BCSP Academic Handbook for Students 2026/27

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 (*Corso di Laurea*), and follow a precise study plan. Since high school (*liceo*) lasts longer than it does in the US and there are general exams in most subjects required for students finishing their high school studies (*esami di maturità*), 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"** at the portal "Studenti online". 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 you username (you have probably been asked to change it on your first login). **It would be advisable to change this password to "bcspspring2027!"** so to help you (and the RD) remember it when you have to enroll in your courses.
To receive credit for your courses (unless you have chosen a course taught in English), **all your work, papers, oral or written exams, presentations, must be performed in Italian, and you must be taking the course as "*frequentante*". ** This means that you have to attend classes and **cannot choose the "*non-frequentante*" option**, which may be offered to Italian students.

After your arrival in Bologna it is useful to **download the app** myUniBo, from which you can find information about your classes, locations, and exam dates. You can access the app with the same credentials.

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 *Corso di Laurea*. A ten or twelve-credit course normally meets for 60 hours and is semester-intensive. Five/six-credit courses meet for 27-36 hours and are normally half-semester long and they are usually referred to as **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
Lettere e Beni cult.	**5/6**	**30**	**3**
	10/12	**60**	**6**
Scienze Politiche	**6/8**	**36/48**	**3**
	9/10	**60**	**6**
Lingue e Letterature, Trad. E Interp.	**3**	**27**	**3**
	6	**54**	**6**

This means that, for example, in a literature class of 60 hours offered at the *Dipartimento di Filologia classica e Italianistica*, 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 *modulo* of a course, you must consult the BCSP Resident Director. The UNIBO professor with whom you take the exam for the *modulo* 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. All students must make sure that their finals (=*appelli*) are taken in person before departure from Bologna. No exams can be taken online post departure.

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 PROGRAM COURSES

Except for the Fall and Spring **Advanced Language & Culture course**, which meets for longer hours, the BCSP courses are ¾ semester-long and meet for 40 hours each = **3 BCSP credits**. BCSP program courses are normally taught by faculty from the University of Bologna. Generally, two courses are scheduled in the Spring semester, in addition to the Language & Culture course. Course descriptions and schedules are already posted on the BCSP Bologna website: www.bcspbologna.it/academics/syllabi/

Attendance for students enrolled in BCSP program courses is required. The schedule for exams will be decided during the course by the instructor and will take place at the end of the semester. As in the case also of UNIBO courses, students are encouraged to meet with instructors to discuss material that is not clear.

Students will choose a combination of BCSP courses and University of Bologna courses and are required to take the mandatory Language & Culture course and at least one BCSP content course.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

Each *Corso di Laurea* 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 (*orario di ricevimento*) 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 and II 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 Spring *module* I runs until mid or end of March and *module* II until May or June.

UNIBO and BCSP observe **one mid-semester break, which is Easter break** (March 25 through March 30, 2027, included).

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 March or April 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 June 30th.**

UNIBO COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Unlike American courses with exact titles, most Italian courses are listed according to general topics and the professors who teach them. For example, in the UNIBO course guide you will find possibly ten courses all listed as Letteratura Italiana. In reality, each Letteratura Italiana course will be different according to theme, period, author, etc.

All departments publish their courses on the UNIBO website. If you are not sure to what *Corso di Laurea* or *Dipartimento* the course you are aiming for belongs to, you can start your search from www.unibo.it/it/didattica/insegnamenti 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. Do not try to ask for a "discount" in the amount of material you have to prepare for the final exam. If the professor intends to facilitate you as foreign student, you'll find out on the syllabus. Still, 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.

Traditionally, Italian university courses of the *laurea triennale* are more general with more material to be covered. In some courses (especially in Art History), the student is expected to demonstrate – usually by passing a test – their competence in the memorization of the material on the text book before being allowed to continue to the more specific topic of the course . For courses or the *laurea magistrale* expect the subject to be more specific, not necessarily more difficult, but definitely more focused on a precise topic that presupposes some pre-acquired 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 June. 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 Advanced Language & 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. BCSP program courses earn 3 credits (equivalent to one US course). **Since various combinations of UNIBO and BCSP courses will constitute the minimum semester requirement of 15 credits, it is essential that each student consult carefully and regularly with the Resident Director in order to compose their course schedule 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 *Corsi di Laurea* 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 period from end of January to end of February 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.
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 Bologna 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 ***primo 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 June 30th and the RD may not be available after that date 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.
Keep in mind that all your requirements must be fulfilled in Italian (exams written and oral, and all papers) and that you must complete all components of your courses in order to maintain full-time academic status with BCSP. The RD may allow you to take courses in English at his discretion based on your major and academic background.

ADVICE FOR ORAL EXAMS

In the **oral exam** be as assertive and as fluent as possible. But use your judgment: some professors like clear, succinct answers. In an oral exam, it is normal that you will be judged in part on your fluency in Italian. Professors who had to struggle with another language themselves may be somewhat understanding, but even they may interpret inability to express yourself clearly, fluently and precisely in Italian as a lack of mastery of the course material.
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 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 ("*Che cosa l'ha interessata di più in questo corso?*" or "*Di che argomento desidera parlare?*"). In some humanities or political science classes, you will prepare a *relazione* or *tesina* 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 – 2026/27

	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**

Biblioteche a Bologna - Catalogo generale (SBN on-line):

Lista completa delle biblioteche

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

Luoghi di studio e di lettura

https://www.unibo.it/it/servizi-e-opportunita/biblioteche-risorse-digitali-e-sale-studio/sale-studio-a-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