



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts	Major(s)	Economics and Mathematics
Host University	Bocconi, Milan	Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 (January – June), 2018

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Economics of Institutions and Culture	English	ECON 300 Level	15
Health and Society	English	ECON 306 Health Eco	15
Climate Change Economics	English	ECON 300 Level	15
Development Economics	English	ECON 303 Dev. Eco.	15

Any comments about these papers?

All were enjoyable. Institutions and Culture and Development Econ have some overlap, so take that into account if you want to learn new things. It's easier to get a higher grade in Institutions and Culture, because the lecturer is more generous and gives more grading opportunity. Health and Society was very chill, required little work and also would often finish 30 minutes early. Climate Change was my favourite, I learnt a ton about a very pressing issue.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

The Italian students at Bocconi take studying much more seriously than students at Otago, except for maybe high-achieving health sci students. However, if you're taking your subjects in English, it shouldn't be too difficult to achieve highly. I found my subjects were at a relatively similar level of difficulty to Otago.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I had a fantastic apartment at Viale Emilio Caldara 24, very close to the Porta Romana metro station. I was very happy with it, my land-lady was easy to get along with, I shared a room with a great Polish lad, and I had two other Italian flatmates. They were all great fun, and the Italians helped me a lot with my Italian. The place was very new, modern, clean and suitable for young professionals. I was also very close to a Carrefour Express, a supermarket. It was a 15 minute walk to uni or a 7 minute tram ride, which usually came every 6 minutes.

When I read previous exchange evaluations, they recommended waiting till you arrived in Milan to sort out accommodation. This is what I did, but I wouldn't necessarily recommend it, it's a bit risky. The vast majority of other exchange students had already found accommodation before arriving, often using websites like Spotahome, Airbnb, or Uniplaces. It took me about 12 days from arriving to finding a place, confirming it, and moving in. The most difficult part was finding a place that allowed me to stay only 4 months. Many places required a 5 or 6 month minimum, and you would either have to find someone to replace you, pay a substantial penalty, or pay the full 5 or 6 months. That being said, I am incredibly happy with the place that I ended up with, so it may be worth the risk to wait till you arrive to start searching. For a single room in a nice place close to Bocconi, for example Navigli or Porta Romana, you should expect to pay around 700 euro per month, plus expenses. I had a really nice place, and because I shared the room (twin bed each), I paid 500 euro per month, with about 60 euros paid towards expenses for the entire 4 months I was there. If you're lucky, you may be able to find a cheaper place in poorer condition or worse location for about 500 euro single, or 300 euro shared.

In regards to the residence colleges, a lot of previous reflections don't recommend them, saying they're over-priced. Personally, I would disagree. Arcobaleno is about 30 minutes south of Bocconi, and exchange students would complain about wifi being poor in some rooms, but there was a big community of exchange students formed there. In my semester, the other two options were Isonzo and Dubini, both of which are close to Bocconi and high quality, but have fewer exchange students and so less community. So if you'd like to live with 200 other exchange students, Arco may be for you. If you want less worry about finding accommodation and you want a nice place with a good location, and you don't mind if it's more chill, go to Isonzo or Dubini. I think per month you can expect to pay 650 Euro at Arco and 700 euro at Dubini and Isonzo. **IMPORTANT:** If you want to stay at a residence, you will have to wake up in the middle of the night and apply as soon as it opens (they'll tell you the date and Italian time). Except for Arco, I heard some people applied to the residences 15 minutes after it opened and they missed out. I waited until the NZ morning to apply to Isonzo, and missed out.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

As stated above, accommodation was $4 \times 500 + 60 = 2060$ Euros.

I took a lot of flights to get to Milan, because I travelled Australia, South-East Asia and Dubai before arriving, but I would recommend using skyscanner/webjet and STA Travel to find the best flight. STA Travel actually has some very cheap flights for students if you're lucky. STA Dunedin branch is meant to give out their international student cards out free to Otago exchange students, I didn't realise that

before buying it for \$30, so make sure to try. I only bought a one way ticket, because I am continuing on to a second exchange in America following my time here.

I believe the visa was around \$70, however when you arrive in Italy you are legally obliged to apply for a Permit of Stay, which costs in total around 120euro, and a bunch of waiting around.

Groceries were comparable to NZ, perhaps cheaper if you went to Esselunga (cheapest and biggest). Pam and U2, are also quite cheap. Carrefour I found to be the most expensive. At Uni you could eat at their canteen which was decent for under 5 euro. I often would buy a large slice of pizza from a Pizzeria nearby for 2.50 euro, or else buy dumplings or noodles from a Chinese place for 2-5 euro. Apertivo is an all you can eat deal with a cocktail, at between 8 and 12 euro. If you want to eat at restaurants, I recommend downloading "The Fork". It has lots of discounts at the local restaurants (all across Europe), and I could eat in nice Italian places for 50% less than what other customers were paying.

For phones, there are four major telecom companies: Wind, Tre, Vodaphone, and TIM. Personally, I had Wind, and paid 9 euro every month for 20Gbs of data (I didn't need minutes or text – everyone uses Whatsapp). There was a very expensive activation fee of 20 euros at the beginning though.

Transport-wise, nearly everyone got the ATM (the public transport of Milan company) Student Card. It costs 10 euros to apply, and 22 euro each month to use unlimited bus, metro, tram, and train within the urban limits of Milan. Unless you live very close to the uni and you love walking, I would recommend getting the card. There are also a couple of Bikesharing services in Milan that I would recommend looking into.

Regarding insurance, after researching a ton, I found Travel Insurance New Zealand (TINZ – not to be confused with New Zealand Travel Insurance) to be the cheapest but still well rated (but not very old) insurance provider. Some tips, instead of just putting in one or two countries, you can put every place in the world except Antarctica and the Americas without the premium increasing, also, they charge by month, so put your dates as full months, even if you plan to return earlier. Make sure you put in Africa if you want to visit Morocco. For 7 months of insurance (I did a lot of traveling before and after semester) it cost \$561.97. This is much cheaper than STA Travel.

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I arrived with a couple hundred euro to get me started, and I used my NZ cards if necessary. I recommend getting a Carta+ma card (a prepaid mastercard) from the Bocconi bank, called Banca Popolare di Sondrio. It cost 6 euros to open, and allowed me to send money to Italy from my NZ account. Then, I used TransferWise, a fantastic company that gives very competitive rates. Normally, if you pay by credit card, there is a 2% mark up by Visa or Mastercard on the exchange rate. By sending money through Transferwise, it was between 0.4 and 0.7%, so you save between 1.3 and 1.6% of every euro you spend. It also meant getting cash was much cheaper (NZ card atm fees are a whole other ball game), 0 euro if you used the banks own atms, 2 euro if not (even if elsewhere in Europe).

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

Yes, I definitely recommend calling the embassy in Wellington. The guy there was helpful and also told me stuff that contradicted the website. So definitely call to double check you have everything before sending it through. They also responded very quickly, I think I sent it in on Thursday, on Friday they called me and said everything was in order, and I received my passport back with the visa by the Tuesday or Wednesday. I may have been luckily, so make sure you apply as early as possible (but within 3 months of departure I believe).

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No. If you want to apply to a gym though, you need a medical certificate stating you are able to do physical activity or something like that. Bocconi will send you the sheet I believe.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

Extra-curriculars were harder to find than at Otago. Except soccer, it was easy to find a group or team who wanted to play social soccer. There was an Erasmus Student Network (ESN) that would organise parties and trips for the exchange students. They were often great, and the trips nearly always sold out very quickly. Most of the time students would spend their weekends travelling Italy or Europe. Because Milan had 3 airports, it often wasn't too expensive to go around on weekend trips. For example I went to Prague return for 40 euro.

What was the university/ city like?

It is pretty amazing to live in such an old and grand city coming from NZ. I would say I have absolutely no regrets. Bocconi is seen as the best most prestigious business uni in the country, and ranks exceptional in certain areas internationally. Surprising the facilities were a bit underwhelming, however, there is meant to be a brand new campus which may be more flash, directly after I leave.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

I'll let you wait to get here to hear from everyone else, you'll learn pretty quick.

Any tips for future students?

Not related to the actual exchange, but before or after. There is a fantastic program called ACLE, which sends English tutors across Italy to run camps for local Italian kids. It runs June-September and was one of my favourite parts of my time in Italy. You fall in love with the kids, meet wonderful host families, and experience Italy in a very special way. It also gives you a way to travel and make a little bit of money. It requires a minimum commitment of 4 weeks (with one week training to begin) and I would recommend it 100% as a way to begin or end your semester at Bocconi.

I also recommend you start practicing your Italian a good month before you arrive, Pimsleur is my recommended program. Other students have said they learned very little Italian here in Milan, I found though if you put yourself out there, you can learn a lot and have a whole lot of fun doing it. Be intentional and make the most of the opportunity, and just keep practicing with the locals. Bocconi can connect you with an Italian who wants to learn English so you help each other.

Overall Experience

I don't know how to convince someone to go on exchange, but all I can say is I absolutely loved it and feel so lucky that I was able to have had this opportunity. Don't miss out!

