

# SDA Bocconi

## EXCHANGE REPORT

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**UBC MBA CLASS OF 2020**

**INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRACK**

**EXCHANGE SCHOOL -SDA BOCCONI MILAN**

## INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is Chukwudi Kingsley Aroh and I am exchange student at SDA Bocconi, Milan. Prior to my acceptance into the Sauder business school, I was a professional engineer who initially grew up in Nigeria, attended post-secondary education in Ghana before relocating to Canada to work in the pulp and paper industry.

In my opinion, an MBA is expected to be a very transformative experience both in the classroom and otherwise so I was eager to seize every opportunity I could to expand my knowledge and professional/personal connections during my time in the program. Hence, when the time came to select a business school, UBC was top of my list because it offered me a chance to study in a different school/country.

The decision to choose SDA Bocconi was quite straightforward for me as it is a world leading institution for students interested in specialization for Innovation & Entrepreneurship as well as Global business for emerging markets. These tied in with my current target learning objective and I was certain to take advantage of the networks and resources provided to boost my continuous development. Also, with an interest on International job opportunities particularly in the renewable energy industry, an exchange with such internationally renowned institution should give me the edge to gain employment particularly in Europe where the renewable energy industry is more developed and supported by government policies.

## ORIENTATION

Due to the changes that my host school made to their curriculum, I did not see much benefit in starting my exchange program in the beginning of the Fall semester (September) because most of the courses being offered then were first year fundamental courses that I had taken (or not interested) during my 1<sup>st</sup> year. This meant that I arrived in Milan after P6 in October. The downside to this, however, was that I did not receive any orientation program or attend any of the social activities that took place in the first week of school. Once I arrived in Milan, I received a brief update from the exchange program manager and relied on my fellow exchange students for other tips.

**COURSES & REGISTRATION:** How long after being nominated for exchange were you sent course information by the host partner school? Were you able to enroll in the courses that you wanted? Was the registration system efficient? What advice would you offer to next year's students regarding registration? How would you compare the level and calibre of courses at your Host University with those of UBC? Are courses generally more or less difficult? Is the workload heavier? What is the academic focus of your host University? (i.e. which MBA specializations are appropriate?)

## COURSES AND REGISTRATION

During the first week of February, I received my confirmation email of my nomination for the exchange program in Milan. However, due to the changes in the host school's curriculum I finally received the course offering for the fall term in mid-april. From there, it was easy to select the courses available and register for them with the Student's Relations personnel in the host school. Looking back, the registration system was quite straight forward. I was sent an excel list of all the courses offered and I highlighted which ones I wanted to take for my exchange term. For the courses being offered, exchange students would have an opportunity to take classes with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year MBAs although most of the courses were from the 1<sup>st</sup> year MBAs. Personally, I tried to have a mix of both classes from the two cohort which turned out to be a good idea for me.

The courses offered were of a high standard with some having both group work and separate assessments similar to those at UBC. In terms of workload, I found them to be slightly less demanding and the professors had lower expectation from students particularly in maintaining a lid-down policy during class, being engaged in class conversations and arriving before the beginning of class. Since I was there during the fall, most of the courses I took with the 1<sup>st</sup> years were foundational MBA courses while the 2<sup>nd</sup> years had already finished their core focus courses so it was difficult to deduce the academic focus of the cohorts apart from those in the finance track.

## LANGUAGE COURSES

An Italian beginner course was offered to exchange students for free (and 1<sup>st</sup> year students) at the start of the fall term to help provide non-Italian students a good opportunity to learn the language which is beneficial for immersion into the new environment. Another strategy that I found helpful for learning the language was to install a language tutorial app on my phone during the summer to help slowly introduce me to the language prior to my visit to the country.

## CAMPUS FACILITIES

There was a stark difference between UBC's campus and that of SDA Bocconi. Unlike UBC's campus which is more than 400 hectares in size, the SDA campus was more like one building in the city of Milan. However, I feel this information is unnecessary since SDA Bocconi is moving to a new campus by next year which from what I hear is bigger and has way more amenities so it should be more exciting. Unfortunately, I did not visit the new campus while I was there because access was limited so I can not speak about its potential amenities and available services.

## HOUSING FACILITIES

SDA Bocconi offers Exchange Students an option to contact their external consultant, Mrs. Daria Mercuriali, to assist with finding housing in Milan. This option is more efficient for students looking for long stay in Milan since this is the preferred route for landlords. However, since I was only staying for less than 90 days, I decided to find an apartment through Airbnb. This gave me the benefit of selecting an apartment located 5 minutes away from the University. Also, I was

able to modify my accommodation period to match my arrival and departure date instead of paying for the entire month. This was very helpful since I arrived in the middle of the month and left Milan before the holidays in December.

Since I was not provided any accommodation with meal plans I had to rely on groceries and eating out during my stay in Milan. In my opinion, grocery shopping was relatively affordable and close by to my apartment so I did a lot of grocery shopping while I was there. In a couple instances when I decided to eat out in restaurants, I also found different options available around my location and most of them were affordable.

## **COSTS/ EXPENSES**

Below is a breakdown of an estimate of what my expenses (in euros) were on a monthly basis during my stay in Milan:

Accommodation: 700 euros (this is on the lower scale compared to others I heard)

Phone network: 20 euros

Groceries: 250 euros

Textbook: N/A

Local transportation: 50 euros

Food/Restaurants: 240 euros

Travel within Europe: 1000 euros

the following e-mail address: [daria.mercuriali@gmail.com](mailto:daria.mercuriali@gmail.com) and phone number: +39.348 5531503.

## **STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES**

There were no student health services on the old campus. However, I expect this to change in the new campus being commissioned next year for SDA Bocconi students.

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**

There were a couple of social events during my time in Milan, it is difficult to list them all here. However, the main sources of information on upcoming events which are accessible to exchange students are:

- Bocconi university official mailbox
- Bocconi MBA cohort calendar on blackboard
- Group chats on Facebook and WhatsApp

## **CAREER SERVICES**

I was introduced to the Master Division Career Service co-ordinator, Giulia Zangrandi, who organised all the career services' and company visits at SDA and she was helpful in providing additional information and presentation slides from company representatives. Also, I found very

useful and updated information on upcoming events on the MBA cohort calendar on blackboard. These events were specifically for the MBA students which I found very beneficial and informative.

## **SPORTS/RECREATION**

I did not partake in any sports/recreation events/activities during my time there since I was usually travelling during the weekends.

## **STUDY TOURS/FIELD TRIP**

During my exchange program, I was fortunate to visit the luxury grocery store, Peck. It was part of a course I took with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year MBA class and it was a great learning experience into their business model, operations and challenges of being innovative. Apart from the tour of one of their stores in central milan, we were able to have a Q&A session with their CEO to clarify any business questions we might have.

There was also a weekend visit for the 1<sup>st</sup> year MBA class to Swarovski office, however I could not make it for that trip but I heard it was very inspiring.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

From my perspective, I think the most important things to take with you are your travelling documents (passport, etc.), study permit, copy of health insurance, bank statement, bank cards (credit/debit cards), adequate clothing, a laptop and a large appetite for Italian food.

In general, it was a great experience studying in Europe as an exchange student. I cherished the opportunity to be able to get a taste of the MBA transformational experience from two top business schools in different continents. From an academic standpoint, there were some peculiar courses (e.g How to Marie Kondo your personal finance) that I found really enlightening which made the experience even more worth it. Getting to grow my professional connection and bonding with a whole new cohort was an experience I do not take for granted. However the icing on the cake has to do with the immersion into a different culture, learning about the rich history of Italians through my conversations with them, and travelling to so many historic sites in Italy (and other European countries) that I had only dreamt of up to this point in my life.

Looking back at my exchange experience, I would say my biggest disappointment was not spending more time in Europe unlike some of my classmates did. Initially, I had hoped to be in Europe for four months, but I changed my mind and limited it to 2 months since the curriculum of the host school changed and they offered predominantly foundational 1<sup>st</sup> year courses in their fall term. At the time I did not see the need spending 4 months there if some of the courses were going to be a repeat of my 1<sup>st</sup> year at UBC.