

MSC Outgoing Exchange Student Feedback



The University of Manchester
Alliance Manchester Business School

Academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18

Level: Postgraduate

Host Institution: Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, Milano

Induction/Orientation Programme

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

It lasted for a week with diverse activities and a very present and dynamic Erasmus Student society. They organized a lot of events and trips and did that for the whole semester. The university guided us perfectly through the steps and have been present for any questions.

There was one general orientation meeting for all Exchange students which provided general information. They ran a series of activities in the first two weeks and people were available to help you/give student tours etc. There was also an Exchange drinks a few weeks into the term.

Academic Experience

Do you have any advice regarding selecting and enrolling on modules?

The positive thing is that everything is well explained over there and that we have reminder for deadlines. Enrolling in modules is not exactly only up to the student's interests as we had to choose classes that were close to the Manchester program. At Bocconi, we had a week to try everything, read the syllabus and change our mind.

Plan ahead in what you wish to study and be sure to be on time to enrol on the modules via the Bocconi platform. It is extremely competitive to get the places you want so ensure you have back up options.

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support. How does academic life at the host university compare with/differ from Alliance MBS?

- *At Bocconi, the speed and intensity are something else. Being so highly ranked, the competition among students is also very high. MBS still seems to think that Bocconi is easier as the conversion grade is very different and quite unfair. I would recommend to students who really need amazing grades to think twice about applying to Bocconi because even though having it on the CV is amazing, the grades won't go further 85% in MBS for a 30 laude.*
- *The teachers, or most of them are truly passionate about their field, highly skilled and it is a pleasure to see and learn from them. Also, every professor has office hours and encourage students to come visit them for any questions, any review of a piece of work.... They are always available physically but less by email. Bocconi however doesn't have amazing infrastructure like the Learning Commons. The library is quite small and not adapted to every kind of learning methods but I've been told it is also cultural.*

- *-There are a lot of differences between Bocconi and AMBS which I have attempted to outline below.*

- *-The style of teaching is incredible, the professors are experts in their field at the top of their game and challenge and engage your ability in a great way! All my teachers spoke extremely fluent English so there were no problems there.*
- *-Do not expect to be spoon fed and you are only able to meet with profs. During their office hour. It will not be a case of emailing them casually like you would in England if you needed help.*
- *-You can pick to attend courses as attending or non attending. Attending means you go to classes and lectures, may have coursework and an exam which will count as a smaller % of your course grade. Non attending is a 100% exam and you will have to learn from a book/reading provided (volume of content varies for each course).*
- *Coursework and group works can be really fun and lots of amazing consulting projects for great companies through which you can make connections.*
- *Courses and materials are really easy to access via Blackboard and library sources. If you need to buy books you can get them from the University book store.*
- *Methods of assessment are ambiguous. Instructions for coursework can be limited and you are expected to use your initiative. Additionally exams are very different. You may not know the length/content/structure of your exam until the very last moment i.e in the exam hall. It is also worth noting that there is no access to past papers. If it is a good professor they may help you with a mock exam. This can prove extremely challenging when revising so I would suggest working throughout the term in order to mitigate these risks.*
- *It is also worth noting that the grading system is curved, thus you are measured against other students from Bocconi who work to an extremely high standard. Therefore you need to be prepared to give it your all! At times this can create high levels of competition in classes but as you are an exchange student, Italian students may care a little less but be warned!*
- *You can sit exams in the first round and if you're not happy with your grade you can sit them in the second. I would say that the first round of exams is always a little easier so try and fit as many as possible into the first session! You can also go to the paper show for your exams if you want to see what you did well/what didn't go as well.*

Is there any other advice you would give future students to help them to prepare for study at the same institution?

The learning opportunities at Bocconi are truly incredible and the courses offer a great selection you wouldn't get back in Manchester. Be prepared to work hard, keep on top of your work during term time and it will definitely help you at the end of the semester. I would advise against taking 5 courses with 5 group works for your time management and to maintain levels of sanity!

Language Preparation (ignore if not applicable)

What was your language level before beginning your placement? Did you do any extra language preparation before leaving the UK?

All my classes were in English but I truly wanted to learn the language. I had few classes before (group lessons for 2 months & private lessons for 3 months before starting the master's degree). I left with an A2 level and came back with a B2. I took all the language classes offered by the Bocconi and had the best Italian teacher ever.

You don't need to learn any Italian prior to arriving as all classes are taught in English. For outside of University life you will pick it up easily.

Did your host university offer language classes during the semester? Have you found these useful?

Yes, one crash course (30 hours before starting lessons, super intensive) and follow up (30 hours during the semester). Amazing teacher and amazing atmosphere.

For a fee, you can take a two week crash course before term starts if you wish to learn basic Italian. There is also an exam at the end. I didn't take part in this but lots of my friends did and it was a great way to meet people.

Host International Office

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students.

They have been very helpful and always available.

The international office were great, fast at communication and are always available to help you. If you have any emergencies or issues you can go and visit them on campus.

Insurance and/or Health Cover

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance i.e. costs etc.

Not applicable as I am European.

I purchased health insurance with my bank.

Information on any addition costs

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

We bought books because it was not possible to take them from the library like in Manchester. Thanks to our student card, we could have a very cheap transport abonnement and our accommodation was a private one, very Italian. Would have been easier with the Erasmus funds.

During my time I was charged no extra fees. Most reading material was available online/Blackboard. For some courses you may need to purchase the textbooks from the University book store and also if you need printing which can be done via RicohPrint and works exactly the same as Manchester.

How does the cost of living where you were studying compare to living in Manchester? Can you give a few examples of the cost of specific items (e.g. bread, cinema ticket)?

Easier for me as it is the same currency than my home country. Way cheaper than UK for way better quality of products. 500gr of Barilla pasta costs between 70cent and 1€.

As a capital city Milan is obviously expensive, comparable to London. Be prepared to spend X2/3 times more on grocery shopping – head to Esselunga which is a great quality and affordable option.

Accommodation

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

We all had private accommodation and lots of us actually arrived there without any accommodation but visited and found one over there. We didn't dare to do so and at the end had the worst (but the cheapest). Try to check the area of living by a local before signing for anything. Also, check the transport possibilities.

During my time in Milan I rented an Airbnb Apartment for myself which was the perfect option at about £750/800 per month. This was a 15 minute walk from Bocconi. I would strongly advise doing something like this as you can have your own personal space, privacy to study and enjoy Milan! The best areas to rent are 20 mins radius of Bocconi, such as Navigli, Porto Romana and Tortona.

I would advise against the university accommodation as it is expensive for small rooms as well as the fact many of the halls are far away i.e. 40 mins via public transport. There is also no guarantee you will get a spot as it is very competitive for exchange students to find a room. There are very strict rules i.e. no guests etc so bear that in mind. Also if you are stuck the Exchange Facebook group people are always looking for apartments/flat mates at the beginning of term so depending on if/ who you want to share with that is also a viable option.

Destination information and overall experience

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups.

Super efficient transport, amazing travel (the country is so beautiful), very dynamic student life BUT you won't really be able to enjoy it. Bocconians have 4 modules, you will have to take 5 + a potential language class. You simply won't have time. I always knew what I was signing for but I wish I could have a bit of time to travel after my exams.

Transport is very cheap. It costs 20 euros for a monthly travel card which you can buy from the Duomo station at the beginning of every month. You can use this for metro/tram/bus. I didn't have one as I walked everywhere but it is the best option.

Social life is great, I made so many friends from all over Europe including Italy, everyone is so friendly and up for a fab time!

I also joined a student association called Green Light for Business which is to do with business and sustainability as this is one of my passions and wrote articles for them. I would however say that with such a short period of time spent there and a heavy work load you may not have much time to do so.

Bocconi hosts amazing guest talks from famous experts and past alumni in finance/business/economics/fashion etc at the University and I would thoroughly recommend attending these in the evening.

Describe in one sentence your semester abroad experience

Full of surprises - intellectual enrichment - life lessons

A magical and memorable experience worth every moment of hard work!
