Omkar M Khandpekar:

As a first year student for a master's degree course in quantitative and computational biology during the academic year 2020-21, my academic experience at the University of Trento has been very positive due to the ease of access to course material online, the interactive nature of online classes and the convenient support services.

Additional supplementary activities are also organized for international students to enable them to feel comfortable and gain a sense of familiarity and belonging to the university environment via virtual means that don't feel any less real and warm. In particular, the 'Thank God it's Friday!' aperitif sessions have served as efficient ice breakers by holding interactive sessions each weekend that are both recreational and informative. Each session is based on a presentation and discussion related to cultural topics wherein the hosts share details of Italian culture and encourage participants to share their own. This format enables insightful and entertaining discussions and a sense of boding with one's peers, and is therefore something I look forward to every weekend.

These supplementary activities greatly enrich the overall academic experience by adding a cultural element to it, which is a simple yet effective way to help students ease into the university environment. I would therefore like to thank the University of Trento and the hosts from the international relations department for their efforts to provide such a holistic experience despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Muhammad Usama Saeed:

My first informal interaction with an Italian person was with Mattia in the aperitifs arranged by Unitn for international students. It was my first experience in a multicultural environment and I loved the idea of exchanging ideas, cultural values, foods, festivals, views on different topics and the ability to express myself in any way I wanted. One of the peculiar features is the flexibility of the aperitifs sessions. We can decide our topic ourselves and the conversations are free flowing. I'm certain that these sessions would really help me with the cultural shock once I move to Trento and help me with polishing my social skills.