Personal information

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Name of host university: Università Bocconi  
Period/Time of Exchange: Spring, 2017

Practical Advice

Visa: I applied to the one in Miami, Florida. Make sure you have copies of all the necessary files as well as a return flight booked. I applied and received a multi-entry National D Visa; you can apply for a Schengen one but it is unnecessary for Italy. I made my appointment around 3 weeks before my departure date although I recommend earlier if you are worried. If you apply late you can line up outside before the consulate opens and see if anyone doesn’t show up to their appointment so that you can take their spot.

Housing: I lived in the “study abroad” school dormitory called Residenza Arcobaleno which was done through the university. You have the option to pay a lump sum or in monthly installments which amounted to around ~2200 euros. The dorm, while far away (30 minutes to Bocconi), was a great choice and really helped bring other exchange students together. While I had friends who lived Off-Campus, I found it nice to have a common living space that housed most of my friends. Besides the commute, it’s a standard dorm although it was formerly a hotel. Beds are a Twin XL and are cleaned weekly which is a nice touch. Although the dorm has finally switched over to WiFi, it’s extremely spotty and oftentimes I found myself going to a coffee shop or Bocconi to do work instead. There are no RA’s on any of the 5 floors and there is a small ‘gym’ in and laundry room. The gym is not much but there aren’t many other options available and laundry costs 3 euros for a full wash and dry load.

Arrival: I had no issues upon my arrival and was lucky enough to immediately recognize other study abroad students at the airport. If you are coming from an international hub there’s a good chance that someone else on that flight will be a study abroad student that you can split a cab with. Since traditional Uber doesn’t exist (only expensive black cars) I took a traditional cab which only cost around 25 euros to get to my dorm from the city center. From the airport can take a cheap 8 euro shuttle that will drop you off near Milano Centrale.

Academics

Courses: CALS Exchange requires us to enroll in 5 courses (the maximum allowed by Bocconi). The classes are actually quite difficult and require you to spend time going over the material. Lectures are long, around 90 minutes each, with no section/discussion periods so oftentimes it was up to us to self-learn material. Pre-Enroll was easy enough especially as everything is consolidated on the MyBocconi website. Classes also make use of Blackboard similar to Cornell so students should find it easy to navigate. Classes are graded out of 30 points with most classes basing their grade 100% from the final.

In order of easiest to hardest, I took Climate Change Economics, Accounting, Business Valuation, Risk Management Derivatives, and Financial Economics.

Students at Bocconi tend to study quite hard, at times I felt worried due to my constant travel about studying but a lot of the material can be self-taught. One thing I would also keep in mind is that there is only one library on campus and study spots are filled extremely quickly. Students will literally line up before the library opens and rush to secure their spot. The library is also not open 24/7 and if you plan on coming to study on Sundays know that the library is closed.

Difference between studying at Cornell and at your host university

Courses are very structured with the syllabus going into detail about what is covered in class everyday. Some courses give you the option to take the class attending or non-attending but Cornell requires you to take it attending. None of my classes took attendance but this is not true for every class, some utilize a similar iClicker
system for attendance while others rely on participation points to ensure attendance. The material itself was quite similar to what you would see at Cornell. Minus some expected differences, such as currency or the number format (periods instead of commas) I found it relatively easy to navigate. I noticed that students often would not speak up much in class and that participation not a graded factor at all in any of my classes which was a surprise coming from Cornell.

**Life Abroad**

**Language:** The two week language course offered by Bocconi was a great way to get immersed with the language and meet new friends almost immediately. The class was very easy but quite time consuming and took up almost 4-8 hours each day in class. Most of the time in Milan you can get by with English and if you can learn how to order in Italian you’ll be fine. I would recommend learning how to order things in a restaurant, how to say please and thank you, and also how to ask for directions before you arrive!

**Health and Safety:** This was not an area of concern for me at all although I prepared myself quite extensively prior to going abroad. The money belt I purchased ended up going unused and I never experienced any pick pockets or thieves. Though drunks may be noisy and a nuisance while taking the late night trains and busses I never felt unsafe. The situations to watch out the most are at the club where it’s easy to have your jacket or phone stolen and near the touristy areas such as the Duomo. Look out for scammers and hustlers who will try to tie bracelets around your wrist and charge you money. Other scams I saw were people hanging out near the ATM (subway) machines asking for spare change and people putting bird seed in your hand and charging you money. Health wise, I never visited a doctor while abroad but there was a local pharmacy near my dorm in case you might need supplies. The local grocery store, Esselunga, has all the basic first aid supplies you might need and even sells items such as syringes in case you are diabetic.

**Additional Tips for future students**

**Packing**
I would recommend bringing:
- 2 Travel Wall Adapters
- Bluetooth speakers
- Laundry pods (if you can fit it)
- Power strip
- Utensils
- Comfort foods (Siracha/BBQ sauce/chips)
- Duffel bag or small carry-on for travel

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

Milan is famous for its fashion sense so make sure to do some shopping while around the area! The biggest areas to check out are Sempione Park (great place to picnic/watch the sunset), Brera (the art district), and the Duomo although beware the scammers. For gelato places, I recommend Chocolat or Giusto although you can check TripAdvisor to make your own informed decision. For travel outside of Italy you will often find yourself flying out of Bergamo (5 euro train ride about 45 minutes away), Malpensa (MXP) or Linate (LIN). Linate is probably the most convenient and cheapest way to travel but is typically the most expensive. One last thing worth mentioning is phone service, I found that Vodafone was the most wide-spread and convenient option and spent around 10 euros/month for service within Italy.