Instructors

- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?

For the most part, I found the instructors there were less flexible and less helpful. They definitely thought of themselves as a much higher status than the students.

- Could you call them by their first names?

Absolutely not.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?

Definitely, it was very formal.

- Were they available for help during office hours?

Technically they did have office hours, but I never really attended them, so I’m not sure how the interactions worked.

Courses

- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?

I found them more difficult, because they basically required that you memorize the textbook and lecture slides, which I’m not used to at all.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?

Not at all. There was a 1-30 system, 30 being the best. It also didn’t translate back into the American grading system very well, and it was actually detrimental to my grades.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?

I had no assignments, although a few of my friends did have group assignments. About half of my classes had midterms, while the rest had only finals.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
Mine were all written, but I have friends who had oral exams, although those were mostly for law rather than economics.

- **Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?**

Inflexible. Technically they have multiple sittings (days when you take the final), so they just expect you take one in a second sitting if your exams conflict. However, sometimes they are a whole month later, which can cause problems if you are coming home. They are sometimes more flexible in that case, but definitely go to the International Student Desk if you’re having trouble because they are the most helpful option when it comes to scheduling.

- **What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?**

Not much. There was an international student desk that helped with getting registered for an exam when I missed the deadline, but that’s about it.

- **Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?**

Definitely. You’re on your own. They don’t offer reviews or extra office hours to help reinforce the material.

- **Was classroom participation expected?**

In some classes, but mostly it wasn’t.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**

Other then the items listed above, that were also obviously more Eurocentric.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**

They were either twice a week for 1.5 hours or once a week for 3 hours. They have scheduled days, but the professors are free to change the schedule any time they please.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**

The professors expect you to be there on time, or by the time the professors arrive, but often the professors are not punctual.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
English and Italian.

- **What language did you take your courses in?**

English.

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?**

The campus is about one city block, but hosts about 12,000 students I believe. It had 2 classroom buildings, a few administrative buildings, and a library.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**

All of the above. Some live at home and commute, some live in campus dorms, some live in apartments around the city.

- **If not located in the city center,**

  - **How far or close is it to the city?**

    It is about a ten to fifteen minute walk to the city center.

  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**

    There are trams and metro. A single ride costs one euro, or you can get a monthly student pass for 17 Euro

  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**

    You can, but they are expensive. I only used them coming home from clubs when the transit wasn’t running.

  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?**

    Around 15 minutes.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
Yes, there are also clubs aimed specifically at international students.

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**

Yes, and that’s where I bought all my books.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**

Both. There is a really outdated computer lab. There is also wi-fi in most rooms on campus, although it can be a bit of a pain to set up.

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**

There are coffee shops and restaurants.

**Housing**

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**

There is an international student dorm through the university. You could also try to find an apartment, but that is kind of challenging from afar and several people found themselves victims of Craigslist scams.

- **How close are they to campus?**

The dorm is about 20 minutes from campus, 30-40 from the city center.

- **How did you find your housing?**

I found it through the university.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**

I lived in the international student dorm with a whole array of international students.

- **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**

In the dorm, the only option is a single, which is nice.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
Surprisingly enough, it is more expensive. It’s about 550 Euro per month, which ranged from 700-850 dollars per month depending on the exchange rate at any given time.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**

You can pay through the website using a credit or debit card. You can also pay cash at the bank on campus.

**Food**

- **What was the food like?**

Amazing. Seriously, I saw a picture of a pizza the other day, and nearly cried because I miss it so much. One problem, however, is variety. There is lots of delicious Italian food, but ethnic foods, other than Turkish Kebabs, is hard to find.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**

I ate a lot of meals at home, fresh pasta was super cheap at the grocery store, so I would cook for myself a lot. I also ate out a lot when I was traveling on the weekends, so it sense to save money by eating at home during the week. I would sometimes grab lunch in the cafeteria or at a restaurant near campus.

- **How much was an average meal?**

You can get a slice of pizza for about 2.50 Euro, a sandwich for around 3-4. For dinner, you can get a whole pizza for like 6 Euro at Pizzeria 40. If you go out to eat for dinner, a pasta course will be around 10 Euro.

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**

Lunch is between 12 and 2, dinner usually around 8 or 8:30pm.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**

Nope. There are lots of veggie pizza options, or you can get eggplant on your sandwich. The only thing to be careful of is things like risotto if you have an aversion to chicken stock, which some vegetarians do and some don’t.

**Travel/Safety**

- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?**
In Milan, there are 3 underground metro lines, in addition to trams and buses. The trams 15 and 3 come almost directly to the dorm, the 15 has a stop in front of the campus, the 3 stops in the Navigli, which is a fun restaurant district, and both end at the Duomo, in the city center. Also, 4 stops down on either is the Green Line (M2) metro that takes you directly to the train stain, and also connects with all the other Metro lines.

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?**

I generally felt pretty safe, but the dorm is on the border of a rougher part of town. I was always advised not to take the tram home alone at night. There were occasions where I did go home alone, and I only had one particularly concerning encounter where I felt a bit unsafe, but even that worked out okay.

- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?**

See above.

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**

It was generally pretty easy. Milan is a hub for RyanAir and EasyJet, the two cheap airlines, so I could get flights almost anywhere. There are three airports, Linate, Malpensa, and Bergamo. Linate you can get to using public transit, but Bergamo and Malpensa (which are used more often by the cheap airlines) require you to take a charter bus that costs around 7 Euro for Malpensa and 9 Euro for Bergamo. Mila also has a decent hub for trains, since all the E-W trains across the top of Italy and the N-S trains going south stop there, including the fast trains. If you book the fast trains well in advance, you can get significantly discounted rates if you check for “Mini” fares.

**Host City/Country**

- **What was the weather like?**

Hot and humid in the summer, cold in the winter with a little bit of snow. There was also a decent bit of rain in the late fall and early spring.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**

New York is probably the best analogy. It’s very business oriented, very fashionable, lots of grey everywhere (the sky, the buildings, the clothes).

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?

It was pretty international business-wise and especially at Bocconi, but it’s definitely not as touristy as Rome or Florence.

Culture

- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.

  o Time & punctuality

  Punctuality is not key. Unless you’re going somewhere for a home cooked meal, then you need to be on time. Also, on that subject, dinner is eaten at about 8pm, much different than what we’re used to here.

  o Eye contact & staring

  Men have no problem staring at you. They will look up and down and not particularly discreetly. It’s just part of the culture, don’t get offended by it.

  o Relationships

  Honestly, I didn’t have enough interaction with them to figure it out, but I’m not sure it’s that different from here.

  o More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?

  There is definitely more formal dress. You wouldn’t leave the house in sweats, yoga pant, or workout clothes and definitely not pajamas. There are lots of high heels, even the little old ladies in the grocery store.

  o Alcohol consumption

  Italians do drink, but they don’t drink to get drunk like American college students do. Wine goes with dinner though, always.

  o What culture shock did you go through?
The only time I really had culture shock was when I came back from visiting friends in England for Christmas to an empty dorm where all of my friends from the first semester had already gone home. I really just missed my friends from the prior semester. I had more trouble readjusting to the US than I did adjusting to Italy.

- **Other?**

The bureaucracy is a nightmare. Just accept it, find it amusing, and joke about. Don’t get bent out of shape by it, or you’ll be miserable the whole time. Appreciate how slow things are, or the randomness of the strikes, or the fact that trains are always late. It makes life a lot easier.

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**

Yes, but Italy is definitely still a cash based system. Grocery stores, chain stores, and even larger boutiques will take credit cards, but small cafes and gelato shops won’t. It’s definitely important to have cash.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**

No, in order to open bank about you have to get codice fiscale, and after dealing with the permit of stay, I didn’t really feel like dealing with any Italian bureaucracy I didn’t have to. Also, the rates on my home ATM card were low enough that it wasn’t a big issue.

- **If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?**

Avoid Barclay’s, they tended to have the worst rates. Unicredito and Banco San Paulo were the best. The rates generally depend on your bank back home, I had Golden 1 and they only charged 1% plus a $3 ATM fee.

- **Were there ATMs on campus?**

Not directly on campus, but within about a block there were three of them.