

The background of the entire page is a light beige color with a repeating pattern of faint, grey line-art icons. These icons include stylized human figures, bar charts, line graphs with upward arrows, pie charts, and speech bubbles. In the center of the page, there is a large, irregular, light blue shape that serves as a backdrop for the main title.

# **DISCOVER BESS**

**FIRST-YEAR GUIDE**  
**2025-2026 EDITION**

**WRITTEN BY:**  
**Isabella Almeida**

**ASTRA**

**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.**

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## **WELCOME**

Dear BESS 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 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 (Microeconomics and



Maths), 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 math I and II, statistics 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. mathematics is 1 vote with weight 9 credits on the total and macroeconomics is another vote with weight 7 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.

## 4) ATTENDANCE AND HONOR CODE

The *attendance* is a procedure to follow to register your physical presence in the room. BESS does not have a first year course that requires a minimum attendance level to be able to take partial exams.

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

BESS students have to reach, during their 1st year, a maximum of 62 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) MATHEMATICS, MODULE 1 (THEORY AND METHODS)

Mathematics | 9 CFU | I semester



Description: In Maths I you will learn the basics of the mathematics of economics. Mathematics is the best support for any rational empirical investigation: it gives theoretical reasoning the analytical and quantitative structure that makes it amenable to empirical analysis. The course combines mathematical rigor and economic motivation. In so doing, students acquire the ability to articulate motivated analytical reasoning.

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). For your final grade you will have some forms of evaluation: Pass or Fail group assignments given during the semester, weekly homework on BlackBoard (10% of your grade), and of course, the exams (90% of your grade for generals whereas for partials 45% for the first and 45% for the second). The exam is the same for both attending and non-attending students. Exams have open-ended answer and multiple choice.

Advice: 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 definitions and proofs for the exams.

## 6.a.2) FUNDAMENTALS OF MANAGEMENT

Management | 7 CFU | I semester

Description: The course provides a comprehensive introduction to the economics and management of business firms. After an overview of the main theories of the firm, the course equips students with the main analytical tools used in managerial accounting. Then, the course provides a comprehensive analysis of corporate strategic decisions. The course blends theoretical and analytical approaches with real-life insights and applications from the business sector. Students are encouraged to take an active part in the learning process.

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 about definitions, study-case open questions, and balance sheet exercises. Also, this is the only course in which you can withdraw from a partial and retake the exam still as a partial later on.

Advice: Focus on exercises for this course, your BESSgest challenge will be the time of the exam. But content wise it is not as complex as other subjects.

## 6.a.3) FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMICS, MODULE 1 (MICROECONOMICS)

Microeconomics | 7 CFU | I semester

Description: In microeconomics you will learn together how to think about the myriad of real-world economic issues through the lens of microeconomic analysis. The professors will show you how the foundations and tools of microeconomic theory are, combining mathematical rigor and curious minds to address fascinating questions about human behavior in economic and non-economic settings.

Exam modalities: The exam can be taken as a general or alternatively two partials. Exams have an online part, taken on the Norton platform, and a written, part based on the problem sets essays. For the final grade: There will be a series of 12 homeworks to be done through the Norton Smartworks too (which correspond to 10% of your final



grade). Then 4 group assignments (another 10% of your final grade). An individual Problem Set (Pass or Fail). An In-class Final Essay (10% of your grade). And the exam, which is worth the remaining 70% of the final grade (35% for each partial or 70% for the general).

Advice: Attendance and engaging both in class and in groupwork is strongly recommended. A personal recommendation are professor Borghi's lectures dedicated to problem solving, those are real life savers!

#### **6.a.4) LOGIC AND METHODOLOGY FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Logic | 6 CFU | I semester

Description: The overarching goal of this course is twofold. First, it will provide you with a good working knowledge of how mathematical arguments are captured logically. Second, it will guide you to appreciate the potential and limitations for the extension of mathematical reasoning beyond mathematical objects. This has a methodological consequence which is very hard to overestimate and which will be illustrated through examples drawn from a variety of fields: rational disagreement is not only logically possible, but it is normal in any social-scientific endeavour worth your while.

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. Having scored a 100% on both tests the student gets cum lode.

Advice: Go to class and focus on the book's exercises, the professor tends to put very similar ones in the exam.





The second semester has 5 exams scheduled, among which there's the first language exam.

### **6.b.1) MATHEMATICS, MODULE 2 (APPLIED MATHEMATICS)**

Mathematics II | 9 CFU | II semester

Description: The course goal is providing the main mathematical and analytical tools which are used in models applied to Economics and Decision Theory. Modeling in applied science always requires mathematical and statistical tools. In particular, Economic Theory makes a large use of some classical mathematical topics such as Mathematical Programming and Dynamical Systems. The development of technology has increased computing power making manageable and convenient the use of many mathematical techniques. Notwithstanding, the implementation and the comprehension of any model needs the knowledge of the available tools.

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 multiple choice questions.

Advice: Focus on the proofs and definitions and do not underestimate the partial exams, in maths it is a 100% worth it to take partials.

### **6.b.2) FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMICS, MODULE 2 (MACROECONOMICS)**

Macroeconomics | 7 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 2 parts. First of them being an online quiz based off of readings - that the student has to do beforehand. Secondly there is the written exam, which has a series of open ended questions and 4 true or false open-ended questions in the end. In order to have cum lode the student must score 50% from each of the quizzes and gotten a 30 on the written part.

Advice: Participate in class and take the partials. Even if you withdraw the exam the points for the quizzes stick with you. The book can be very useful.

### **6.b.3) STATISTICS, MODULE 1 (THEORY AND METHODS)**

Statistics | 7 CFU | II semester



Description: The aim of the course is to provide students with a first introduction to the main concepts of statistical thinking, both descriptive and inferential. The most relevant techniques for collecting and analyzing data are first explored. The course then introduces the fundamental principles of probability theory and random variables, as a basis for better understanding the point estimation theory. The focus is on analyzing real data, illustrating some of the methods and concepts with the help of the statistical software R.

Exam modalities:

The exam can be taken in the form of two partials or one general, worth up to 27 points maximum. The exam has a series of open-ended questions, one proof or definition exercise and two multiple choice questions in the end. Also, for your final grade you will have a group assignment worth up to 4 points made with R software - do it with dedication cause those points are going to be precious.

Advice: Participate in class and take part to TA sessions. The general exam can be more difficult. Books are not that useful, the professor's slides are top notch.

### 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 1<sup>st</sup> year, you have two options for the language to choose: you can either have English as your 1<sup>st</sup> 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/programs/current+students/services/language+center/certificates/certificazioni+riconosciute+per+corsi+di+laurea+triennale+eng](https://www.unibocconi.eu/wps/wcm/connect/bocconi/sitopubblico_en/navigation+tree/home/programs/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 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, so that you're covered even in case you'd like to leave for the spring term during your 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> year you'll have to choose a 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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/progr](https://www.unibocconi.eu/wps/wcm/connect/bocconi/sitopubblico_en/navigation+tree/home/progr)



[ams/current+students/services/it+education+center/it+certifications/prerequisite+for+curricular+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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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> !

