

FIRST-YEAR BIG GUIDE

2025-2026 EDITION

WRITTEN BY:

Matteo Minafra

Susanna Goso



ASTRA

GUIDE TO THE FIRST YEAR BIG

1) Introduction	2
2) Use of personal devices and books	3
3) Exam session	4
a. Registration	
b. Partial, generals and continuous assessments	
c. Exams retakes	
d. How to see your GPA	
e. Application of the curve to grades	
4) Attendance and Honour Code	6
5) Study Plan	7
a. First semester: detailed explanation of the exams	7
i. Political Science and comparative politics	
ii. Quantitative Methods for social sciences I - Mathematics	
iii. Comparative public law – Module I	
iv. Introduction to Economics I - Microeconomics	
b. Second semester: detailed explanation of the exams	10
i. Introduction to Economics II - Macroeconomics	
ii. Political Philosophy	
iii. Quantitative Methods for social sciences II – Statistics	
iv. Marketing Research Skills for Public Policy	
v. Computer Science	
c. English exam: certification conversion or internal exam	12
d. ICDL	13
6) Programme change	14

This guide has no intention of substituting the material published by the University, that has to be considered the only official source of news on this topic.

WELCOME

Dear BIG students, we can officially give you our warmest welcome at Bocconi University! Knowing that going from high school to university can be incredibly stimulating but scary at the same time (we've all been there), we decided to write this brief guide that can help you through the beginning of your academic journey, providing you with all the information and advices that we wish we would've received our first day.

So, take some coffee (you'll need a lot!) and grow your desire to experiment and your goodwill: these are the key elements to fully enjoy this intense, but amazing, journey at Bocconi.

2) USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES AND BOOKS

Fundamental for lectures and exams is to have a personal laptop, both for courses such as *computer science* (exam you'll take in the 2nd semester) and to have better access to all the materials given by the university and the professors, all uploaded on the BlackBoard platform. Furthermore, some exams have to be taken on your personal laptop using a software called "*respondus lockdown*", that you will have to download before the exam session.

Many students prefer to also use an iPad/tablet to take notes, do exercises and write directly on the slides uploaded by professors; this is a purely personal choice, given that some students prefer to take notes on paper while others go with the digital way. However, as previously mentioned, you are required to have a laptop for exam purposes.

As far as books are concerned, we suggest you buy them after the beginning of lectures, because some books might end up being of little use for exams preparation (they can be substituted by handouts or other material given by professors). We highly encourage you to read each exam's section that you find if you keep reading this guide :)



3) EXAM SESSION

Exams, in Bocconi, usually take place during two ordinary sessions, a winter one (from December to January) and a summer one (from May to June).

You can then retake the 1st semester exams in July, and both 1st and 2nd semester exams in a session going from late August to early September.

For each exam you have two sittings during the ordinary sessions.

3.a) REGISTRATION

In order to sit an exam, you have to register through the You@B agenda. In it you can find exam dates and deadlines to sign up.

It's very important to sign up for the exam, because otherwise you won't be able to take it (Yes, it happened way more than once).

3.b) PARTIALS, GENERALS AND CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENTS

Most courses give you the possibility to take two partial exams instead of one only general exam, an opportunity to reduce your workload for the winter session.

On your first year, you will be able to take the partials for each course except "Comparative Constitutional Law", for which you will only have the possibility to take the general in January (it also has a group work that is worth part of the final grade). Our advice is to try and take all the partials, as they can really be of great use to reduce the workload for the December-January session. Partial exams take place at the end of October for 1st semester courses and in mid-March for 2nd semester classes.

We highly encourage you to pay great attention to the exam type when registering, as you won't be able to change it after the deadline. We are here reporting the main abbreviations to remember:

I: partial exam

S: general written exam

O: general oral exam

During the 1st year you will not have any oral exam except for the speaking part of the English internal exam (more on it in the following paragraphs).

Some courses have a continuous assessment schedule, that consists in brief tests (for example, Mathematics and Computer Science) or group projects (Comparative Constitutional Law and Statistics), and for which you don't have to sign up through the agenda. For most courses, you will receive information and instructions on these assessments through the Blackboard online platform.

3.c) EXAMS RETAKES

You probably know this already, but in Bocconi you're not allowed to retake exams as long you have gotten a grade higher or equal to 18.

One possibility that the university gives you is to withdraw during the exam. Professors will go into the specifics for this as they slightly change from exam to exam, and in case you withdraw your exam won't be graded and you will be able to retake it in the following sitting.

An advice we give you is to never withdraw from the 1st partial. When results come out in



case you are not satisfied with your grade you can always take the general, but at least you have tried! One very important thing to know is that if you withdraw from the 1st partial you **MUST** take the general, and same thing if you withdraw from a 2nd partial (you can't retake the 2nd partial in the following sitting!!).

3.d) HOW TO SEE YOUR GPA

You can see your GPA on the You@B Pro app (highly encouraged to download it!).

To do so you only have to open the app and click on your profile icon. You will be shown two separate GPAs:

- "GPA" (the one on the left) is your GPA with joint modules, and this means that exams such as law I and II, quantitative methods I and II and macroeconomics and microeconomics are considered together (ex. the weighted GPA of microeconomics and macroeconomics constitutes 1 vote that weights 14 credits on the total. This GPA is only used to compute your graduation grade).
- "GPA with modules" (on the right) is your weighted GPA with separated modules (ex. microeconomics is 1 vote with weight 8 credits on the total and macroeconomics is another vote with weight 6 credits on the total). This GPA is used to compute your exchange and master admission scores.

The GPA is always weighted by the number of credits per exam.

3.e) APPLICATION OF THE CURVE TO GRADES

In our university it is expected that grades follow the normal distribution, like many things in nature. Therefore, for those exams where the normal distribution is not reached, scores are "curved" so as to allow the achievement of the aforementioned distribution.

It is highly unlikely that BIG exams end up being curved, because usually they already satisfy the normal distribution.



4) ATTENDANCE AND HONOR CODE

The *attendance* is a procedure to follow to register your physical presence in the room.

“Political Science” is the only first year course that requires a minimum attendance level to be able to take partial exams. For this class a minimum frequency of 75% is required, but we highly encourage you to register your attendance for every class you attend.

Moreover, we strongly invite you to never register yourself as attending when you are not physically in the room, as it violates the Honor Code and can lead to hard disciplinary sanctions.

In order to register your attendance, it's necessary to enter the You@B app, click on the lecture you're following and then click “check in”.

The attendance has to be registered at the beginning of the lecture, usually in the first 10 minutes, or it might be considered invalid (there's no penalty for an invalid attendance).

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is a very important document you'll hear about many times, as it is fundamental for our university. It is a code that contains behaviour rules to follow, directed to the whole Bocconi community in order to guarantee a peaceful study environment in line with the university's values and principles: independence, ethic, transparency, freedom of expression, equality, solidarity, enhancement of diversity, attention to merit and to the development of individual skills, professionalism and attention to quality, social responsibility. The respect of such principles is part of the university's mission.

We are here reporting a summary of what we believe are the most important rules, but we encourage you to read the whole document in order to avoid incurring in disciplinary sanctions:

- Don't register your *attendance* in a class if you're not really there (professors often have rollcalls in classes with mandatory attendance!);
- Don't use academic or electronic material during exams if it's not explicitly allowed;
- Don't ask for suggestions to your classmates during exams;
- Don't plagiarize content without citing the sources in group projects or when writing your thesis in order to protect copyrights (Bocconi uses antiplagiarism software!);
- Don't impede academic activities nor cause potential damages to people and objects.

We remind you that, in order to avoid wrongdoings during exams, you will have to sign the Honor Code before the start (if you don't, your exam might result invalid!).

In case the norms were to be violated, you can incur in sanctions, decided by the Disciplinary Committee after a careful analysis of the case. The most severe sanctions are:

- An admonition
- A temporary ban from one or more courses
- A suspension from exams during one or more exam sessions
- A temporary exclusion from the University

Each sanction can have an impact on the student's career, as it will be recorded on the documents awarding you your degree. Furthermore, in the instances of ban, suspension and exclusion students won't be able to take advantage of benefits such as scholarships, residences etc.



5) STUDY PLAN

BIG students have to reach, during their 1st year, a maximum of 60 credits. In order to register for the 2nd year, students must have reached a number of 24 credits by the July session (so it's not mandatory to give all the exams of the year to be considered an "in corso" student).

The first year has 4 exams during the 1st semester:

6.a.1) POLITICAL SCIENCE AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Political Science and Comparative Politics | 8 CFU | I semester

Description: Political science delves deeply into the study of politics, governments, political systems and public policy. The key areas of focus in political science include: political theory, comparative politics, international relations, political behaviour and policy analysis. During the course you will understand how to summarise major theories concerning the origin of nation states, the causes of conflicts or cooperation and the strategies of terrorist organizations, the differences between regimes and the problems associated with the transitions to democracy.

Exam modalities: You can take two partials (the first one in October and the second one during the winter session) or a general exam (in the winter session). You will be able to take the partials only if you are an attending student (attendance equal or superior to 75% of lessons). However, the exam is the same for both attending and non-attending students. Exams have open-ended short answer, multiple choice, or short essay format.

Advice: We highly recommend you to be an attending student and to actively participate in class. Also remember to register your attendance.

It is strongly recommended to concentrate the study on the intuition behind the mathematical political models which are asked during the exams. Books may not be purchased since there is a plenty of material available (such as slides or documents) on the platform Blackboard, so the books can be useless.

6.a.2) QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES (MODULE I - MATHEMATICS)

Mathematics | 6 CFU | I semester

Description: Quantitative methods for social sciences refers to the use of mathematical tools, models, and techniques to analyze and understand social phenomena, human behavior, and societal trends. By applying mathematical methods, researchers in social sciences can quantify, predict, and explain various aspects of human interactions and social systems. Throughout the course matrices, derivatives, integrals, static and dynamic systems will be explained in the perspective of social sciences.

Exam modalities: You can take two partials (the first one in October and the second one during the winter session) or a general exam (in the winter session). The exam is composed of multiple choice questions and more articulated problems in its second part.



Advice: The book can result being useless. Our main recommendation is to study time after time and pay attention to the assignments, otherwise you could lose important points. We highly encourage you to ask for office hour whenever you have doubts about the explanations or exercises.

6.a.3) COMPARATIVE PUBLIC LAW Law Module I | 6 CFU | I semester

Description: Comparative public law examines and compares different constitutions, legal systems, and constitutional principles across various countries. It involves analyzing the structures, functions, and principles of constitutions to identify similarities, differences, and trends in how different nations govern themselves and protect the rights of their citizens. Key elements and objectives of comparative constitutional law include: comparing constitutional texts, identifying constitutional principles, examining constitutional institutions, rights and liberties, judicial review, constitutional evolution and legal and political dynamics

Exam modalities: The exam can only be taken as a general. There will be a series of multiple-choice question as well as two short essay questions on the topics analysed during the course. The exam is worth 70% of the final grade. The remaining 30% of the final grade depends on a groupwork and it consists in a presentation aimed at testing the students' ability to interact and to think critically about a given topic in the course.

Advice: Attendance and engaging both in class and in groupwork is strongly recommended. We also

recommend having a good understanding of the cases seen in class in preparation for the exam because there can be some questions about that. The notes taken in class are sufficient if taken with great attention to detail. The books are very interesting, and several questions of the exam refer directly to some passages.

6.a.4) INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMICS (MODULE I - MICROECONOMICS)

Microeconomics | 8 CFU | I semester

Description: The first economics course you'll follow at Bocconi. The course is focused on individual behaviours of economic agents, be them companies or individuals. Among the topics covered you can find consumer theories, supply and demand, technology and production, monopolies and oligopolies, choices under uncertainty and information asymmetries. During the course, you'll study different economic models, both from a theoretical standpoint and from a practical approach by doing many exercises.

Exam modalities: It's possible to pass the course either with one general exam or with two partial exams; both are worth up to 30 points. To get the extra point and obtain a 30 cum laude (31), you will have to research and write an article about the real-life applications of a microeconomics theory of your choice. The teacher will provide you with many examples and instructions. The expiration to upload the article is usually in late December.

An important thing to note is that, if you take the partials, you will be able to choose which exercises to complete (based on current modalities, you will be given 5 t/f exercises and will have to choose 4 of them and 3 exercises, among which you'll have to complete 2). If you take the general exam, you can't choose which exercises to do and you have to complete all of them.

Advice: Go to class and take notes, the book is not very used among students but it's still



interesting reading it. Slides contain what you should focus on the most and it's always encouraged to study from your professor's material. The course has a theoretical nature but it's fundamental to know how to solve exercises, and for this we highly encourage you to buy the exercise book and focus your preparation on solving exercises. Another advice is to take a look at past exams and to try and challenge yourself by solving them, as you might learn new way of reasoning that can end up being very useful for the exam. Even if you find it hard to understand everything in class, solving exercises help you understand everything better! We highly encourage you to solve all the exercises from the book as you study theory.



The second semester has 6 exams scheduled, among which there's the first language exam.

6.b.1) INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMICS (MODULE II - MACROECONOMICS)

Macroeconomics | 6 CFU | II semester

Description: Macroeconomics provides valuable insights into the complex interactions between various economic variables and their broader consequences for society, helping policymakers and researchers make informed decisions to promote economic stability and improve the welfare of individuals and communities. In the context of social sciences, macroeconomics plays a crucial role in understanding how various economic factors impact society as a whole. It examines how government policies, international trade, fiscal and monetary measures, and other economic forces influence the standard of living, employment opportunities, and overall well-being of the population

Exam modalities: The exam can be taken in the form of two partials; alternatively there is one general. The exam has a series of open ended and essay questions. The professor will also provide extra points for engaging in the groupwork. Concerning the groupwork, you will be divided in groups of 4-5 and will be required to prepare a presentation on a macroeconomic topic suggested by the teacher or the group members and accepted by the teacher. At the end you will also have to deliver a report.

Advice: Participate in class and take part in the groupwork. We strongly suggest having a deep understanding of the topics presented by all group students. The professor fully explains all important concepts during the lessons, so we strongly advise you to participate actively in class. The book can be very useful.

6.b.2) POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Political Philosophy | 6 CFU | II semester

Description: Political philosophy seeks to provide a theoretical framework for understanding political systems, evaluating their ethical implications, and guiding discussions on how to create just and well-ordered societies. Political philosophers delve into a wide range of topics, such as justice, liberty, equality, legitimacy, the role of the state in society and the evolution of these concepts throughout eras. Key themes in political philosophy include: the state and political authority, justice and rights, liberty and freedom, social contract theory, political ideology and global justice.

Exam modalities: The exam can be taken in the form of two partials or one general. The exam has a series of open ended and essay questions. The professor will also provide one extra point for active participation and contribution in class.

Advice: Have a good understanding of the readings assigned and read them before attending class. There aren't any differences between the partial and general exam, except for the study load. So, our advice is to always try partial exams, but the general is not so difficult. Exams usually only concerns what the professor says in the classroom; so, take



actively part to the lessons (also in order to obtain the extra point). You will be able to find pdfs for all the readings required and explained in class, so books are not necessary.

6.b.3) QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES (MODULE II - STATISTICS)

Statistics | 6 CFU | II semester

Description: Statistics for social sciences is a discipline that involves the collection, analysis, interpretation, presentation, and organisation of data to gain insights into social phenomena and understand human behaviour. It plays a fundamental role in the social sciences by providing researchers with tools to draw meaningful conclusions from empirical evidence and make informed decisions. Statistics serves as key purposes: data collection, data analysis, drawing inferences, identifying correlations and testing hypothesis. Through the application of statistics, social scientists

gain a better understanding of human behavior, social patterns, and societal trends. This knowledge contributes to the development of social policies, interventions, and solutions to address various social issues and improve the well-being of individuals and communities

Exam modalities:

The assessment is divided into three blocks:

Block 1: It consists of two partials of a general written exam that are worth up to 22 points.

Block 2: It consists of two short tests (6 questions worth 0.5 points each) aimed at testing students' knowledge on the use of STATA software (that will be a fundamental part of the lessons).

Each of the two tests is worth up to 3 points, and the average of the two will be summed to obtain the final grade.

Block 3: It consists of a group project that focuses on the application of STATA tools on a real case's data set. You will run analysis and write conclusions based on the results obtained through STATA. The group project is worth up to 6 points and you will be evaluated on how you managed data and on reporting and analysis abilities.

Your final grade will be calculated by summing points obtained in Block 1, 2 and 3.

Advice: Participate in class and take part to TA sessions on STATA, in order to understand how to use the software correctly. The general exam can be more difficult. Books are useless if you attend all the lessons, your notes will be sufficient.

6.b.4) MARKETING RESEARCH SKILLS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Marketing Research Skills | 3 CFU | II semester

Description: The course is a seminar that will teach you the basics of marketing and decision making, with a special focus on "nudge theory", the art of influencing the behaviour of groups or individuals. An interesting course that addresses social psychology, consumer behaviour and choice architecture and their implications and applications for political scientists and policy makers. Through the course, you will also learn to assess the quality of existing marketing researches in the context of public policy.

Exam modalities: It is a pass or fail exam and it will not influence your final GPA. The exam modalities are different for non-attending and attending students.



To be considered attending, students will need to take 2 short multiple-choice tests, the first in early March (before the first partial session) and the second in late April. If you pass both the tests, you will then take a final exam, based only on the slides and the readings provided by the Professor. Non-attending students (and students who didn't pass the two tests) will only be able to take the general exam based on the textbook. This assessment may include multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions and short essay questions.

Advice: We strongly recommend being an attending student, so that you will be able to avoid the entire workload of the book. As well, be sure to revise all the provided material before the quizzes, so that to avoid failing it, since by passing you will have less exams to prepare for the summer session. Hand-notes, integrated with slides, are more than enough for your preparation. We highly recommend to actively participate in class.

6.b.5) COMPUTER SCIENCE

Computer Science | 6 CFU | II semester

Description: A very practical course that allows you to gain knowledge on Microsoft Excel and Python. Regarding Excel, you start from the most basic functions to then study the most complex ones. The second part of the semester is instead focus on Python, a programming language. You'll learn the basis of the language, how to create variables, cycles and more. The most important skill you'll develop is to translate real problems to a Python script that can solve them.

Exam modalities: It's possible to pass the course with one general exam or two partial exams. Two online tests are also scheduled to give you 2 bonus points, 1 for each partial. Bonus points are not available to students taking the general exam. The exam is made up of some multiple-choice questions and some exercises to be solved using Excel or Python

Advice: Go to class but, most importantly, go to the practical lectures! They're held both in class and in the laboratories (with Bocconi's PCs), and this will allow you to gain confidence on the exercises you'll encounter during the exam. You shouldn't miss the practical lectures especially if you own a computer with software MacOS, as the exam will be taken using Bocconi's PCs and you might want to get acquainted with them. Theory books are very useful, and the exercise ones as well.

6.c) LANGUAGE EXAM

When enrolling for the 1st year, you have two options for the language to choose: you can either have English as your 1st language, and a level C1 is therefore required, or another language (Italian, Spanish, French or German), and in this latter case the level to be reached is a B2.

In order to pass the course, you can follow classes and then either take the Bocconi internal exam or convert an external language certification.

You can find, on Bocconi's website, all the accepted certifications. We remind you to the link as the list is frequently updated:

https://www.unibocconi.eu/wps/wcm/connect/bocconi/sitopubblico_en/navigation+tree/home/progr_ams/current+students/services/language+center/certificates/certificazioni+riconosciute+per+corsi+di+laurea+triennale+eng .



In the case of the English exam, we recommend you take an external language certification, as it is recognized globally and can be used for your exchange application as well (the IELTS is the most widely accepted, but mind that it has a 2-year validity and sometimes it's required to have it at the moment of departure. In order to avoid having to take it twice, as it can be expensive, we recommend you take it during the 2nd semester, so that you're covered even in case you'd like to leave for the spring term during your 3rd year).

In case you'd like to take the internal exam, either for English or the other languages, it will be divided in *listening, writing, reading e speaking*.

It's important to note that during the 2nd year you'll have to choose a 2nd language, and the level to be reached is B1. In case you're not fluent with any of the languages offered by Bocconi apart from English, we highly recommend you take it as 1st language.

Furthermore, International students must take Italian when studying in Bocconi, and as it can be a tricky language our suggestion is to take it during the 2nd year, when you've already had one year to learn a bit from friends and the exit level required is a B1.

6.d) ICDL CERTIFICATION

In order to take the Computer Science exam, it's necessary to have the ICDL Full Standard certification, composed by 7 exams (*computer essentials, online essentials, word processing, spreadsheets, IT security, presentation, online collaboration*).

If you don't have the certification yet, you can take it at Bocconi, at a lower price than what you would find from other test providers.

You have to buy the skill card and 7 exams (186€ on the website), and you have to take them (either online from your laptop or at the Bocconi test center) before the deadline provided on Bocconi's website (before the 2nd partial). You're indeed not allowed to sign up for the 2nd partial/general if you haven't passed the ICDL certification.

In case one exam is not passed, you can buy another one from the website (without having to buy the skill card again).

As far as the exams preparation is concerned, Bocconi will give you some videos to watch on BlackBoard that can help you prepare each single module. We also encourage you do some mock tests online, as they can be very useful.

As there's a maximum number of exams you can take per day (3), we encourage you to start doing the ICDL as soon as you can, as spots tend to fill out quickly when the deadline is approaching.

If you already possess an IT certification, you can check whether it's possible to convert it (so not to take the ICDL) here:

https://www.unibocconi.eu/wps/wcm/connect/bocconi/sitopubblico_en/navigation+tree/home/programs/current+students/services/it+education+center/it+certifications/prerequisite+for+curriculum+exams/ .



6) PROGRAMME CHANGE

It's possible to request a Programme Change in some predetermined slots during the BSc.

- In case you want to change from your course to another one taught in the same language (ex. both in English), you can ask for it at the end of 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of studies. However, it's highly recommended to ask it at the end of the 1st year, as you won't have to take supplemental exams (or just few of them). In case the change is asked between two courses with a common path (that are BIEM and BIEF), it can be done also at the end of the 3rd semester (January of the 2nd year of study), as the exams are the same for the courses up to that point in time.
- You can ask for the change between two courses with different teaching languages only at the end of the 1st year. Furthermore, if this is the case you need to have the linguistic prerequisites necessary to enroll in that course.

When changing program, exams can either be directly converted, can require a supplementation or not be converted at all. Exams can be easily converted if they have the same name and same number of CFU (ex. the first 3 semesters of BIEM and BIEF). Exams that don't have a conversion, and are therefore in excess, can be converted as electives during the 3rd year. Some exams might, as previously mentioned, require a supplementation, and this is the case of exams with slightly different syllabus or different numbers of CFU. Professors will inform you on the modalities to take these supplements.

It's important to highlight that, if your program change request is accepted, you can't present a new one. However, if your request is not accepted in September, you can try and present a new one in December (in this case, only between BIEM and BIEF). Once your request is accepted, you have 5 days to confirm your choice.

In case there's more requests than places available, a ranking will be made based on merit (weighted GPA and CFU reached). For some courses, a motivational letter is also required (for example, for changes to BAI).

To stay updated with all our projects follow us on instagram, [@astrabocconi](#), and join our **WhatsApp Community AstraWorld**:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/K0BxVUIYR22K739QkNA45J> !

