

Semester Exchange Programme Final Report

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1. Support

From PH Zug / the International Office

The International Office provided exceptional support throughout my exchange semester. Olivia and Linda, my mentors, were pivotal in my professional development. Olivia provided me with weekly advice and patiently listened to my internship reflections each week. Linda, my mentor at ISZL, was instrumental in helping me navigate the challenges of teaching in an international school environment. Her wealth of experience and encouragement made the teaching practice both rewarding and educational. Linda guided me in creating a structured and practical internship plan, offering insightful feedback at every stage.

Judith, the Mobility Coordinator, ensured all administrative arrangements ran smoothly, including my accommodation and transport passes. The Swiss half-fare card and one-month Zuger pass provided by the International Office were extremely useful for exploring Switzerland affordably. The International Office was incredibly supportive; when I encountered an issue with my residence permit, they resolved it promptly and efficiently.

From My Classroom Teacher

Linda, my mentor teacher at ISZL, was a role model in every sense. As an experienced IB educator, she emphasized the importance of student-centered learning, critical thinking, and open-ended questioning. Her constructive feedback and unwavering support significantly enhanced my teaching skills. Working alongside her allowed me to understand the nuances of supporting students with diverse learning needs, a lesson I will carry forward in my career.

From My Buddy

My two buddies, Michelle and Irina, were incredibly friendly and welcoming. We had a wonderful time together, including my first-ever experience playing bowling, which they introduced me to. Irina also kindly invited us to her home for a delicious pasta meal, and we spent an enjoyable and memorable evening together. Their warmth and hospitality made my exchange experience even more special.



2. Accommodation and Living Situation

Finding Accommodation and Type of Accommodation

I stayed in a homestay with Tanya and Pat, who live in a scenic rural area near Zurich. My monthly rent of 900 CHF included evening meals, which were both delicious and a great opportunity for cultural exchange. Living with them allowed me to experience Swiss family life firsthand while enjoying a tranquil environment perfect for study and reflection.

Approximate Monthly Living Costs

In addition to the rent, my monthly expenses for food, transportation, and leisure were approximately 1500 CHF. Since it was my first time in Europe, I often took advantage of the weekends to travel to other countries, which accounted for the additional expenses.

3. Overall Programme

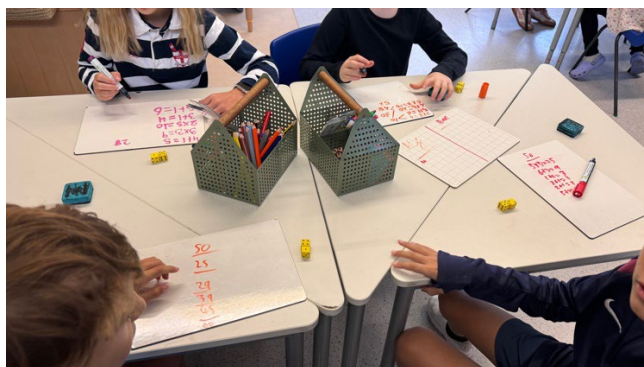
Programme at PH Zug

The academic programme at PH Zug was thoughtfully designed, catering to the diverse needs of exchange students. The school showed great care for exchange students by offering dedicated courses tailored specifically for us. For instance, some sessions focused on sharing the joys and challenges experienced during the exchange, promoting mental well-being through open dialogue. One particularly unique and engaging course introduced us to voice training for teachers—a first for me. Courses like “*Studying Abroad*” and “**Speech and Voice Training**” stood out for their emphasis on cultural exchange, inclusive education, and effective teaching strategies. While the language barrier posed challenges in certain German-medium sessions, the professors were always supportive and made efforts to help international students engage effectively.

Teaching Practice Programme

My teaching practice at ISZL was an unforgettable and invaluable part of the semester. Teaching a vibrant 4th-grade class gave me hands-on experience in lesson planning, classroom management, and fostering critical thinking. The IB system's emphasis on holistic development and inquiry-based learning inspired me to explore more creative approaches in teaching.

Linda’s mentorship helped me overcome initial difficulties, such as navigating language barriers and providing constructive feedback to students. Observing her classes taught me the importance of being empathetic and flexible, especially when working with students who have diverse learning needs.



Challenges Faced

- **Language Barriers:** Teaching in English, rather than my native Chinese, was a significant challenge, especially when conveying complex ideas.

- **Adapting to a New Educational System:** The IB system's focus on inquiry-based learning required me to rethink traditional teaching methods.
 - **Time Management:** Balancing lesson planning, internship responsibilities, and personal time was initially overwhelming. However, each challenge taught me resilience, adaptability, and the value of seeking help when needed.
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4. Personal Evaluation of the Stay

Benefit for Future Studies and Career

This exchange semester has been transformative for my personal and professional growth. The teaching practice at ISZL deepened my understanding of international education and reinforced my passion for teaching. I gained valuable skills, such as designing student-centered lessons, providing effective feedback, and managing a classroom. The experience has also enhanced my confidence to teach Chinese in international schools.

Recommendations for Future Students

1. **Be Open to Challenges:** Teaching in a new environment can be daunting, but it's an excellent opportunity for growth.
2. **Immerse in Swiss Culture:** Explore the local traditions, enjoy the beautiful Swiss landscapes, and spend time by Zugersee.
3. **Budget Wisely:** Switzerland's cost of living is high, so plan your finances carefully and make use of discounts like the Swiss half-fare card.
4. **Seek Mentorship:** Build strong relationships with your mentors and take full advantage of their guidance.

Personal Evaluation (3 Positive and 3 Negative Points)

Positive Points:

1. I developed confidence in my teaching abilities and discovered new

methodologies.

2. Living in a homestay allowed me to experience Swiss culture authentically.
3. I formed meaningful connections with my students, colleagues, and host family.

Negative Points:

1. Language barriers occasionally hindered my ability to engage fully in academic and social contexts.
 2. I initially struggled with time management, particularly during lesson planning.
 3. The three-month exchange felt too short to fully explore Switzerland and integrate deeply into local life.
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Conclusion

This semester exchange programme at PH Zug and teaching practice at ISZL have been pivotal in shaping my aspirations and skills as an educator. Despite the challenges, the support from my mentors and hosts, combined with the enriching academic and cultural experiences, made this journey unforgettable. I feel more confident, open-minded, and inspired to pursue a career in international education. I highly recommend this programme to future students who are eager to grow personally and professionally while embracing the beauty of Switzerland.