

BCSP Academic Handbook for Students 2025/26

OVERVIEW

Your visa from the Italian government is very precise about why you are in Italy: *motivi di STUDIO* = to study. The principal goal of the Bologna Consortial Studies Program is to facilitate your integration into your studies at the University of Bologna and to offer Program courses helpful to that integration. Your initial decision is either to adjust to an academic system that is quite different from the one to which you are accustomed and have a fruitful academic experience, or to resist this difference and spend a frustrating semester abroad. The Italian system lacks the regularity of American university rules and academic scheduling and requires an ability to adapt to a different style of studying and learning.

The University of Bologna is based on the 3 (laurea triennale) + 2 (laurea specialistica) degree system. BCSP students can choose courses from both degrees.

A rule of thumb to apply at all times and in every circumstance when dealing with any representative of the Università di Bologna is to understand that every university course is an empire and every professor the emperor of that reign. Whenever you are in doubt about a course date, requirement, or deadline, **always** consult the individual professor of the course in question. Rules may change from professor to professor.

The BCSP Resident Director advises you in your orientation to the University of Bologna's academic structures. He will help you to select your courses and advise you on procedural details. However, you are expected to be prepared and very proactive in determining your interests and matching those interests with course offerings and schedules to ensure your academic success in Italy.

THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Like European universities in general, Italian universities are quite different in character and function from those in the United States. In principle and in practice, Italian students study one field at their university, and follow a precise study plan. Since high school lasts longer than it does in the US and there are general exams in most subjects required for students finishing their high school studies, Italian universities do not require general studies in a number of areas as do most American universities (general curriculum courses). Rather, at the Italian university, **introductory courses are usually not provided**, and students specialize immediately upon entering the university. This means that you should not plan on taking courses in areas in which you thought, someday, you'd like to try out, or in which you simply have some general interest but have not studied.

There are **six** extremely important **points** about the University system you need **to remember**:

1. First of all, you must consult with the BCSP Resident Director, with whom **you are required to sign a sheet that lists the courses you have chosen to take and is valid for your American institutions for the transferring of your grades. You must consult regularly with the BCSP Resident Director to keep him informed of the courses you are taking, especially if you decide to drop or add a course.** This is the only way you have of maintaining your status as a full-time

student in Italy, a requirement of BCSP and of Italian law for you to remain in the country with a student visa. You will only receive credit for each UNIBO course when the professor gives you a grade for your examination (or a written work that will substitute, with the professor's permission, for the exam and **record the grade online** or "*verbalizzazione*"). You will be able to register on-line for some examinations; for others you will have to go directly to the department in which the course is offered. The professor must complete the *verbalizzazione* online ([Almaesami](#)) to make your grade official. Examinations can be oral, but more often now include also a written component. **Make sure that the Resident Director has received notification of your final grade, and meet with him before departure in order to check that all procedures are completed. The RD will then prepare your Grade Report and send it to your institutions.**

2. Fill in the "UNIBO **piano di studi online**" form at <https://piani.unibo.it>. The *piano di studi online* is for UNIBO a way to keep track of the courses taken by all exchange students and you must fill it as soon as you have made your decision about UNIBO courses. The Resident Director will assist you with this procedure once you have discussed the courses you will be taking.

To enter the system you will need:

a) Your **username**: this is usually your *name.lastname@studio.unibo.it*, as it is in your unibo e-mail address;

b) Your **password**: this is the password you use to access your unibo e-mail address and is listed on the same sheet where you find your username (you have probably been asked to change it on your first login). **It would be advisable to change this password to "bcspfall2025!"** so to help you (and the RD) remember it when you have to enroll in your courses.

To receive credit for your courses **you must be taking the course as "attending student"**. This means that you have to attend classes and **cannot choose the "non-attending" option**, which may be offered to Italian students.

3. You will note that **UNIBO courses** are listed in the Italian system for sometimes **10/12 (full semester) or 5/6 (half semester) credits, sometimes 8 and 6, or even 6 and 3 credits** and are linked to the academic schedules of each Degree Program = *Corso di Laurea*. A ten or twelve-credit course normally meets for 60 hours and is semester-intensive. Five or six-credit courses meet for 27-36 hours and are normally half-semester long and they are usually referred to as **module = modulo**. For the transfer of these credits back to your American university, you can refer to the following table, which sums up the most common options available:

	Italian Credits	Hours of teaching	Credits transferred
Humanities	5/6	30	3
	10/12	60	6
Political Science	6/8	36/48	3
	9/10	60	6
Languages and Literatures	3	27	3
	6	54	6

This means that, for example, in a history class of 60 hours offered at the *Department of History and Cultures*, it may be possible to take the examination on the first or second of two thematic units in the course (**30 hours = 3 credits**). If you decide to take only one *module* of a course, you

must consult the BCSP Resident Director. The UNIBO professor with whom you take the exam for the *module* will also indicate on the online verbalization the number of credits for which you will receive examination credit.

4. All BCSP students are required to take a minimum of 15 BCSP credits per semester. Each institution has different limits for the maximum number of credits. Consult with the Resident Director if you plan to take more than 18 credits for the semester.

5. Fall only students must make sure that *appelli* (= exams) for their courses are actually offered before the Christmas holiday break.

6. In all cases of questions or changes of any kind in a course, **you must always consult the professor of the UNIBO course and your Resident Director.** It cannot be stressed enough that the professor of a course **operates virtually autonomously** in terms of requirements, schedules, and class changes. Also remember to check with your home school advisor for credit transfer options.

BCSP LANGUAGE COURSE

English Track Students are required to take the **BCSP Applied Italian Communication & Culture** course (3 cr). All other courses will be at UNIBO.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

Each *Department* within the University of Bologna operates according to its own calendar (see last page of this packet). Therefore, there is **no common Schedule of Classes** containing all the academic information for courses and their schedules. Moreover, schedules are not prepared and published a semester in advance as they are in the US.

Remember that **in the first weeks of classes you will be shopping around for different courses and professors**, and visiting perhaps as many as five courses before settling on one or two UNIBO classes. You should also plan on speaking with the professors who will be teaching the courses you are interested in, during their regular office hours and ask them questions on the material you are expected to prepare, the main topics of the course, the kind of exam required, etc. This will also help you open a channel of communication with the professor, which will be beneficial in case you need his/her help throughout the semester.

The entire academic year is divided into two parts, or semesters, each of which is then subdivided, for certain courses, into two additional periods = *modules*. Thus, courses will be offered in the following configuration: 1) **Full Semester** (listed as 2 separate courses on your transcript); 2) **Module** I, II, III, IV, offered either as part of an intensive semester course or as an independent course. Regardless, these *modules* are listed according to their place in the academic calendar: in the Fall term *module* I runs roughly until the end of October and *module* II runs until before the holiday break. In the Spring *module* III runs until end of March/beginning of April and *module* IV until May or June.

Depending on when Italian holidays fall, each year, there are occasionally **breaks** either in November, or March/April. **There is no common semester-break vacation.** AY students find that they will have to take their Spring break around Easter (when the University and BCSP are closed).

You should not be surprised if there are occasional disruptions during your UNIBO courses, including student/faculty strikes and sit-ins. Sometimes instructors change class hours and do not appear for classes. They most often arrive 15 minutes late (it's the institutionalized *quarto d'ora accademico*, which allows students to get from one class to the next). They also sometimes lecture beyond the end of the class. You will learn to be flexible. Remember, accept and learn or resist and be miserable.

Exams will be scheduled at different times for different courses (see [Almaesami](#)). Students enrolled in semester long courses, for example, can begin asking their professors (or check Almaesami) in November when they should expect to take their exam. Some professors will make special arrangements with American or Erasmus students to set up an early exam. But do not expect special treatment. **Learn to communicate as thoroughly as possible with other students frequenting your same courses. They can provide a wealth of information about professors' attitudes, exam dates, books to study, class notes to share etc. They'll be proud to have a new American friend to talk or sit next to during the semester.**

Most important, you should not, under any circumstances, schedule a special exam and expect to leave Italy the next day for a vacation or to return to the States. Students have ended up returning to the States without appropriate credit for courses in which they should have taken an examination. **The rule is that you must finish your academic work, take your final exams, make sure that the BCSP Resident Director has access to all your grades not later than December 23rd (or June 30th for Annual and Spring).**

UNIBO COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

All departments publish their courses on the UNIBO website. You can start your search from [this page](#) and search the catalogue by key word or course title. This way you should be able to access the syllabus of the course containing all the info, such as:

- a) name of the professor who is teaching the course
- b) number of credits
- c) description of content
- d) list of books or texts
- e) examination requirements
- f) course meeting hours
- g) link to class location

It is always advisable to meet with the professor during their office hours to introduce yourself as a foreign student and to make sure you understand the requirements for the course. If the professor intends to facilitate you as foreign student, because you do not meet the same requirements as a degree seeking student, you'll find out by meeting with the professor to discuss your academic background. Going to class regularly and meeting with the professor of the course is always to your benefit when it comes to receive your final grade.

Again, keep in mind that most disciplines at Italian universities will not have introductory courses as one usually finds in the US. Students in all disciplines are expected to have a solid grasp of the basics in a variety of subjects.

In the Italian university system, courses of the *First Cycle Degree* (three years = Laurea triennale) are more general with more material to be covered. Courses of the *Second Cycle Degree* (two years = Laurea magistrale) are more specific, not necessarily more difficult, but definitely more focused on a precise topic that may require some previous knowledge.

GRADES

Bartering for grades does not exist in Italy and is not practiced in UNIBO or BCSP courses.

There is NO way to retake a UNIBO exam after you have left Italy, nor is it possible to receive an “incomplete” for a UNIBO course. Grades must be finalized by the end of December for Fall students (or June for Spring and AY). If you haven’t completed your work for a UNIBO course and no grade is submitted for that course, you will receive an “F,” which can be two Fs, when a UNIBO course meets 60 hours a week and counts as two courses on your university record.

For **BCSP courses**, the professor will only offer one *appello* (call for the exam) for the midterm or the final. Therefore, there will be no time or occasion to retake an exam. If you miss the date and exam time you’ll receive 17/30 points only (18 is the lowest passing grade).

COURSE LOAD

Including the three semester-credits earned in the Applied Italian Communication & Culture course, the minimum course load, as specified in the Bologna handbook, is **15 credits per semester**. Normally, University of Bologna courses that meet for 60 hours earn 6 BCSP credits (usually indicated in the *online registration* as ten or twelve Italian credits) and 3 BCSP credits for courses that meet for 30 hours (usually indicated in the *online registration* as six Italian credits)

UNIBO courses that count for 6 BCSP credits will be listed on your transcript as two separate courses for 3 credits each. **It is essential that each student consult carefully and regularly with the Resident Director in order to compose their course schedule of 15 credits for the semester.**

COURSE INFORMATION, or How Do I Know What to Take?

First of all, talk to your professors about what books you will be expected to read in order to be well prepared for the exam. Direct contact is preferable to e-mail communication. If you can’t get in touch with the professor during office hours, then send an e-mail.

Several sources of course information are available. All the [Degree Programs](#) maintain websites that are retrievable from the central University URL: www.unibo.it. In addition, you can access professors’ email addresses and telephone numbers from this website (see the [Rubrica](#) in the UNIBO portal). Course schedules themselves are available via the individual websites. These course schedules, however, are not always available until just before classes start (which is why the program cannot provide students with timetables before they arrive in Italy).

The periods of mid-September/beginning of October (and, again, mid-January) can be challenging and frustrating as you and the Resident Director attempt to determine the schedules from the various departments. Take initiative in finding out information and sharing it with the Director and other students.

You will have discussed your requirements with your advisors at your home university before

coming to Italy. You should remember to **check with your advisors if a course will be transferred for your major or as elective**. You may have to send syllabi to your school for approval. Hopefully, you will find them translated in English on the UNIBO website, but in some cases you may have to translate them before submitting.

UNIBO courses won't conform exactly to those at an American university, and you may need to think carefully about what kind of "equivalences" are available at your university for courses that you want to take in Bologna. It is always a good idea to be thinking well in advance whether or not a particular course will correspond to the courses/requirements at your university.

As an additional resource, the BCSP program professors are normally very helpful. They can also be called or visited during office hours and will answer your questions.

SELECTING COURSES

You will begin consulting with the Resident Director after your arrival in September about the courses that you wish and need to take. The RD can assist you if there are questions about your requirements by contacting someone at your university. Remember that the Resident Director is your official liaison with your home university and can assist you in determining which courses will be equivalent to those you are required to take on your home campus. Also, **the Resident Director, representing the entire consortium of BCSP universities**, can be expected to speak for your interests on a professional par with advisors at your home institution.

After having attended several classes and talked to the professors about what they will expect you to read and prepare for your exams, make sure that you talk to your BCSP Resident Director about your final choice of course load. **One month following the beginning of your UNIBO courses, the BCSP Director will have you sign a document, which will serve as your official schedule.**

PASS-FAIL OPTION

This option is not available at all universities. Check with the Study Abroad advisor at your university – and do so early. Where this option exists, it will correspond to the pass/fail schedule of the individual institution. Check with the Director. You must inform both the Director and the Advisor (different dates for each institution) if you wish to take the P/F option in a course.

FINAL EXAMS AND FORMS TO SIGN

For all courses, you are strongly advised to take the final examination during your professor's **first appello**. The dates may be announced at different times, but the best policy is to ask the professor in advance, so that you can plan your work more efficiently. You should not plan trips or other distracting activities close to the date of your final exams. You will soon be leaving Bologna, and you might be busy and preoccupied organizing your return home. **The BCSP office will close on December 23rd and the RD may not be available after those dates to check your grades. Not submitting your grades on time may result in not having any of your UNIBO exams transferred to your home institution.**

Each professor will register (*verbalizzazione*) your final grade in the [Almaesami](#) online system and that is the official grade that will be transferred by the Resident Director to your institution. Make sure that you keep the RD informed of your preparation for the final exams and if you encounter obstacles of any sort.

ADVICE FOR ORAL EXAMS

In the **oral exam** be as assertive as possible. But use your judgment: some professors like clear, succinct answers. Still, the important thing is to relax and talk – thoughtfully, of course. Prepare answers to anticipated questions in advance, and practice with a friend. Ask your Italian and International friends about their experiences. Be prepared to cite important dates and details and to speak at some length, without long silences. Prepare two or three points on the major course topic.

Some professors may ask you about what has most interested you in the course or what you have prepared for the exam. In some humanities or political science classes, you will prepare a paper before the exam (about 5 to 8 written pages), which will serve as the basis for the exam. Whatever the circumstances, you should be prepared to give a thorough answer to these open-ended questions. Other professors may provide a similar opportunity by asking you simply to speak on a topic or sub-topic of the course work. Of course, you may be presented with **pointed, detailed questions**. In brief, you need to know the material!

After each UNIBO exam, your professor will give you a grade and record it on the [Almaesami](#) website. After each exam, let the RD know of your result and check that it has been verbalized online. At the end of the semester the RD will send all your grades to Indiana University and eventually IU will send them to your own institutions.

Grading Scale for BCSP students – 2025/26

	Indiana U*	U Chicago	U Penn	Illinois	UNC	U Wisc
30 lode	A	A	A	A	A	A
30	A	A	A	A	A	A
29	A	A	A	A	A	A
28	A-	A-	A-	A-	A-	AB
27	A-	A-	B+	A-	A-	AB
26	B+	B+	B	B+	B+	B
25	B	B	B-	B	B	B
24	B-	B-	C+	B-	B-	BC
23	C+	C+	C	C+	C+	C
22	C+	C+	C-	C+	C+	C
21	C	C	D+	C	C	D
20	C	C	D	C	C	D
19	C-	C-	D	C-	C-	D
18	D	D	D	D	D	D
NO PASS	F	F	F	F	F	F

*Indiana U grading scale applies to all students from associate or non - BCSP institutions

Libraries in Bologna - [Catalogo generale \(SBN on-line\)](#):

[Complete list of the libraries](#)

BIBLIOTECA SALA BORSA

Piazza Nettuno, 3

tel. 0512194400

Orario di apertura: Lunedì 14.30 – 20; da Martedì a Venerdì 10 - 20; Sabato 10-19

<http://www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it>

BIBLIOTECA DI DISCIPLINE UMANISTICHE

Via Zamboni, 36

Tel. 051 2098310

Dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 – 23.50; Venerdì 9 – 14

Sabato e Domenica 11 – 19.

<http://www.biblioteche.unibo.it/bdu/>

BIBLIOTECA EZIO RAIMONDI - DIP. DI ITALIANISTICA

Via Zamboni, 32

Sale di lettura – Arte – Cinema – Teatro

Orario di apertura: dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 - 18.30

<https://bur.sba.unibo.it/>

BIBLIOTECA/VIDEOTECA DEL DIP. DELLE ARTI – MUSICA E SPETTACOLO

Via Barberia, 4

Orario di apertura

dal Lunedì al Venerdì ore 9 - 18.40

Catalogo disponibile solo in biblioteca

<http://arti.sba.unibo.it>

BIBLIOTECA DELL'ARCHIGINNASIO

Piazza Galvani, 1

Cultura generale, con prevalenza delle discipline storiche, filosofiche, politiche, letterarie, artistiche, biografiche e bibliografiche. Cultura bolognese.

Orario di apertura

dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 - 19.

Sabato 9 – 14

Domicilio - documento per prendere libri a prestito

<http://www.archiginnasio.it/>

BIBLIOTECA DI SCIENZE DELL'EDUCAZIONE

Via Filippo Re, 6

Sale studio, Pedagogia.

Orario di apertura: dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 - 18.30

<https://edu.unibo.it/it/biblioteca>

BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSITARIA CENTRALE

Via Zamboni, 33

Sala studio con aria condizionata

Orario di apertura

dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 - 18,45

Sabato 9 - 13,30

<https://bub.unibo.it/it>

BIBLIOTECA DI STORIA ANTICA E DI FILOSOFIA

Via Zamboni, 38

Dal Lunedì al Venerdì 9 - 18.30

Sabato 9 – 12.30

<http://www.disci.unibo.it/it/biblioteca>

Study Rooms

<https://www.unibo.it/en/study/life-at-university-and-in-the-city/libraries-digital-resources-and-study-rooms/study-rooms-in-bologna>

Palazzo Paleotti

via Zamboni n. 25

orari: dal lunedì al venerdì 8 - 24

sabato e domenica 8.00 - 22.00

Sala studio di via Azzo Gardino n. 33

orari: dal lunedì al venerdì 9.00 – 22.00

sabato e domenica 11.00 – 19.00

Sala studio di via Belle Arti n. 8

orari: dal lunedì al venerdì 9.00 - 20.00

sabato 9.00 - 14.00

Sala studio di via Ranzani n. 14

orari: dal lunedì al venerdì 8.30 - 19.00

Sala studio di viale Berti Pichat n. 6

orari: dal lunedì alla domenica 9.00 - 24.00

Sala studio di via Petroni n. 13/b

orari: dal lunedì alla domenica 9.00 – 24

Scuderia - Piazza Verdi 2

Orari: dal lunedì alla domenica 9:00 - 18:00