**Personal information**

Name: Diana  
Major: AEM  
Name of host university: Bocconi University  
Period/Time of Exchange: Fall 2016  
Address of blog if you had one: N/A

**Practical Advice**

**Visa** (did you need one, how did you apply, how long did it take to get the visa)

I applied for an appointment for my long-term (>90 day) student visa online for the New York City Italian Consulate office. I definitely recommend having all of your documents in order and organized before going. I was missing a second copy of a form, and the woman I spoke with told me to go to a nearby FedEx and have another copy within one hour. If you are missing something, you have to come back (queue up again), or make another appointment. So be prepared! The visa was mailed to my house within one week.

**Housing** (Did your host university arrange housing? If not, how did you find it? How much did you pay for housing?)

Bocconi provides housing, which was great. However, I learned that they charge international students twice the amount of normal students. I kind of regret not finding my own apartment, but it is easier to go through their system. Housing was 602 EUR per month. I lived in Residenza Arcobaleno, which was a 25 minute tram ride from Bocconi’s campus. One downfall of the dorm is that Arcobaleno did not have wi-fi. You just need to remember a USB-Ethernet adaptor (they provide Ethernet cables, though). This was a pleasant surprise, and the local electronic stores were out of USB-Ethernet adaptors at the time (I remember visiting several), so I ordered one via Amazon Italy. The dorm is a converted hotel, so the rooms contain a small kitchen (no stovetop though), an outdoor patio, private bathroom, and are shared between two people. Each floor has a kitchen where you can cook. The biggest perk about living in Arco was the weekly maid service, which included a linen change and cleaning service.

**Arrival** (Immigration, was there an Orientation program, Buddy program?)

Upon arrival into Italy, I was not really questioned at immigration. There was an orientation program a couple days after arriving where we got information about Bocconi, and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which hosts travel trips and international student events.

**Academics**

**The University** (Campus, International Office, Facilities, Social activities)

After coming to Bocconi, I definitely found a new appreciation for Cornell’s facilities. Bocconi’s campus is much smaller than Cornell’s, and there are two main buildings where classes are held. Bocconi also has fewer cafeterias, but the food is very reasonably priced and cheaper than off-campus. For less than 2 EUR, you can get a warm chocolate croissant and cappuccino. Paninis and first courses (pastas) usually ranged from 3-4 EUR. Vending machine snacks and drinks were also surprisingly cheap, with water at 20 cents per bottle. There was only one computer lab, however, which had odd hours (closed on weekends, except for Saturday morning) and decade-old hardware.

Around campus, you will see a lot of students smoking, which was something I had to get used to. There is one library, and another study area right next to the library called the “bunker.” It was surprising how much students studied here, as it seemed to be perpetually full. This was really motivating though, and I rarely saw students browse through social media or do anything aside from diligently take notes and read in the library.

I found the international office to be very helpful at answering emails and accommodating international students. They also posted updates about school holidays and such on the Exchange Students Facebook page, as well as updates on public transportation strikes.

**Courses** (How did you enroll in classes, could you pre-enroll? What classes did you enroll in? Did you like them? How were the classes graded (exams, presentations, assignments)?)

I enrolled in classes around two weeks after coming to Bocconi. Students are not allowed to pre-enroll, but the
process was not as hectic as it is at Cornell. I enrolled in five courses, as per Cornell's requirement, and I took the two-week crash course in Italian.

I took the following classes: Management of Financial Institutions, Global Sustainability and Strategy, Alternative Investments, International Banking, and Management of Fashion Companies. Milan is the fashion capital of Europe, so taking a fashion management class was something I found unique. I took courses that were more focused on Financial Services (Banking, Insurance, REITS, Hedge Funds and Mutual Funds, etc.), which I found useful and interesting.

Most of the courses either had a midterm and final, or one group project and final. For the most part, the courses had 50-100 people, and were mainly self-taught. Most professors are pretty receptive at answering emails and helping out students, but some didn't provide guidance when it came to exam prep. You might struggle to understand their English, but you will get used to it!

There are definitely fewer assignments and work in general than at Cornell, but that brings more pressure to do well on the exams. For two of my courses, the grading structure was such that if you got an answer correct (+0.8 pt), left blank (0 pt), wrong (-0.1 pt), which was different. Similar to other European universities, school rooms and times change weekly at Bocconi, which means you should check your student diary (online at you@B.unibocconi.it) weekly. You also have to register for your exams in order to take them, and final exams might even overlap. Overall, the schooling system is less hands-on, which gave me more freedom, which I enjoyed.

**Difference between studying at Cornell and at your host university** (how were the courses organized, how was the level, how approachable were the lecturers)

The courses were quite different. The class sizes were larger (might have just been due to the courses I chose). There were significantly fewer assignments, and most of the learning was self-taught. The professors for some courses do not mention the format of the exam during class at all, so students need to take initiative and ask. They also don’t hold extra office hours (which require appointments) or review sessions, which is something I took for granted at Cornell. You can also take classes non-attending, which means you do all of the reading assignments and take the final, which is your grade in the class. I wouldn’t recommend this though, since there’s usually more reading, and you will inevitably find yourself cramming ~100-200 pages of research papers / readings.

**Life Abroad**

**Language** (Was a pre-course offered at the university? Did you need the foreign language to manage your daily life or could you communicate in English?)

There is an Italian crash course offered at the university. I don’t think it helped me that much, since my Italian is still very, very rough. A lot of people in Italy actually don’t understand English; employees at the cafeteria also only speak Italian, which made ordering food a bit difficult. Google translate was a savior!

**Health and Safety** (What advice do you have for future students regarding their health and safety? What resources were available for you?)

I felt very safe in Milan. The city is quiet, and the dorm I lived in was in a suburban neighborhood. Milan is also a pretty quiet city, and I never felt like I was in danger.

**Overall exchange experience** (anything you would like future exchange students to know about your study abroad semester)

I definitely recommend studying abroad to any students who are even the slightest bit interested. I decided to go abroad towards the end of my time at Cornell (fall of junior year), and I’m so glad I did! One of the best parts was the cheap and plentiful prosciutto, cheese, and wines (you can find a wide selection around 5 EUR or less). Milan is around one hour away from the Franciacorta wine region, which is known for sparkling wines. There are also tons of wine regions around Italy, and I loved visiting the vineyards in Tuscany and Franciacorta.

Travel as much as you can, and it’s such a great opportunity to see as much of Europe while you are here. Train tickets and budget airlines make travel super easy and affordable. There are also quite a few national holidays when Bocconi is closed, and time during mid-terms where you can go on longer trips.

During my time here, I visited: Venice, Naples, Amalfi Coast, Capri, Florence, Pisa, Siena, San Gimignano, Lucca, Montepulciano, Montecatini, Germany (Munich, Bremen, Berlin), France (Paris), England (London), Croatia (Zagreb), Hungary (Budapest), Czech Republic (Prague), Switzerland (Geneva), Spain (Barcelona), and Greece (Athens, Santorini). One reason why I chose Bocconi was its close proximity to the rest of Europe, which made travel easier.

I recommend you unlock your phone or get T-Mobile. I use T-Mobile, and I was able to actually continue with my unlimited LTE data plan, for no additional charge. This was super convenient and saved quite a bit of time / money. If you have an unlocked phone with another carrier, you will need to buy a local SIM card at Vodafone, Wind, or TIM.
Additional Tips for future students

**Packing** (What did you not bring that you wish you had? What items do you recommend not bringing?)

In the Fall, it doesn’t get super cold, so I would not recommend bringing too much heavy winter gear. I had a wool peacoat and a light down jacket, which was enough. It also didn’t snow at all while I was there. The coolest it got were the mid-high thirties in December. Do bring an umbrella, as it rains a lot here. I definitely do not recommend bringing any pots or pans, since the stovetops require special induction cookware that generate heat via magnets. I would, however, recommend bringing a USB-Ethernet adapter (if you get Arcobaleno), and multiple adaptors.

**Anything else that students should be aware when studying at your host location**

Be careful of your belongings! Do not stay at hostels that don’t have locks – I had my laptop stolen out of my backpack while traveling in Athens. Do not ship anything to your address from outside of Italy! Italian customs charges a huge tax. If you do order anything online, make sure it is from within Italy (for example, go to Amazon Italy rather than Amazon). Always carry coins and cash, for bathrooms and places that only use cash (a lot of Europe).