

# Final Report – Ainhoa González Uriarte

Semester exchange programme at PH Zug

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## 1. Support

- **From PH Zug / the International Office**

The university organizes a presentation day that is during the first week of September. The adapting/socializing activities are scarce, the adaptation and inclusion to the university and the country is rather individual.

The university assigns a “buddy” to the exchange students who will oversee helping you in this process of adaptation and showing you the city, etc.

I felt like I could write to the international contact and to every professor if I had any doubt or enquiry. They were all very helpful and supportive. I could notice that they were making an effort to communicate with me and understand my needs, they were trying to make me feel as comfortable as possible.

Furthermore, the University provided me with a grant which helped me afford the high prices of Switzerland and were always very sensitive with what they could do to help with our finances.

- **From your classroom teacher (if you completed the internship)**

Both my classroom teacher (Ann Hamilton) and my mentor at University (Olivia Green) were incredibly helpful and from them I learnt much more than I expected. I look up to them both in their professional life as in their personalities.

She was always willing to answer all our questions and treated as like any other teacher colleague. She trusted us to be in charge of a whole room and learning area and was always happy to guide us if needed.

This was the best of my stay at the Pädagogische Hochschule and I couldn't be more grateful for it.

- **From your buddy**

The activities carried out with the buddy depend on the connection that is created between the two of you and the relationship that develops. In our case, there were very few activities offered by the buddy, having met only once the first week, another time the second week to deal with some papers for the immigration centre, one third time for an hour in a market in Zug and a fourth and last time at her home.

We feel a little abandoned by her and as if it was more of a duty rather than a social, interactive and enjoyable experience for her.

## 2. Accommodation and living situation

- **Finding accommodations, type of accommodations, cost**

The university arranges, helps and guides about accommodation by contacting the best option.

My accommodation has been the monastery "Kloster Maria Opferung". It is located next to the University, with an excellent location and newly renovated facilities. It consists of a single room with a sink, two bathrooms, two showers and a kitchen shared with the other roommates (maximum of up to five women).

It is highly recommended; it is comfortable and cheap (450 CHF / month) and allows you total freedom. They provide you with sheets and towels.

The only downside is that low light enters the room.

- **Approximate monthly living costs**

The accommodation costs CHF 450 per month, the food estimates that triple or quadruple that in Spain (where I come from) and transport is also expensive. However, the university offers a scholarship of CHF 440 per month for five months (a total of CHF 2,200) that can cover accommodation and meals.

## 3. Overall programme

- **Programme at PH Zug (lectures etc.)**

The subjects are interesting, and the method used by the teachers is participatory. However, there are some subjects that, although they appear in the program as bilingual, are taught mainly in German. For me, in particular, that was challenging and exciting it allowed me to enrich my German knowledge. In addition, there are subjects that are so similar to those in our university that may seem repetitive and others that have nothing to do with the Spanish educational system (they are particular to the educational program in Switzerland). Nevertheless, I must congratulate the university for the advanced programme in this regard, as it is not easy, neither regarding organization nor teacher training in English.

The difficulty of the classes is not high except for those that are totally new for foreign students and that may seem strange at first. However, all teachers make a great effort to adapt to the students and understand their needs. They put all possible facilities.

- **Teaching practice programme**

What is most worth this exchange is undoubtedly the internship. Two days a week at the international school are a real supplement to the exchange. I have learned more in four months here than in two years of career. The method of organizing and monitoring practices is also much more reflective than what I am used to. You will be able to make an important reflection about what you would like to pursue in your professional future. It is a unique experience where you can also improve your level of English.

- **Challenges you faced**

One of the courses that I am taking in PH Zug is “Textiles in Design”. The first day was quite surprising and challenging at the same time. The first remarkable comment would be that even if it should supposedly be bilingual, the teachers mainly talk in German, so the oral comprehension is already a difficulty. Additionally, in Spain we do not have any subject related to Textiles neither in Primary/High School nor in University.

So, when the first day, the professor started moving around the class, making figures, using old clothes to cover herself... and asked us to complete a task just by explaining to us that we had to explore the textiles and have fun, it was a challenge for me because I did not understand the subject, the purpose of the activity and did not have any indication of how to complete it.

The other day, I went alone to Trampolin class. We were 4 students and a teacher, everyone was Suisse except for me. The teacher always spoke in Suisse German even in the explanations and only used English or High German when she was talking to me.

There was only one trampoline so we (the students) had to jump in and practice by turns while the others watched. While we were waiting for our turn everyone kept talking in Suisse and I could not intervene in the conversation because I did not understand the language.

In the beginning of October, I went to Kosovo with other students from Switzerland. During our stay there, we stayed with host families that were very welcoming.

While we were with the others students, I went and talk to different people (both students that I didn't know from Switzerland and students) or walk sometimes alone, just as I would do in any other place when surrounded by people I want to get to know.

However, most of the times I would hear my host calling for me, saying my name so that I would join her. It might sometimes had seemed as if I couldn't go out of her sight and could not talk to other students or walk a little further than her.

This semester is the first time that I have teaching practice in a kindergarten class. Maria and I are together, and we support each other. Maria has already some experience in the field.

The other day, we had prepared a lesson in the construction room and we oversaw three kids.

Suddenly, one of the kids said: “I want mummy” and I saw that he had a very sad look in his eyes. I looked at Maria to see if she knew what to do or not. I wasn't sure if it was better to take him to his main teacher or if we could handle it by ourselves.

We were in an unfamiliar and unknown situation.

## 4. Personal evaluation of the stay

- **Benefit for your future studies and career**

In one hand, this profitable experience will enable me to be more appreciative and grateful of every good teacher and course and be more comprehensive.

In the other hand, having seen other educational systems and schools will allow me to have a different perspective that can be advantageous.

Finally, the experience I have earned in the International school is unique and favourable to have a fruitful future.

- **Recommendations for future students**

Be aware of the taxes for the immigration centre, travel and discover places as much as you can, do not be shy to introduce yourself to others, find people to rely on and with whom you can share adventures. **TIME FLIES!**

Take every chance to do what you came here for: improve your English, German, learn about education, travel, improve your teaching skills...

Take advantage of natural scenarios, they are breath-taking.

**SAY YES TO EVERY PROPOSED ACTIVITY!**

- **Personal evaluation**

### 3 positives

1. Personally, I think I am much more tranquil, and I have more inner understanding or education (I know what I need in every variable mood)
2. I am now able to be more empathetic with others being more aware of their feelings and thoughts.
3. I am fearless to try something new or even difficult assignments in any language.

### 3 negative points

1. My expertise in languages is worse than I thought, I find it really hard to change quickly from one language to another. And my French level has very much worsened.
2. I could have socialized more and made most of my German speaking opportunities.
3. I am not as hard working as I could, and I have not travelled as much as I thought I would.