

Basic Information

I have attended Bocconi University in Milan during the spring semester, from the beginning of February 2019 to the end of June 2019, as a finance student.

Host university information

Host University

The university is situated in the south of the city, between Porta Ticinese and Porta Romana, with around 15'000-20'000 students. All over Italy, it is considered an elite university. The study infrastructure, offered to students, is quite good. The library has computer rooms, where the common research tools are available. Space for learning is provided in the library, in the "bunker" as well as in the "punto studio", located in the "Leoni" building. However, if you want to study on campus, you have to consider that not all the learning spaces are quiet. In the bunker and at tables in the two main lecture buildings, it is common to talk loudly and work on group projects. The library and the punto studio are usually more silent. Another possibility is coworking spaces close to university (we went to tenoha, close to Porta Genova). Around the university, there are a handful cheap and tasty places to eat. I would not recommend buying a meal plan for the cantina. Just next to Bocconi, there is the café Gatullo, which serves one of Milan's best coffees.

Academics

During my exchange, I have attended three courses. In my core study field, I completed Investment Banking. This was one of the best and most practical courses I have ever taken. Professor Gatti is one of Bocconi's most famous teachers and has won two of Bocconi's teaching awards, each over a dozen times in a row (before voluntarily renouncing it). The second Investment Banking professor is Massimo Della Ragione, Goldman Sachs Italy's country head. The second course I attended was Business History. It is essentially a course about history of entrepreneurship. Andrea Colli, who teaches the course, is the head of social science studies at Bocconi and a very dedicated teacher. He develops smaller digital case studies to foster interactive and more sustainable digital learning. I can recommend this course to anyone who still needs/wants to do context courses in his/her exchange semester. The third course I completed was Cultural Mediation. It is a social sciences course that focuses on the sociological aspect of mediation/transformation/communication. The foundation of the course are concepts from major sociologists. Thus, the course is connected with a large reading effort. The content of the course as such is interesting but the different teachers' foci are not very aligned and overall, the organization is a little messy. The last couple of lectures held by Francesca Recchia are by far the most interesting in this course and these lectures are very nice to attend.

Practical Information

Exams

It is very important to know, that you have several chances to do an exam. Therefore, always inform yourself about the exam type the respective course offers. There are usually at least

two exam dates. If this is the case, you will be able to attend the first exam (usually in May) and withdraw from it until around ten minutes before the exam ends and then, attend the second exam (usually in June) that will count 100%. If your course has a midterm, you can take the midterm and after you received your grade, you can still chose whether you do a second midterm exam, where the overall grade will be the average of your two midterms or a full semester exam that counts 100%. If you have a midterm, you can still attend the semester-end exam twice and withdraw from the first, if it does not go well: In other words, you have full flexibility.

Visa Procedure

As a Swiss or EU citizen you will not need a visa for your stay in Italy. Bocconi's International Student Desk will send you a link where you can check whether you need a visa or any permission to stay. While staying in Italy you might have to get a "codice fiscale" that you might need for certain purchases (e.g. rent or the permanent train ticket).

Living Arrangements

I lived in a shared flat with two other men (one student and one intern at EY). Flats can be found over the common social media channels like Facebook or via housing agencies. I would personally advice every exchange from St. Gallen to share flats together with fellow exchange students or look for a one/two-room apartment, as all my fellow Bocconi exchange students, sharing flats with people from other European countries had different expectations regarding living/tidiness than their flat mates.

Host Country

Living in Italy is not very different than living in Switzerland. Milan is a very modern city. The public transport is usually reliable (sometimes they have strikes). Payment systems are modern (EC and credit cards are almost everywhere accepted). The buildings are usually in a pretty good state, as they have to fulfill certain Italian/EU standards (e.g. pipes that supply gas cookers have to be maintained once a year). Overall, the city is very secure and there are only a few parks that you should not visit during night (ask the local people). Sometimes procedures are generally a little bureaucratic and take a lot of time (if you have to deal with local authorities, plan with enough time buffers). Most of the young people in Milan speak English some older people speak only Italian. I would therefore recommend you taking the Italian crash course as well as the follow up course (ISD will inform you about this before your exchange semester starts).

Practical Things to know

There are only a few practical things to know. Metro/bus/tram tickets can be bought in tobacco shops as well as in metro stations. For your stay, I would generally recommend buying the ATM card. This will give you unlimited access metro trains, buses and trams for up to four months. For four months, you will pay around EUR 90.-. You can buy the ATM card at the ATM point (which is a ticket shop that has branches at Milano Centrale and Duomo station). Any question with regard to your enrolment as exchange student can usually be answered by the International Student Desk. They usually reply very quickly and you can call them in urgent cases.

Social Life

At Bocconi, the local students are very competitive, which makes it relatively difficult to connect with them. Most of the time in Milan, I spent with my fellow exchange students from St. Gallen, the CEMS students from St. Gallen and internationals. In the free time, I would recommend visiting the several tourist attractions all over Milan and visit as many restaurants as possible. Eating in restaurants is much cheaper than in Switzerland and the quality is usually superior. Tourist traps are very rare. Still, I would recommend doing a so called "Aperitivo" only in selected places. With regards to the nightlife in Milan, I can definitely recommend trying out several bars in Navigli and Brera but also all around the city. The club scene, I experienced as being very basic and not so much fun. Student parties and events organized by ISD are often high school-like parties. If you have any questions regarding restaurants, gelaterias, cafés etc. feel free to contact me.

Overall Evaluation

Attending Bocconi University is not joining a very different cultural field. After all, it is still Europe and you cannot expect to have a cultural shock like you would have in other destinations. Bocconi is the right choice for students who like Italy, its lifestyle, good food and drinks and want to study at a well-recognized European business school. Personally, I enjoyed the good academic quality and the central location of the campus. I can recommend an exchange at Bocconi university to everyone and would definitely do it again.