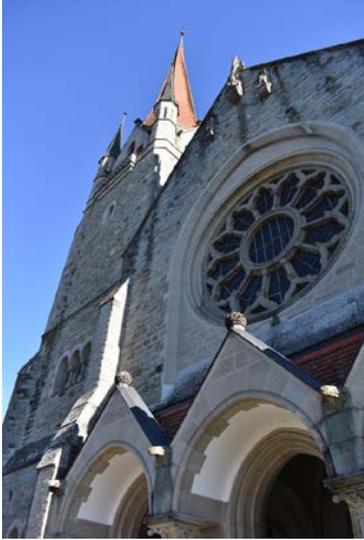


Final Report

Emily Camilleri



Information and support

Of the PH Zug/International Office

I was accepted to complete my four-week teaching program at PH Zug in May and on that day, they provided me with the dates regarding my welcome session at the university and my first day at Elementa. The international office distributed a comprehensive itinerary in July, informing me about where I was staying and who with, what days I would attend university classes and which ones, what days I would be at Elementa and who my university buddy was. Upon meeting Patrick and Stefanie at PH Zug on our first day, they showed me around the campus and treated me to lunch in the cafeteria. The programme changed slightly on the Friday before I flew out of Australia and they let me know quickly, informing me that I would no longer be receiving basic German lessons and that placement start date had changed. Luckily for me, by the second week, they had found someone else willing to teach us German.

Of your classroom teacher

Monica first contacted me in June and it was really great because she gave me the weekly timetable of what classes I would be in, mainly the 5/6 class, and the topic Mieja and I would need to teach for Mensch and Umwelt, which was History of the World. Monica is the kind of person you can really learn from, not just as a teacher, but on a personal and professional level. Being the founder, head teacher and classroom teacher of Elementa must leave her with very minimal spare time, but she always has extra time to speak with the students and with us, and even competes in marathons! I received so much knowledge from her about the school's teaching style and how they help each student, which I am very grateful for. We were also with different teachers throughout the school and they always allowed us to help in their classes and teach some also.

Of your buddy

I liked Larissa from the first time I spoke to her. She got my number off of my host and contacted me whilst I was still in Australia. It was awesome that she had completed exchange in Australia because she knew the differences between universities and placements, and we could

have great conversations about it. She offered to pick me up from the airport, even though she had a class after it(!), because my host was unable to. She took me to Lucerne, Ballenberg and the Zuger Messe on the first proper weekend here and we also went to a hockey game, went out for dinner and invited me to games nights with her friends. We spoke nearly every day and she was always so helpful with transport tickets and ordering my food at restaurants! I have made a lifelong friend and feel very fortunate to have met her whilst I was here.

Overall programme and living situation

Teaching practice program

We were placed in Elementa, a private school in Neuheim with an international touch. The students learn English from Grade 1, compared to Grade 3, in the public school system and complete lots of individual research projects and presentations about things they are interested in or in relation to their Mensch and Umwelt topic. This allows the students to grow independently and creatively, by permitting them full control over their topic and how they wish to present it.

We were mainly with the 5/6 classes, but also taught English to the 3/4 non-Native class. Within the 5/6 classes, we taught Sport (basketball), English to the non-Natives and History of the World (over 4 lessons). Upon arriving, we were also told it would be a great idea to specifically teach Australian and Swiss history. It was great to be with the older students, as I had not completed a placement with either Grade 5 or 6 in Australia. The rest of the time we were observe different classes and helping out if we could.

I have learnt a lot from the teachers and students at Tagesschule Elementa and am excited to implement these things in my final placement in Australia and in my own classroom one day.

Program at the PH Zug

The program at the university was fine, however, to best suit the interests of all students, both the visiting and permanent, it should not be a requirement to be there from 8:20am-4:45pm. I understand needing to see how different universities work and it was particularly interesting for me because the university is only for Kindergarten and Primary teaching, whereas our university is for mixed courses, but as most lessons were delivered in German, it was hard to really grasp what was going on. The teachers knew we would be in their classes, but it seemed like some maybe thought we could speak German, as they would give us instructions in German and did not assign someone to translate some of the class. It would have also been nice to be in the classes my buddy was in, both so I could get to know her better and because I would feel more comfortable approaching her to ask questions.

The best bit was the city tour provided by Thery in the first week. She had an awesome personality and told the greatest jokes. She was so well informed about Zug and told us so many useful pieces of history about the city. It was very interesting and made everything seem more familiar.

Living situation

My accommodation in Baar was situated perfectly between the PH Zug and Elementa. There were two bus stops about a 5-minute walk away, one that took me directly to Elementa and the other took me to Zug Station, where I could get another bus to go to PH Zug. My host and I discussed prior that food would not be included in the rent price, which was completely fine, and that it would be split three ways with the other housemate. This meant I knew to prepare

for this as a cost, but I never found it to be too expensive. I didn't eat out very often, but when I did, I realised it was slightly more expensive than Australia. I would feverishly convert the pricing, but after a while, I stopped because you cannot enjoy it that way. This was very easy to combat by getting your lunch from the supermarket – I often got a pastry, a snack and a drink for around 5CHF. I got the Zugerpass for 60 CHF in my first week and found it to be a really handy investment. It includes all public transport costs with the Canton of Zug and means you don't need to buy a ticket every time you go to placement or to PH Zug.

Goals and professional benefit

Personal goals for the placement

- To grow as a person both professionally and personally.
- To find different ways to communicate when language is a barrier.
- To feel like something has been accomplished at the end.

Achieved goals and newly acquired competencies

I think I am definitely a different person for having been on this experience. There have been times and situations that have been tough or tricky at times, and with no family or friends around, I have had to figure out for myself how to best deal with them. I think I have really put myself to the test and my confidence and independence has grown tenfold because of it.

In the beginning, it felt like some students were apprehensive to talk to Mieja and I in English, as they lacked the confidence or just believed they couldn't. But it was so great to see by week four that many students were happy to participate in conversation with us, with a partner or in front of the whole class. It felt really nice to think that maybe we've been a part of building their confidence around their English capabilities.

Benefit for your future studies and profession

This experience has given me new perspective and has allowed me to compare Australia's education system to the Switzerland private system. I will be a better teacher because of the experience and it has also helped me to find ways to communicate with students who have English as a second language, which I haven't been exposed to yet at home. International experience also will help me in interviews when discussing my personal strengths and weaknesses, and international and diversity understanding.

Personal evaluation of the stay

Recommendations for future students

If the opportunity to participate in overseas study/placement is available to you, take it! You will learn so much about yourself and your capabilities, and will grow as a person more than you can imagine.

Research different travel passes and entry tickets, and choose what works for you and what you can afford. Get things like this to ensure you actually see Switzerland in your free time. Also, stop converting to your national currency when purchasing something. It can take some of the fun out of the experience and you will have worked so hard just to get here, both academically and financially, that you deserve to enjoy every minute.

Personal evaluation

Positive points

- The experience has helped me grow professionally and personally, and allowed me to discover my own capabilities.
- I have got to explore so much of Switzerland on my weekends, which has definitely been one of the highlights. I went to Lucerne, Bern, Zurich, Rapperswil-Jona, Basel, Lugano, St Gallen and Geneva. Plus a few visits to cookie and chocolate factories!
- The buddy program at PH Zug.

Negative points

- Although not stated as a requirement, I wish I had properly learnt German before I came, as I think I missed out on a lot with all classes, but English specifically, being delivered in German at the PH Zug and Elementa.
- Too much time was spent in university classes, especially if they're delivered solely in German or the students are learning English for themselves, rather than how to teach it.
- I would have liked to have been in university classes with my buddy, as she was the only student we officially met at the beginning and I wouldn't have felt like I was bothering her if I asked her to translate some content in to English.