives in Olomouc.

1673



In the area of present-day Iowa, French-Canadian explorers Jacques Marquette (Jesuit missionary) and Louis Jolliet (fur trader and cartographer) documented the Mississippi River basin. The area was named after French monarch Louis XIV and was declared property of France until 1763.

6 Apr.

1712

New York Slave Rebellion. Nine white people died in the clash; the subsequent retaliation executed 21 slaves.



1712

During the peak period of the University of Olomouc, in 1712, the foundations of the Baroque Church of Our Lady of the Snows, which is still associated with the university today, were laid. The church was consecrated in 1716, but works on the building and its interiors were not finished until 1743.

Construction on the New Convictorium, a monumental three-winged building, and to this day one of the landmarks of the historical center of Olomouc, began. The existing Gothic church was replaced by the Corpus Christi Chapel, with rich frescoes and numerous sculptures.



Convictorium entrance, today's Palacký University Arts Center.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2020.



# Gradual Transformation into a Secular University during the 18th and 19th Centuries

1754

On the ceremonial occasion of the consecration of the Holy Trinity Column, Emperor Franz I Stephen of Lorraine and his wife Maria Theresa visited the town and the university. During her rule, many fundamental reforms were initiated in the Habsburg monarchy in the spirit of Enlightenment absolutism, aimed at modernizing the functioning of the state apparatus, education, and the army.

The Holy Trinity Column was built between 1716 and 1754 to celebrate the rebuilding of Olomouc and the restoration of the Catholic Church and faith. In 2000, it was listed as one of the most prominent works of the Central European Baroque and was added to the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2020.



1766

As a result of the Theresian Reforms, the Jesuit Order after two centuries lost all influence over the university when Maria Theresa appointed the first secular rector in 1766. He was neither a theologian nor a superior of the Jesuit College.

1773

Shortly afterwards, in 1773, Pope Clement XIV dissolved the Order of the Society of Jesus as a whole, under pressure from some European monarchs. One of the consequences, among others, was the reorganization of the University of Olomouc, which then came under the direct administration of the state.



The Baroque building of the former Theresian Armory now houses the central library, university press and bookstore, study rooms, and a café. It is situated in the center of the city, close to the Faculty of Arts, and has become one of the natural centers of student life.

Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2022.

Archduchess Maria Theresa of Habsburg, in a portrait by the Austrian painter Martin van Meytens, 1759. Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.



1775  
1783



American  
Revolutionary War.

1778

Due to the long-lasting clashes between the Habsburg Empire and Prussia, Olomouc was gradually transformed into a border fortress, and the number of soldiers in the city increased greatly. The reorganized university, rectory, and dormitory for the aristocracy moved to Brno because of the unsettled conditions, poor functioning of the school, and pressure from the citizens of Brno to have an institution of higher learning in the provincial capital. The buildings of the Jesuit Convictorium passed into the army's hands for more than 200 years.



The buildings of the former Jesuit Convictorium served as a military hospital, artillery barracks, and warehouses from 1778 until the 1990s.  
State Regional Archives Olomouc.

1782

After four years in Brno, the university was moved back to Olomouc, but only as a lyceum with limited graduation rights. Emperor Joseph II decided, as a part of the ongoing state reforms, to keep universities only in Vienna, Prague, and Lviv. The Olomouc lyceum was later expanded to include medical and surgical studies with German as the language of instruction.

The study of medicine continued to develop in Olomouc at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1806, midwifery classes began to be taught in Czech. Later, a department of forensic medicine was established, as well as obstetrics, special therapy, and veterinary medicine.

1789



The Great French Revolution began with the fall of the Bastille.

1827

In 1827, Austrian Emperor Francis I promoted the Olomouc lyceum back to a full-fledged university with three faculties: Philosophy, Law, and Theology. Medical and surgical studies were also retained. During the 1830s, elected deanships were gradually restored at faculties, and in 1834, the first academic senate was established, laying the foundations for modern university self-government.

1848

In 1848, Europe was struck by the wave of revolutions demanding constitutional, national, and social reforms. The Olomouc academic community also took part in these public expressions of dissatisfaction with the existing situation, and its members traveled to Vienna during the rebellion to help their academic colleagues, and some Czech educators later joined the revolutionary Prague Slavic Congress.

In response to another wave of revolutionary riots in Vienna, the Imperial Court moved to Olomouc in October. In December, Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria abdicated the throne in the Olomouc Archbishop's Palace in favor of eighteen-year-old Franz Joseph I.



Barricades in the streets of Vienna in May 1848 on a lithograph by F. Werner. Brown University Library, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection.

1851

The Reuters news agency was founded in London.

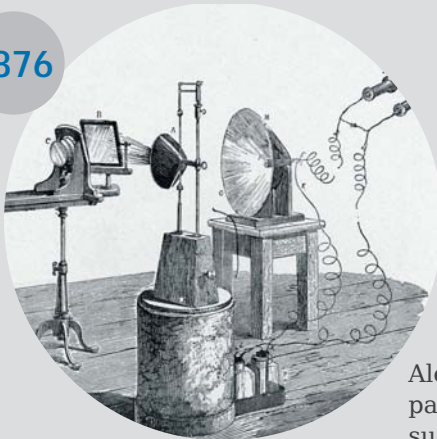


1851

After the victory of conservative forces, the Austrian Empire entered the era known as Neoabsolutism. Because of its participation in the revolutionary events, the University of Olomouc fell out of favor with the Austrian government, which resulted in it gradually being shut down. The Philosophical Faculty was abolished in 1851, followed by the Faculty of Law in 1855, and lastly, Francis University as a whole was closed down by imperial decree in 1860. Graduation rights were left only to the Faculty of Theology, which in the following years ensured the continuity of higher education in Olomouc.

The precious university insignia were transferred to the Moravian Vicegerency in Brno and subsequently to the University of Innsbruck in Austria. The late Renaissance mace of the Theological Faculty is the only original which remained in Olomouc, and is still used during ceremonial events to this day.  
Photo: Markéta Lehečková and Zdeněk Sodoma, 2022.

1876



Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone; he suggested “Ahoy” as a greeting.







# Toward University Reinstatement

1919

Shortly after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 – when relations between the new democratic state and the Vatican were quite tense – the name of the Faculty of Theology was changed to the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Divinity. It is still named after Sts. Cyril and Methodius – the Christian missionaries from Byzantine Thessaloniki, who during their stay in Great Moravia in the 9th century helped to establish Old Slavonic, the oldest Slavic written language, as the language of worship.

28 Jun.

1919



The Treaty of Versailles signed with Germany, bringing World War I to a close. Democratic US President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) on this occasion said: „At last the world knows America as the savior of the world!“

24 Oct.

1929

The New York Stock Market Crash, the beginning of the global economic crisis.



1939

In March 1939, the Czech lands were occupied by Nazi Germany. In reaction to student protests against the occupation in the autumn of 1939, all Czech universities were ordered shut on 17 November, which of course affected the Faculty of Divinity as well.



In addition to the Wehrmacht, members of the Gestapo and SD came to Olomouc and began arresting and brutally interrogating political opponents. The snapshot captures intelligence officers in front of the Olomouc Town Hall, March 1939. Regional Museum in Olomouc.

7 Dec.  
1941



In response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the US entered World War II.

15 Aug.  
1945



VJ Day: the end of the war in the Pacific; the surrender protocol was signed on 2 September 1945, marking the end of World War II.

1945

Shortly after the fall of the Nazi regime and the end of World War II in Europe, teaching at the Faculty of Divinity was resumed and its academic community, together with the representatives of the local intelligentsia, began to work towards the reestablishment of a fully-fledged university.

1946

On 21 February 1946, the Czechoslovak Parliament adopted the law on the restoration of the University of Olomouc under the new name Palacký University, in honor of František Palacký (1798–1876) – an important Czech historian, politician, writer, and organizer of public cultural and academic events. Four faculties were established: the Faculty of Divinity (Theology), the Faculty of Philosophy (Arts), the Faculty of Medicine, and later the Faculty of Education. The initial intention to re-establish the Faculty of Law was not fulfilled until after 1989.



Palacký University still uses the emblem of Palacký University by artist Aljo Beran from 1946, today in a slightly simplified design.  
Photo: Markéta Lehečková and Zdeněk Sodoma, 2022.



The reinstated university was named after Czech historian, politician and writer František Palacký (1798–1876).  
Wikimedia.org.

1947

The very next year, on 21 February 1947, Palacký University was officially reopened and classes began in the spring semester. President Edvard Beneš and representatives of the Czech government attended the ceremony.

New insignia were created according to a design made by the prominent Czech sculptor, jeweler, and teacher Jaroslav Horejc: the Rector's mace, the mace of the Faculty of Medicine, and the mace of the Faculty of Arts.



Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš and his wife Hana Benešová during the ceremonial reception on the occasion of the reinstatement of Palacký University in February 1947. Palacký University Archives.



The design of the Rector's mace by Jaroslav Horejc, 1946, and its final form. Photos: Markéta Lehečková and Zdeněk Sodoma, 2022.

# In the Shadow of Totalitarianism: 1948–1989

1948

The February 1948 coup culminated in the Communist Party seizing all power. Although Palacký University Rector Josef Ludvík Fischer immediately issued a manifesto in which he expressed support for the new regime and pleaded for the preservation of academic freedom, the university was soon after subjected to the supervision of the party apparatus, like all other schools.



The new building of the Theoretical Institutes of the Faculty of Medicine, designed by Jiří Kroha, regarded at that time as a completely unique building complex for teaching medical students, located directly on the University Hospital Olomouc premises. Construction began in 1955 and was completed in 1960. Classes are still held there today. Source: Palacký University Archives.

1953



Crick and Watson discover the structure of DNA. Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin dies, and television broadcasting begins in Czechoslovakia.

1955  
1975



The Vietnam War, one of the key conflicts of the Cold War.

1962



“Three days of peace and music” at the Woodstock music festival held during 15–19 August, with more than 400,000 attendees.

1966

The 1960s brought partial liberalization of public and also academic life to Czechoslovakia. The existing conditions at universities began to loosen up and in 1966, Palacký University elected its highest representatives – the rector and three vice-rectors – by itself for the first time. In the same year, the first Academia Film Olomouc festival was held, later developing into the international festival as we know it today.

1968

During “Prague Spring”, the Olomouc academic community actively participated in the efforts to democratize the communist regime in order to create “socialism with a human face”. In May, the Majáles Student May Celebrations took place, with writer Josef Škvorecký elected King of May. In the autumn, students participated in protest strikes against the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact.



In 1968, Olomouc students elected writer Josef Škvorecký as the King of May. After the August invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops, Škvorecký emigrated to Toronto, Canada, with his wife Zdena Salivarová, where they founded the important exile publishing house '68 Publishers. Palacký University Archives.

1969

After the failure of Prague Spring, the “Normalization” era began. All universities in Czechoslovakia became closely watched and controlled entities, and personnel purges were initiated among students and employees. The goal was to eliminate all those who expressed disagreement with the latest developments.



Students marching in protest along the Faculty of Arts and the Rector's Office buildings during the Velvet Revolution. Palacký University Archives.



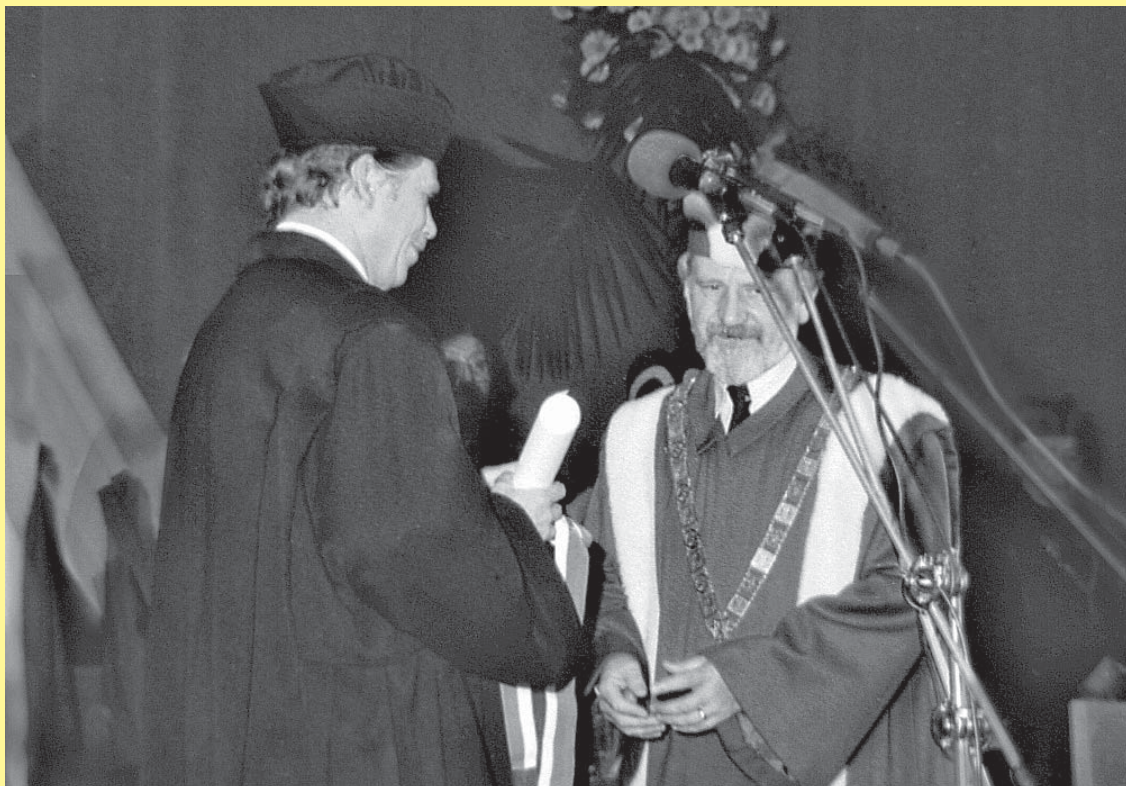
# A New Era: November 1989 – 2022

1989

As a result of ongoing social, economic, and political changes which led to the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc controlled by the Soviet Union and increasing dissatisfaction of a large majority of the population with the situation, the Velvet Revolution took place in Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1989. As in other university cities, students in Olomouc stood at the front of the revolution. The first democratically-elected rector of the university after the revolution was Josef Jařab, who supported the students from the very beginning, and later greatly contributed to the changes at Palacký University which transformed it into a modern university with extensive international connections.



Production of protest banners during the student strike in November 1989. Palacký University Archives.



Palacký University was the first university in Czechoslovakia to award an honorary doctorate to President Václav Havel after November 1989. Palacký University Archives.

1999

Thanks to the departure of the Soviet army from Olomouc, many historical buildings were left vacant – however, in very poor condition. After a costly reconstruction, the university opened an information center and library in the building of the former Theresian Armory in 1999; and in 2002, the UP Arts Center opened in the premises of the former Jesuit Convictorium (dormitory).



Exhibitions, conferences, lectures, design exhibitions, and Academia Film Olomouc take place in the premises of the UP Arts Center.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2020.

2009  
2015

In 2009, a new modern building for the Faculty of Sciences was constructed. Since 2011, Palacký University has established five scientific research facilities: the Centre of the Region Haná for Biotechnological and Agricultural Research (CRH), the Regional Centre of Advanced Technologies and Materials (RCPTM), and the Research and Educational Facility of the Faculty of Education. Additionally, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry opened a newly constructed section of the Theoretical Institutes, as well as the Institute of Molecular and Translational Medicine (UP IMTM).

In 2014, Palacký University was ranked among the top 500 universities in the world for the first time, securing the 488th position in the U.S. News Best Global Universities Ranking. A year later, Fort Science, an interactive science centre aimed at popularising science, opened its doors, attracting over 100,000 visitors annually. The international festival of popular science films, Academia Film Olomouc, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with esteemed guests, including the renowned biologist Richard Dawkins.



„Budova někdejší korunní pevnosti se po rekonstrukci proměnila v interaktivní muzeum vědy – řívnosti poznání, One of the buildings of the former fortress was transformed into an interactive science museum – a “Fortress of Knowledge”. Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2023.

2016  
2018

In 2016, the Faculty of Physical Culture inaugurated the Baluo Application Centre, a unique science centre dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle and preventing diseases of affluence. Two years later, the Faculty of Arts completed the modernisation of two of its buildings. The Faculty of Law underwent its most extensive reconstruction to date. In 2018, Palacký University hosted the first THE (Times Higher Education) summit in Europe titled “Research Excellence: New Europe.” This summit focused on the advancement of exact sciences and research, drawing attendance from 127 scientists and academics spanning 32 countries.



The 2018 Times Higher Education Research Excellence Summit addressed challenges and opportunities, arising from a rapidly changing political and economic landscape.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2018.

2019  
2022

In 2019, Palacký University received a prestigious award from the European Association for International Education in recognition of its outstanding achievements in internationalisation. The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry became the first in the Czech Republic to undergo a rigorous external evaluation and attain accreditation from the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE). Two years later, the Czech Advanced Technology and Research Institute (CATRIN) was inaugurated. It was established by merging research teams from the Centre of the Region Haná for Biotechnological and Agricultural Research, the Regional Centre of Advanced Technologies and Materials, and the Institute of Molecular and Translational Medicine, bringing together esteemed experts in biomedical research, nanotechnologies, new materials, and botanical research. By 2021, CATRIN had solidified its position on the European scientific map, elevating Palacký University’s reputation in the field of science and research. That same year, Palacký University was honoured with the HR Award of the European Commission, recognising quality care for human resources in science and research.

# 2023: Mission, Values, Vision



Courtyard of the newly reconstructed buildings of the Rector's Office on Křížkovského Street.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2023.

Palacký University in Olomouc is celebrating its **450th anniversary** and reflecting on its journey to attain a distinguished position among the international universities of Central Europe and the world. Its contributions to scientific, cultural, and social development have been marked by excellence. The university's consistent ranking among the **top 600 universities** globally can be attributed to its comprehensive scientific and research performance, the volume of cited publications, patents, measurable quality, and the success of its alumni in employment.

In the area of internationalisation, Palacký University stands out due to its robust international ties and collaboration. The significant proportion of international students and academic staff at our university necessitates consistent efforts to foster an

inclusive, globally-friendly environment. This is achieved through an extensive array of international study programmes and international centres.

The newly opened Welcome Office centre plays a crucial role in offering support services to international students and visitors. The **Welcome Office** ensures that every international student and academic feels both welcomed and supported.

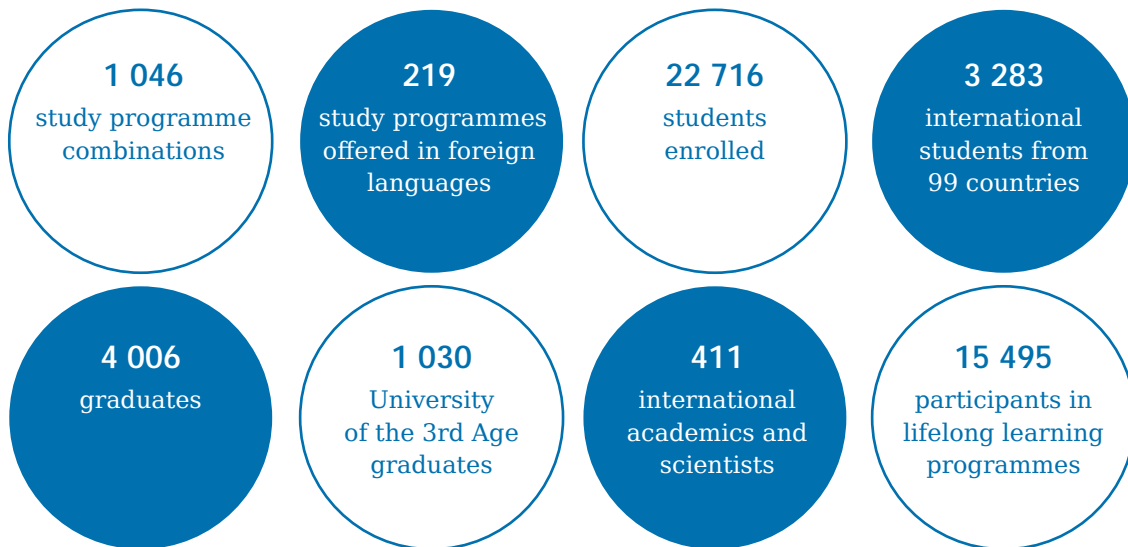
Palacký University is also the holder of the largest long-term project in international credit mobility within the **Erasmus+** programme. Since 2020, the university has proudly been a part of the international consortium **AURORA Alliance**, which further enables it to strengthen its international relations and cooperation.

The University fulfils its third role by promoting the development of student activities beyond the curriculum. This is achieved through initiatives such as the **Career** and **Volunteer Centre**, the **Palacký University Foundation Fund**, and the **Palacký University Student Club**.



Lecturers also prepare activities for the participants of the University of the Third Age.  
Photo: Vojtěch Duda, 2022.

# Palacký University in Numbers



Data from 2022.

## Palacký University international rankings

2022

36<sup>th</sup> rank  
701–800<sup>th</sup> rank

QS Emerging Europe and Central Asia Ranking  
Academic Ranking of World Universities

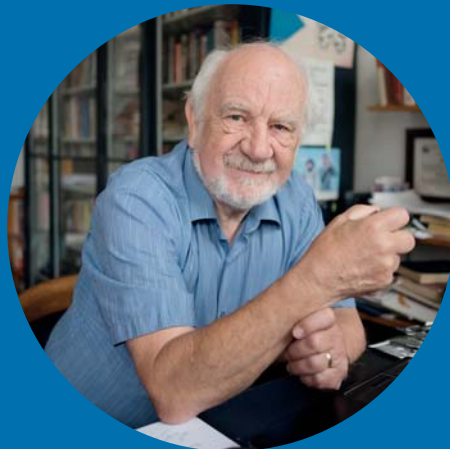
2023

591<sup>st</sup> rank  
605<sup>th</sup> rank  
651–700<sup>th</sup> rank

The Center for World University Rankings  
U.S. News Best Global Universities Ranking  
QS World University Rankings



# Famous Personalities of the University of Olomouc



J. L. Fischer in a photograph by Olomouc artist Aljo Beran, who also created his official portrait in the Rector's Office meeting hall.



## **Josef Ludvík Fischer (1894-1973)**

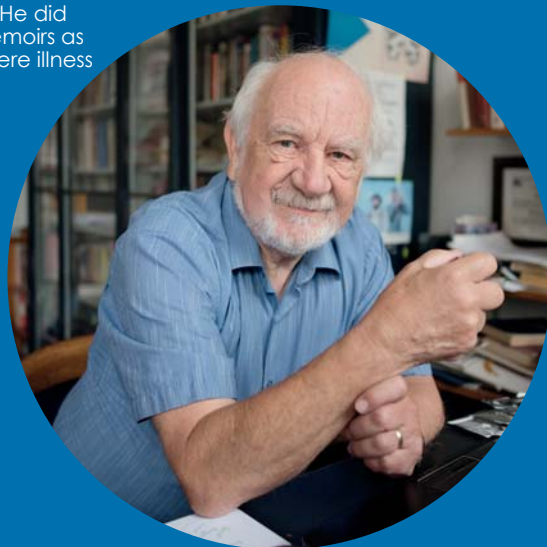
*Philosopher, sociologist, first rector of the reinstated University of Olomouc.*

Josef Ludvík Fischer graduated with degrees in Czech, German, and philosophy from the University of Prague and habilitated at Masaryk University in Brno in philosophy and sociology, where he stayed on as a professor. During the First Czechoslovak Republic, he also actively engaged in the left-wing movement, and after the Nazi Occupation he was in hiding in the Netherlands until the end of the war.

After his return, he actively participated in the re-establishment of the university in Olomouc and served as its rector during its first years. He gradually left political office after the February 1948 coup d'état. He criticized some steps of the government in relation to the universities, was expelled from the Communist Party in 1955, and was forced to retire a few years later. In the 1960s, he began to write and teach again, but only temporarily, until his active participation was again prevented during the Normalization period.

Palacký University organizes annual lectures in honor of Josef Ludvík Fischer – the first took place in 1994, marking the centenary of his birth. Guests are always domestic or foreign experts, e.g.: nuclear engineer Dana Drábová, theologian Tomáš Halík, immunologist Blanka Říhová, and astrophysicist Jiří Grygar.

Josef Jařab was the first post-revolutionary rector of UP. He did not stop working even as an emeritus rector, and his memoirs as rector were published in 2018. He died after a short, severe illness on 3 May 2023.



## Josef Jařab (1937-2023)

*American Studies scholar, literary historian and theoretician, translator, and former senator. In 1990, he became the first freely-elected rector in Czechoslovakia after the revolution and held this position until 1997.*

Josef Jařab was an internationally renowned scholar and translator who consistently focused on the history of American literature; specifically Black literature and its place in the North American cultural context. He was extraordinarily important for Palacký University as a leading figure of the Velvet Revolution in Olomouc. In the fall of 1989, he took the side of the striking students, supporting their demands and actively participating in the ongoing transformations. He accompanied Václav Havel during his trip to the USA in 1990 and later became an important public figure.

He helped, among other things, negotiate the acquisition and reconstruction of several historical buildings, and thanks to his contacts brought many important foreign guests to Olomouc, such as poet Allen Ginsberg, theater director and actor Peter Ustinov, and journalist and columnist Pavel Tigrid. He was invited as a guest professor to many leading foreign universities, including Harvard. He was also twice elected to the Czech Senate as an independent.

In July 2018 Helena Suková was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. [www.sukova.org](http://www.sukova.org).



## **PhDr. Helena Suková (b. 1965)**

*Former Czech professional tennis player and psychologist.*

One of the most successful tennis players in Czechoslovakia, a women's doubles world number one, winner of fourteen Grand Slam titles, and a champion of the Doubles Championships, she secured 10 singles titles and 69 doubles titles on the WTA circuit. In women's doubles, alongside Jana Novotná, she won two silver medals at the Summer Olympic Games in 1988 and 1996. In 2010, she obtained a PhDr. degree after completing her studies in psychology at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts.

Bohdan Pomahač on the occasion of being awarded an honorary doctorate.  
Photo: Pavel Konečný, 2013.



## **Bohdan Pomahač (b. 1971)**

*Czech plastic surgeon, who led the team performing the 1st full face transplant in the US and only the 3rd worldwide.*

Bohdan Pomahač graduated from the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry of the Palacký University and later interned in Boston hospital, where he completed his postgraduate studies and took up a position as a doctor. In 2017, he was appointed Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. He is currently the head of the Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery department at Yale School of Medicine. In 2013, Palacký University awarded him an honorary doctorate.

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