

Feedback from Nawid Sobat (Exchange Semester in Bologna)

Hi everyone - I'm Nawid Sobat. I did an exchange semester through Philipps-Universität Marburg and spent the 3rd semester at the University of Bologna. Below is what I learned and what I wish I'd known before I went to Bologna.

Why I chose an exchange: I wanted to experience a different teaching style, improve my CV, and live in a vibrant student city. Bologna delivered great food, history, and lots of student life.

Most useful preparation steps: I started thinking about it early (about 9-12 months before departure), met my faculty's outgoing advisor to sort recognition rules, and finished my Learning Agreement before booking non-refundable travel. That saved a lot of stress.

What surprised me / challenges: Housing was the hardest part - rooms go fast. Bureaucracy at the host university took longer than I expected (enrolment, residence registration), so I kept copies of every email and form, and scheduled in-person help at the Exchange Student Desk when I arrived. Some courses used exam formats I hadn't seen before, so plan for different assessment styles.

What worked well: I attended orientation and the language preparation courses offered by Marburg, joined local student groups and the Erasmus Facebook and WhatsApp groups to find housing and social events, and kept a flexible reserve in my budget for social and travel costs.

Top tips for newcomers:

1. Finalize the Learning Agreement (LA) and recognition rules with your Marburg study advisor early - that's critical for credit transfer.
2. Start housing search immediately after nomination - use university housing portals and Erasmus groups.
3. Learn basic Italian - even A2 helps for everyday life and some administrative tasks.
4. Keep digital and paper copies of all documents (migration/visa, enrolment, LA changes, transcripts).
5. Don't forget to apply for Erasmus funding and fill in the grant report on return.

Overall: The semester was academically enriching and personally transformative. If you prepare the paperwork, housing, and a realistic budget early, you'll get much more out of the experience and less stress. Good luck - and contact me if you have questions! Nawid

Step-by-step roadmap (Philipps-Universität Marburg → semester abroad)

Below are a practical timeline and a checklist. Key Marburg pages are cited after the most important steps.

12–9 months before departure - decide & check eligibility

1. Decide destination & program - Erasmus+ (Europe) vs bilateral/partner vs freemover. Check Marburg's partner-university lists and your faculty's exchange pages.
2. Attend information events & contact advisors - go to the International Office information sessions and your faculty's outgoing coordinator to learn faculty-specific rules and recognition practices.

9–6 months before - application window & documents

3. Check exact application deadlines for your program and partner institution (Marburg lists deadlines for Erasmus and partner exchanges; note there are seasonal deadlines - e.g., application deadlines cited on Marburg pages). Mark these in your calendar.
4. Prepare application documents - transcript, CV, motivation statement (if required), language certificate (Marburg generally recommends at least CEFR B1/B2 depending on the course), passport copy, and any faculty forms.
5. Submit internal nomination / application at Marburg (Mobility Online / Mobility portal) and, if required, apply to the host university after nomination. Follow the step-by-step instructions on the application pages of Marburg University.

4–3 months before - academic & funding preparation

6. Create Learning Agreement (LA) - draft the LA with courses you plan to take at the host university, discuss recognition with your Marburg study advisor, and use the Online Learning Agreement system if applicable. Keep versions and approvals documented.
7. Apply for funding & insurance - apply for Erasmus grant (will be a big help and you don't need to refund it), check Auslands-BAföG or PROMOS, and arrange travel/health insurance or EHIC/European Health Insurance Card if applicable. Contact Marburg's International Office for links and forms.

2–1 month(s) before - housing, visa, travel

8. Start the search for housing immediately - university dorms and private housing are both possible; use university housing pages, local student groups, and recommended portals. Begin this as soon as you receive nomination or acceptance.

9. Visa / residence permit - non-EU students must apply for the host country visa in time; EU students must check local registration rules. Confirm entry/registration procedures on the host university website.

10. Book travel & plan arrival - note orientation dates. Marburg/partner pages often list recommended arrival windows (orientation, language courses).

While abroad - stay organized!

11. Finalize Learning Agreement (LA) changes if needed - submit LA modifications promptly (keep Marburg advisor and host university in the loop). Keep digital copies of all approvals.

12. Use exchange student services - the host Exchange Student Desk helps with enrolment and bureaucratic steps; book appointments early. Keep copies of enrolment confirmation and exam records.

13. Budget and social integration - monitor spending, join Erasmus/student networks and cultural events, and use campus services (language courses, counselling).

After return - recognition & reporting

14. Request official transcript (Transcript of Records) from host and submit it to Marburg for credit recognition. Follow Marburg's recognition/LA finalization procedure.

15. Complete funding/grant reports (Erasmus grant final report) and any feedback required by Marburg or the funding body. Save final documents for your records.