

Virtual Exchange Semester at



**Università Commerciale
Luigi Bocconi**

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Melina Ehram

Master in Accounting and Finance (MaccFin)

General Information

Due to the Covid-19 Situation, the planned exchange semester in Milan unfortunately had to be cancelled. Bocconi University, however, responded to this situation by offering a virtual exchange semester. This meant that we were able to participate in the courses and all other academic offerings of the University on a virtual basis from home. At the beginning we were provided with very little information, especially in regard to which courses will be available for us to participate and how the courses will be organized. During the semester, however, the organization was very well done, and the International Student Desk offered a lot of activities to still get a little taste of Milan.

Academics

I took a total of four courses from Bocconi and additionally did one at the HSG, which was very convenient due to the online setting. The International Student Desk from Bocconi has provided us with a list of courses which were possible to be chosen as an exchange student. This was very helpful in order to choose courses and also to get a feeling where the courses can possibly be accredited. Most of the courses are 6 ECTS or more. However, it is important to check in advance whether your degree has any restrictions with accreditation (e.g. in the MaccFin Core Electives a max of 4ECTS per course can be accredited even if a course is worth 6 ECTS at Bocconi).

Because of Covid-19, the courses were organized a bit different from other years. In the first half of the semester, the classes were thought on a hybrid basis. Half of the class was in the classroom and half of the class at home, alternating every week. After the break, as the corona situation got more serious, the courses moved to being online for everyone. For me, as an exchange student, it was fully online from the beginning. All courses were recorded and made available afterwards. In some course descriptions it was mentioned that there's a grade for in-class contribution. This, however, did not count for the online Semester. Therefore, it was also possible to choose courses that collapsed timewise. Except for some minor technical issues at the beginning, it all worked very smoothly, and the professors were very cooperative and made the best out of the situation.

I took the following courses:

Mergers and Acquisition (6ECTS in Immersion or 4ECTS in Core Electives)

The course is taught by Prof. Antonio Salvi, who is a very entertaining professor. There are a few theoretical lectures held by him about basic valuation techniques. Mostly, however, the course consists of case studies which are presented by guests from the industry. Prof. Salvi enjoys the interaction with students and also did quite an effort to keep that up in the virtual setting, which was very refreshing. The exam, which for us counted 100% of the final grade, was in multiple choice format and held online. It was not very difficult but graded quite strictly. Overall, I can recommend the course as the case studies were interesting and helped to deepen my theoretical finance knowledge.

Psychology, Economic Analysis and Behavioral Finance (6ECTS Independent Electives or 4ECTS in Core Electives)

The course was a combination of theoretical aspects and interpretation of data and articles in the field of behavioral economics and finance. We have looked at several studies analyzing field data on consumer/market behavior, which are highly influential for policy making, marketing etc. Sometimes, the models presented in class were quite complex, so a good microeconomic understanding is definitely a plus. The number of slides and topics looked at in the course is quite voluminous and often the slide set could not be finished during the lecture and had to be reviewed individually. Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the course as it was extremely interesting, and the professor has a huge knowledge in the field. The final exam was a MC exam, which was tricky but fair.

Healthcare Management and Policy (6ECTS Independent Electives)

This was my favorite course! In this course we first discussed Healthcare Systems of different countries. The second part of the course was dedicated to Innovation in Healthcare and the third part was about different managerial and organizational models of Hospitals and Healthcare Institutions. It was very interesting, and we discussed many up-to-date issues. There was the possibility to prepare a group presentation that counted 60% to the final grade together with a final exam counting 40%. The other option was to have a

longer final exam which counted 100%. As it was difficult to meet people due to the online setting, I chose the option with the final exam counting 100%. The exam consisted of four open, essay-style questions.

Data Analysis (6ECTS, Contextual Studies – Skills)

I really enjoyed this course as it was a good balance between looking at theoretical statistical concepts and performing hands-on data analysis exercises in R Studio. The professor is extremely dedicated, supportive and able to explain the statistical concepts in a very understandable manner. The course was divided into two parts, whereas the second part was about mathematical finance (CAPM, option pricing etc.). This part was shorter than the first part and had not much to do with data analysis, which made it a bit redundant, in my opinion. The final exam consisted of two parts. One part was about statistics and mathematical finance and in the second part we had to analyze and interpret data using R Studio. Overall, I highly recommend the course, especially if you are keen on learning how to work with R.

Conclusion

Overall, it was an interesting experience to be part of a virtual exchange semester. Bocconi has organized everything well and they made the best out of this extraordinary situation. Would I recommend taking part in the virtual exchange semester? It depends a bit. To me, it was a pleasant alternative given the current situation with Covid-19 and especially because in-person tuition was probably reduced at most of the Universities. A big plus was it for me, that the courses I attended were very interesting and innovative, which was also a reason why I chose Bocconi as an exchange destination in the first place. Nonetheless, if besides the virtual exchange semester, there was the option to take courses in person – in Milan or in St. Gallen – I would go for this option. That is because to me a big part of an exchange and generally about University is about meeting people and enjoying other social aspects, which definitely fall by the wayside in a virtual setting.