

1. Information and support

PH Zug

The measures put in place to assist and provide me with a pleasant and easy experience being in Switzerland was brilliant. Judith and Patrick from PH Zug were helpful, approachable, contactable and their assistance with matters was dealt with in a professional and timely manner. The contact I had with Judith in both Australia prior to the program commencing and during my time in Zug was never an issue.

The support shown by the teachers and students at PH Zug were commendable considering I don't speak any German. The teachers who had limited English always attempted to their best of their ability to make information clear. All of the students I had contact with were friendly, welcoming and more than happy to assist where they could. Nicole, our buddy, was more than generous with her time and offered us countless opportunities to explore Switzerland with her. She introduced me to other Swiss students which made my experiences at PH Zug easier and more enjoyable.

ISOCS

My teaching experience there was incredible. I felt like I was walking into my home because the staff were so welcoming, caring and happy for us to join their team. I've never felt that way in an Australian school. Sarah Pegacho (my mentor) is one of the most incredible teachers/people I have ever worked with. She is knowledgeable, never made me feel uncomfortable or intimidated and I feel that I have established a strong personal relationship with her, alongside a professional one. Serrin (PYP Coordinator) works closely with Sarah and we've subsequently spent lots of time together too. Serrin is indescribable as a mentor, teacher and leader. Her strength, experience and expertise in her profession has mesmerised me since the day I met her and I'm excited to stay in contact with her back in Australia. I have been so exceptionally lucky to have been placed with Sarah and Serrin for my placement at ISOCS and the knowledge they have passed onto me has impacted my teaching and pedagogical philosophy and I will be forever grateful of the time and patience they have had with me during my time in Switzerland. Anna Davis (Primary Coordinator), although I haven't had as much involvement in her lessons or presence, exudes professionalism and care of her staff; myself included. She has welcomed me into her school with open arms and spending time with and learning from her has been invaluable for me as I develop into the teacher I want to be.

I have engaged with staff more than I ever have in a Melbourne school, I was asked on countless occasions to step in and take over a class without having done any planning and was able to successfully execute these lessons. I was given opportunities to teach other year levels, participate in daily staff meetings and be welcomed into a team of teachers and help them in every way I could. I don't think I would have had this experience or adopted these qualities elsewhere.

2. Overall program / living situation

Host Family

I could not have wished to be placed in a more caring and loving family. From the moment I met Bettina, I knew how fortunate I was to be placed with her and her beautiful family. She treated me like her own and the room I had was perfectly sufficient. I spent more time in the lounge room and kitchen than I did by myself locked up in my room and spent breakfast and dinner with the family every day.

Bettina teaches at two schools and asked me to teach with her at Talentia (a school for students who's IQ exceeds 130). Teaching English lessons with Bettina opened me up to how team teaching works in the real world and also provided me experience teaching extremely academically advanced students.

Cost of accommodation (500CHF) was no problem at all and never struck me initially to be a ludicrous amount. Unterageri is absolutely beautiful and it was difficult to go down to Zug when the skies were so blue and I could see the fog coming. Public transport to and from the house was convenient and easy to navigate and having supermarkets within a 5 minute walk was also really great. Couldn't recommend the Causero family enough; I can't wait to come back.

Program at PH Zug

I was really excited to immerse myself into the Swiss approach at developing pre-service teachers. Viewing the subjects and engaging with Swiss students about their experiences at Pädagogische Hochschule's in different cantons. It was intriguing to learn about the subjects they undertake, the amount of time they spend at the institutes and how elaborate and extensive the programs are compared to that at Deakin. Compared to the one day a week, 4 subject semesters I'm required to undertake in Melbourne, I was originally resentful towards the prospect of being at Uni 4 days a week, however after learning about the extensiveness of the program I became envious at the experiences the Swiss students are exposed to.

The lessons that I was allocated to at PH Zug, although interesting at the beginning were difficult to understand (due to mainly German speaking lessons) and the timing of the schedule on a Friday was really difficult to coordinate my time at ISOCS. In the first week we were in Switzerland I spent less than a full day at ISOCS due to lessons, meetings etc., which was frustrating. The break between the first class (8:20-9:50) to our next class at 1:30 was just too long and made me feel like I was wasting my day when I could have been teaching. My mentor teacher was flexible and gave me all the freedom I needed to attend classes and other activities planned, but having paid a substantial amount of money to come here and gain teaching experience; I found it difficult giving that up to sit in a class I was unable to comprehend or learn from. I don't know if I would have preferred a class or two after school once a week or maybe two full days rather than once a week would have been better – I'm hoping input from the other students will provide their opinions so the classes at PH Zug are undertaken in the best possible way to ensure our classroom time isn't as impacted.

The tour that They took us on around Zug was really valuable. She was funny, engaging, knowledgeable and I didn't want her to leave! It would have been really lovely to go to a café and sit down and relax somewhere through the tour to ask her questions but that's the only form of improvement I could think of. She was really incredible to meet and learn from.

3. Goals and professional benefit

Coming to Switzerland, I wasn't entirely sure about what to expect, but my goal was to improve my teaching and understanding of other cultures and practices. In my class of 11 students, each of them came from a different country, bringing contrasting views, opinions, beliefs, skills and values to the classroom. I had three EAL students in my class which exposed me to a new aspect of teaching that I assumed would frustrate me but instead proved to be really rewarding. Because the teachers and class sizes at ISOCS are tiny, I was able to go in and out of different classrooms to adopt characteristics and teaching strategies from each teacher which I have added to my own pedagogy. I have learnt new skills in classroom management and been exposed to the PYP program and extensively learnt about how it's taught, the benefits and how students react to that sort of

education. I have developed an understanding of the program to a competent level and would feel confident applying for jobs that follow the PYP/IB program.

Coming into an international school, I found it easy to assimilate with all the staff because they were so incredibly welcoming which has allowed me to address an entire standard from the Australian standards I am expected to adhere to. Establishing positive relationships with the staff at ISOCS has allowed me to create strong relationships and the opportunity to seek future advice from them as I make my way on my teaching journey. All of the teachers have insisted I put them as a reference on my CV which makes me feel as if I've had a strong impact at the school and with them personally. My time, although emotionally draining and stressful at times, has impacted my stance on educating and teaching which has made this experience beneficial and rewarding.

4. Personal evaluation of stay

Negatives

- Not finding out host families until 2 weeks before departure was extremely frustrating/disappointing and caused a *lot* of us heartache and angst. I understand people are on holidays at the time the program is organised but seeking them before that period so we can be told with plenty of warning would be a better option.
- One day a week at PH Zug initially didn't seem too much but with other meetings/classes/tours etc., it was far too disruptive when it came to our practicum and it was difficult to prioritize a class being completely taught in German to the experiences in the classroom.
- The overall cost of the program and inability for us to know where and why it cost so much – this I believe comes more from Deakin's end but if it is related to PH Zug I would like the opportunity to discuss it further to improve future study experiences for the upcoming Australian students.

Positives

- My mentor teacher was absolutely fantastic.
- The home-stay experience.
- Being able to view the educational differences between Switzerland and Australia at both primary and tertiary levels.
- The Zug tour.

5. Other

Public Transport

The cost of public transport tickets that we had to purchase was *really* expensive. After speaking with a Swiss student who I met in Australia last year telling me we could have bought a monthly pass for the entire country at 250CHF compared to the almost 600CHF we spent made me quite annoyed. I don't think this had anything to do with PH Zug but instead the company who organised the trip, however, in future, if you're in contact with Deakin staff or Reho Study Tours, passing on the information that that pass is available to limit the expenditure on public transport cost would be brilliant. It's always difficult not being native to a country to understand the best possible options and I think the future students would be incredibly grateful to save a significant impact of money on unnecessary travel passes.

Cassandra Furst – Review of Zug program

