



One Year in Bologna

Wai Yee TAN

Ciao, mi chiamo Wai Yee.



Hi, my name is Wai Yee. I was one of the first batch of students from the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE), who received DAAD scholarship to attend the double degree program between the UDE and the University of Bologna (UniBo).

I have a background in Mechanical Engineering and at the time of double degree program, I was pursuing my master degree in Mechanical Engineering with specialization in Mechatronic at UDE and Mechanical Engineering with specialization in Motor Vehicle at UniBo.

I arrived in Bologna in October 2022 with two other fellow students and moved back to Duisburg after the completion of my degree in October 2023.

To future double degree students, I am sure you are going to enjoy this journey as much as, if not more than, I did!

The Program - Double Degree at UDE & UniBo

This program was by the Faculty of Engineering in UDE and the partner university UniBo, and is sponsored by the DAAD. At the time of my application, it was targeted for mechanical engineering students studying in the ISE program, with the specialization in Mechatronics.

Students who take part in the program have the opportunity to study in two universities in two different European countries simultaneously, with the first year of the master degree at the home university (in my case UDE) and the second year at the partner university (in my case UniBo) and receive a master degree from both universities upon graduation. For german students, DAAD provides sponsorship to cover living costs, one time transportation costs as well as the tuition fees.

**For the latest details of sponsorship, application procedure and requirements, please refer to the official website or contact the person in charge.*



The City - Bologna in my eyes

Bologna is a very young and old city, special in its own way. Old as in how well-maintained the historical building and architecture are, young as in how vibrant and full-of-surprises the city is.

Located within the Emilia-Romagna region, Bologna is famous for its regional cuisine, historical heritage and beautiful landscape. Besides, the train station Bologna Centrale can bring one to the coast or to the mountain in less than an hour.

As a student from the Ruhr area in Germany, the colorful atmosphere and sleepless city vibe fascinates me from the day I first set foot on it until today.



The University - Università di Bologna

The university of Bologna dated back in 1088, is known as the oldest university in world, which has been operating continuously since its existence. Many old architectures and buildings are still intact and well-maintained and some of them are so mesmerizing that they have become one of the attraction in the Bologna city.

The main campus for engineering students resides just right outside of the old city wall, which takes around 20 minutes from the train station if one walks. There is a canteen, a cafeteria as well as countless espresso vending machine situated in the campus.



Challenges (1/2)

1. Housing:

Finding an accommodation near to the university was a challenge for me given Bologna being a very popular choice for many internationals and locals to find a living and study. More and more people want to live in Bologna but it being an old town has limited space for new buildings. I had to live in an airbnb next town for the first 6 months until I found an apartment in the Bologna city.

2. Intense Curriculum:

Due to the difference of the academical calendar planning between UniBo and UDE, the lecture contents at UniBo are compressed into 3 months rather than 4.5 months at UDE. Almost everyday, classes started from 0900 to 1700, with sometimes longer or shorter break in between.

3. Oral Exams:

Throughout my bachelor and master degree program at UDE, I only had one exam carried out in oral form, not including those in the form of a presentation. However, at UniBo, most of the exams are carried out in the oral form, which I needed to get use to in the beginning.



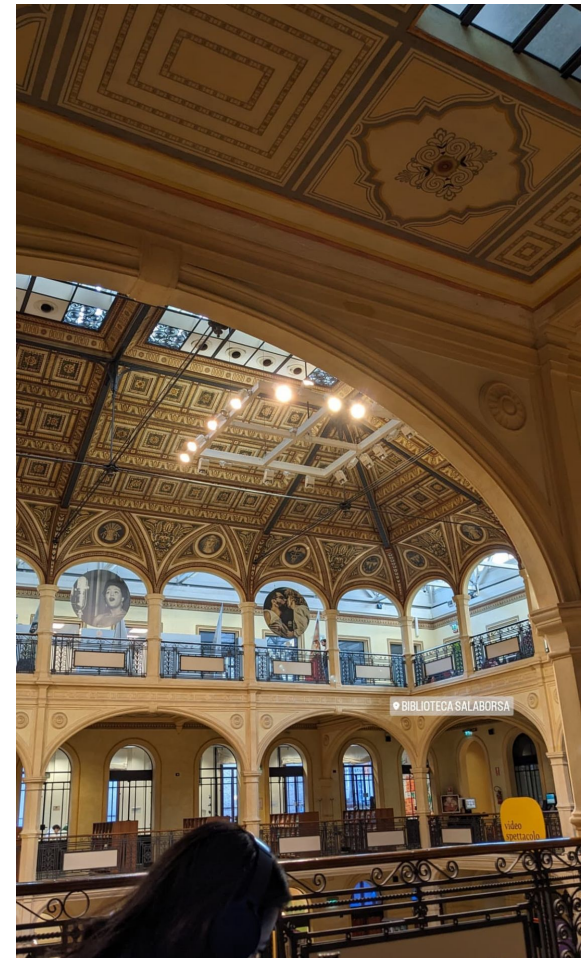
Challenges (2/2)

4. Lectures are more practical and in-depth:

It was sometimes challenging for me to follow the class even though I have had already taken a similar course back at UDE. One of the reason is that the lecture was carried out in a more practical way, with more in-depth detail. One good example is CAD related classes, even though we have had CAD related classes at UDE before, it was rather theoretical instead of practically using the CAD software to design and construct products.

5. Limited studying space outside of lectures:

At UDE, one can easily find a place to study or catch up with fellow course mates after lectures, be it the sitting area outside of a lecture hall, the library, the cafeteria and more. At UniBo, especially the Engineering Campus, the possibility to find a place to continue learning or studying is rather low. The study rooms were limited and library was normally full. I later realized that the city library Biblioteca Salaborsa next to Piazza Maggiore offers a possibility to study in there, with electricity and internet available.



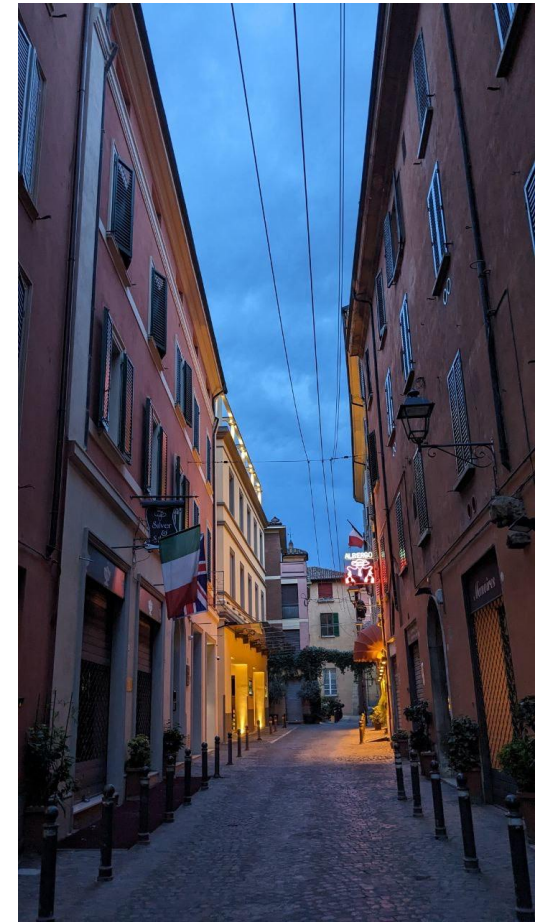
My Day to Day as a Student at UniBo (1/2)

The Commute

Since I lived in a small town next to Bologna called Imola, I woke up around 6:30 to catch a train to Bologna everyday when I had early classes. The train from Imola to Bologna is quite frequent and therefore is not a big issue for me that I didn't live in the Bologna city center. Instead of taking busses from the train station to my campus, I would normally opt for walking, as I really appreciated the scenery and atmosphere I experienced walking down the city portici, the old buildings and vibrant morning. Not to mention that Bologna city is very well-designed for pedestrian as it is equipped with wide walkway and portico, which is a great protection during rainy days.

The Lectures

Different from the curriculum structure in Germany, the lectures were quite intense and it was hard for me to follow in the beginning. As an example, at University of Duisburg-Essen, in winter semester lectures start in October and ends in the middle of February, which is then followed by one month of exam period. However, in the University of Bologna, my lectures started at the end of September and ended before Christmas. Therefore, the knowledge transfer was done in a rather compact way by having two times the amount of lectures per week compared to back in UDE. As a result/reward, we were granted longer non-lecture time after new year to explore the surroundings..



My Day to Day as a Student at UniBo (2/2)

The lecture was also hold in a different way. In UDE, as of master degree in mechanical engineering, the amount of students in one course are significantly less than what I experienced in most of the courses in Bologna. There are many cross-curriculum courses and many courses have more than 80 students. It was quite common that some students have to stand or get a seat without a table as the attendance, even though is not mandatory (just like in many courses at UDE), most students won't skip the lectures. What is worth-mentioning is that most lecture contents won't be published online, which explains the high attendance of the students.

The Break

After lectures, I would either enjoy my lunch in the cafeteria or visit my favourite coffee bar, Mister Coffee at Via Riva di Reno, to get a Cappuccino and Cornetto al Pistacchio. When I long break in between, I liked to visit the public library Biblioteca Salaborsa to go through some study materials. It is spacious and equipped with WIFI and power supply, not to mention that it is also a tourist spot!

As a student city, one can easily find parties and aperitivo bar to have fun and get to know new people in the evening. My favourite evening activity was actually the open-air cinema at Piazza Maggiore each summer. After the sun went down, the whole piazza was filled with people enjoying the movie and the season. It is sensational!



Personal Words



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This experience doing my second master degree year at UniBo has definitely enriched my personal, academic and professional aspect in life. Throughout the whole journey, I have faced many challenges being in a rather unfamiliar city without friends and family, however, I have gained many friendships along the way. The passion and dedication of some of my Italian classmates in knowledge impressed and humbled me. The friendliness of the people I met randomly, be it my landlord, my Airbnb host and his family, the coffee bar owner who brews perfect Cappuccino, the street artists who filled the Piazza Maggiore with their music and the ice-cream parlours closing at 2300, and all the small little things, warmed my heart and fed my soul.

Appreciation

I would like to thank all parties involved who made this experience possible for me. The DAAD, the person in charge at UDE and UniBo. Special thanks to Mr. Sazdovski, who supported the program students directly and indirectly throughout the whole program. And I would recommend anyone who is interested in experiencing a different culture and academic atmosphere to join this program.

A Picture Says A
Thousand Words

A Photo Says A Thousand Words - The Unexpected



Description: A symbolic postcard from Florence / Randomly being interviewed by the local TV at Piazza Maggiore / An interesting status from Milan / Random streetview in Bologna

A Photo Says A Thousand Words - The Expected



Description: Being spoiled by the famous Mò Mortadella Lab with Mortadella / To celebrate passing my last exam at my favourite Pizza restaurant / The Cannoli / Some seafood dish I got at Cattolica with my Bolognese landlord / The best Tortellini al Brodo I have ever tasted during the Tortellini festival

A Photo Says A Thousand Words - The Warmth



Description: I was lucky to taste Margarita's fantastic Paella! / My regular orders at Mister Coffee, Cappuccino e Cornetto al Pistacchio / Awesome Gelato at Verona / Found this little eggplant at Barbara's garden / Learned to make tortellini from Carlos, my AirBnB host turned friends! / Wine festival at Imola / Black berries handpicked by Barbara

A Photo Says A Thousand Words - The Goodbye



Description: Presentation and defense of my master thesis on the topic of "Design and Implementation of a Virtual Reality Platform for Automotive Architecture Assessment" / The graduation ceremony with other graduates