

The Sextant

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(from left) Back from living abroad: Kristian Berisha, Caroline Niederhauser, Leandro Gerber, Valérie Adam and Samuel Gröflin. (Photo: Kierin Mulholland)

New alternatives to finding housing
for semester abroad

The Accommodation Challenge



Immediately after being allocated a place at a host university abroad, exchange students face the challenge of finding accommodation for at least four months. New trends are emerging as to how this temporary home is found. Instead of relying on the host university, some students now turn to Airbnb, Facebook or real estate agencies. Kristian Berisha's "master plan" was to find a central location in Madrid to fully experience metropolitan life. He spent many hours first registering on about 10 closed groups on Facebook but then bumped into a scam. A landlord asked for a sizeable deposit up front. "So I then simply googled for Erasmus flats in a specific area of Madrid and found one landlord who was very transparent with information," Kristian reported. He ended up sharing with 10 other Erasmus students, sharing a small kitchen and 3 bathrooms, but no lounge. "It was a good experience – most of us socialised together, often in my room, and the location was perfect." David Grossenbacher faced a considerable challenge in trying to find reasonably priced accommodation in Canada's most expensive city of Vancouver. He tried Facebook first but also discovered there had been issues so he opted for agencies and found an excellent and transparent site. "I found a shared basement flat in a house. The location wasn't perfect as it was far from the school, but the flat and landlord were really good.

Airbnb to start

A few students stayed at an Airbnb flat initially to give them time to search for housing when they had a better overview. Ike Garley was looking for a central location in Bogotá, in Columbia, and initially took a one-month lease on a central, if expensive Airbnb flat. He then posted on a closed Facebook group. "I found a fantastic flat on the 19th floor which was cheaper and in a better neighbourhood. I shared with a fellow student and the landlord was extremely helpful." Leandro Gerber was also headed for Bogotá and organised to spend the first month in a central Airbnb flat. However, the flat was so much to his liking that he stayed on for the entire semester. "My landlord was a really nice elderly Colombian, with whom I sometimes went for lunch where he told me about his interesting life experiences and always gave me advice how to behave in Colombia, where to go, what to see, and also life advice," Leandro says. Most students still chose accommodation offered directly by the host university. Juulia Järvinen, from Helsinki, decided that the FHNW School of Business' offer was the easiest option. "It's only for 4 months," she said. The so-called staff house is on the grounds of Olten's hospital and both the city centre and the school are within walking distance. Students have individual rooms with a toilet but share a kitchen and showers on each floor. "I'm lucky that I have a balcony so this makes up for it all being a bit small. Sharing the kitchen can be problematic but then we often eat together so I get to know many people."

Valérie Adam and Caroline Niederhauser also took the easier option in greater Toronto. Their host university offered different options on 3 campuses and they followed advice in picking a flat they could share on a campus fairly close to where their lessons would be. "The flat itself was good as we had a bedroom each, a bathroom and a small kit-



(from left) Diego Aguilar Ortega, Juan Arellano Mendoza from Mexico and Juulia Järvinen from Finland in Juulia's student flat in Olten. (Photo: Kierin Mulholland)

chenette. One challenge was that it was far away from shops and from Toronto. So we had to take buses, either to the campus where we studied, to Toronto if we wanted to go there or to the shops. Each Tuesday we took the special grocery bus to do our weekly shopping," Caroline remembered. Occasionally, students hit the jackpot. Diego Aguilar Ortega and Juan Arellano Mendoza, in Switzerland from Mexico, discovered that within their social network there was a distant relative who not only had a flat precisely in Olten but would be away during the period of their exchange. "So we can live in this great, large flat for a very low rent. Everything is here and there are buses about every 10 minutes so getting to school is easy," said Diego.

No toilet paper

The Accommodation Challenge continues after lodging has been found. A recurring issue is that the flats are often not fully equipped. The main furniture is there, but students might find that there are no plates to eat off and no towels to dry themselves with.

"When we arrived after a long journey, we discovered that there was basic furniture, bedding, a shower curtain and a towel. But no pots and pans, no utensils and no toilet paper," Valérie remembers. Interestingly, the lack of toilet paper seems to be a recurring issue. Kristian, David and Ike also report that this necessity of life was missing. "But my landlords were so helpful – they actually picked me up at the airport, took me to their home for a meal and afterwards out shopping where I could buy what I needed, including toilet paper," Kristian smiled. Sam Gröflin also faced the toilet paper issue in his flat in Tampere, but shrugs this off as the overwhelming exchange semester memory is positive. "The university gave us links to a few different accommodation platforms and this was very well organised. I opted for a flat share as I wanted to be able to cook my own food and have my own bathroom. The school provided a survival kit which had most of the basics and was a great idea. I still had to get a few things, like a shower curtain, but there was an Ikea nearby." ■

Brigitte Sprenger

Beijing Study Trip: 12 MSc students explore Chinese working styles

A new 6 ECTS elective module enables MSc International Management students to investigate Chinese business and management through a combination of on-site lectures and company visits in Beijing. During the 2-week trip from 2 April, the students explored consumer behavior on the street, attended lectures at the Beijing Foreign Studies University and visited a dozen companies. Integral to the learning experience was the selection of individual topics. "The students researched their topic before we left and also set up individual company visits which aligned with this topic," Fan Neifer, who organized the field trip, explained. "Then during the trip they wrote individual blogs about their perceptions, experiences and delivered insights." For sections of the programme the 12 women studied alongside BFSU students, which added another dimension to the trip. Lectures and workshops were lead by local professors: Ruohong Chen focused on the legal environment of business in China and Qin Ma lectured on the Chinese economy and business culture. ■ BS



Part of the MSc in International Management class who went on the study trip to Beijing with the organiser Fan Neifer and their dean, Prof Dr Lynn Lim (2nd and 3rd from left, back row). Photo: Dahai Shao

Lecture Series on Russia: Searching for an Identity



Over 200 Swiss companies currently operate in Russia and as many again in Switzerland. As Prof Dr Anya Nikoulina explained at the first of a new interdisciplinary lecture series on Russia on 28 March, many of these Russian enterprises here are start-ups which are attracted by the stability that Switzerland offers. Switzerland is fertile ground for innovation and offers Russian companies access to global capital markets. The ties between the two countries stretch back over many

centuries and this year the countries are also linked by a centenary celebration of the train journey Lenin undertook from Zurich to Moscow to co-lead the Russian Revolution there. The series aims to provide insights into Russia's culture, its current issues and its ways of doing business. A main focus during the first set of lectures featured dimensions of the loss of identity the relatively young nation faces (the Federation is not yet 30 years old). As both Anya Nikoulina, who is of Russian origin, and Marcel Hirsiger explained, there seems to be a lack of orientation. "Russian society has lost the means to define an identity such as a common history or symbols due to the rapid and disrupting changes in the past decades.

There is a close identification with the Russian language and President Putin also emphasises patriotism," Marcel Hirsiger explained. Yet these do not constitute a national identity. Eminent guests feature in the next two lectures of the series. On 5 April, Prof Dr Ulrich Schmid of the University of St Gallen explored on Russia's history and current culture. The final lecture, on 11 May, various aspects of doing business in Russia will be presented by a panel of experts: Yves Morath, the Head of Swiss Business Hub in Moscow, Charles Anderson, the formal Head of Legal of the giant aluminium company RUSAL and Andrej Rejic, a Pfister Frei partner. The sessions are always held over lunch, from 12.15 and include a small lunch. For further details or to register please contact marcel.hirsiger@fhnw.ch ■



On the Road: Student Seminars

Focus India delegation members and Blaser Swissslube employees greet each other with a Namaste during a visit to the Blaser company near New Delhi.

Over 80 students and a dozen faculty hit the road on 6 April for the two-week on-site seminars to experience how business is done in India, China, the USA and ASEAN countries. To see what they all did visit the websites: focusindia.ch, insightchina.ch, connectus.ch and exploreASEAN.ch.

Partner Profiles

The School of Business cooperates with 130 universities around the world. A full list is on www.fhnw.ch/business/international. Each issue of The Sextant profiles half a dozen of these partners.



Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Where Manchester is one of the UK's largest and most vibrant cities. Located in the north-west it grew into a powerhouse during the Industrial Revolution. It is now a popular modern city, close to Liverpool and the Pennine mountain range and has an impressive music heritage. Not to mention football....

Cooperation Student exchange

Size over 32 000 students, it's the 5th largest university in the UK

Study Fields The Business School has 4 departments: Accounting, Finance and Economics, Management, Marketing, Operations and Digital Business and the Professional and Commercial department.

Campus Two main campus sites, the School of Business is on the new All Saints campus which is a few minutes' walk away from the city centre, the campus offers an impressive library, numerous study areas and surrounding parks, a sports complex and cafés. There is a wide choice of accommodation in halls or flats.

Website www2.mmu.ac.uk/



Stockholm University, Sweden

Where Stockholm, as historic capital of Sweden, is the home of parliament, the Swedish royal family and the Nobel Prize. With about 1 million inhabitants (three times that in the greater area) it is the most populous in Scandinavia and thus offers a broad selection of culture, entertainment, sports and shops. One of its charms is that it consists of 14 islands: a third of the city is waterways, another third is green spaces.

Cooperation Student exchange

Size 70 000 students

Study Fields There is a broad programme of courses taught in English (various different courses in the fields of Finance, Marketing, Accounting and HR). There is a free Swedish language course and those feeling proficient can attend courses taught in Swedish too. The school operates a buddy system. The university is within the top 100 universities in the world and sets high standards.

Campus Situated in the Frescati area, in the northeastern part of Stockholm, the campus is spacious with a lot of green space including a boating lake and botanic gardens. There are numerous working spaces and eateries, Public transport connection to central Stockholm is various and fast. The university helps exchange students find accommodation but also supplies many links for finding your own. Mostly students select apartments to share or an own room.

Website www.su.se/english/



California State University (CalState), Los Angeles, USA

Where Los Angeles is located in a basin on the southern Californian coast and with nearly 4 million inhabitants, is the second most populous city in the USA. Greater Los Angeles has a population of 19 mio. It is of course famed for its Hollywood film industry but also offers plenty in the fields of sports and the arts.

Cooperation Student exchange

Size 24 000 students

Study Fields Within the BSc in Business

Administration and Management there are numerous courses in Accounting, Management, Operations, Communication, HR, Marketing, OB, Strategy and more.

Campus The Downtown LA campus is in the financial district and has modern facilities with computer labs, library, student work areas, dining, cultural facilities, sports facilities, shops, green space. The University offers four types of living accommodations: Homestay, Apartment, Extended-Stay Hotel or at the Dormitory on Campus. Cal State LA is one of 23 universities within the California State University (CSU) system.

Website www.calstatela.edu/international-centre.aspx



School of Business and Management, ITB (Bandung and Jakarta) Indonesia

Where Bandung is Indonesia's second largest city with 8.5 million inhabitants. It lies inland on a river basin surrounded by volcanic mountains. As it's cooler, it is a popular tourist destination where sightseeing includes the surrounding mountains and the Dutch colonial buildings. It is a major shopping destination especially for "distros" which sell non-trademarked products made by local designers.

Cooperation Student exchange

Size Nearly 20 000 students of which 14 000 are undergraduates.

Study Fields Within the International Business programme there are numerous courses taught in English. These include: Cross Culture and Conflict Management, Integrated Business in Asia, Psychology and Organizational Behavior, Business Research Methods, Global Marketing and Financial Management.

Campus The main ITB campus lies to the north of downtown Bandung, and together with its other campus sites covers an area of 770,000 square metres. There are libraries, book shops, a sports centre, cafeteria, a medical clinic, post office and an art gallery. Student housing is located close by.

Website www.sbm.itb.ac.id



Universidad del Pacifico, Santiago de Chile

Where In Chile's capital, Santiago, which lies inland, backing onto the Andes. With over 5 million inhabitants, it is a sprawling global city with modern infrastructures alongside some remaining historical - mostly colonial - buildings. Points of interest include: planetarium, zoo, theatres, cultural centres, museums, the Metropolitan Cathedral and the 50 000 seat national stadium. Close by are ski slopes and numerous bicycle trails.

Cooperation Student exchange

Size 5 500 students

Study Fields All courses taught in Spanish. Full range of business, administration and management subjects.

Campus A modern campus with a cafeteria and canteen. Some sports are offered. Students need to find their own accommodation - residential halls or homestays are options.

Students are advised to look for housing within a manageable distance to the university

Website www.upacifico.cl



Pusan National University, South Korea

Where Busan, with a population of nearly 3.5 million, lies on the south coast of South Korea. It is especially famed for its beaches. Equally, it is one of the largest industrial cities and largest ports in the country. There are interesting historical remnants such as a Buddhist shrine from the 7th century. When you tire of the beaches and their bars, there is plenty of shopping or hiking in the nearby Geumieongsan mountains.

Cooperation Student exchange

Size Over 17 000 undergraduates, 10 000 post-graduates

Study Fields The Department of Business Administration offers courses in the following: international business administration, business administration information, marketing, production management, HR and organizational management, financial management and accounting. Pusan is a high-ranking university - one of only ten Korean universities to feature in both the QS and ARWU global ranking.

Campus This modern campus provides libraries, sports facilities, banks and shops, cultural venues and loads of clubs (paragliding, anyone?). There are two student centres that enable students to relax and socialize with shops, billiards, restaurants, gyms and more. There are on-campus dormitories (meals included, but also a curfew) but also off-campus accommodation (boarding house or individual rooms).

Website www.pusan.ac.kr/uPNU_homepage/en/

Short Study Trip to Poland Aims to Change Perceptions

"Central and Eastern Europe are often still perceived as sources of cheap labour. However, due to the high levels of education and high motivation, a country like Poland now delivers educated and hungry young people who are great innovators," according to Marcel Hirsiger the organizer and supervisor of a new study trip to Poland. Fifteen students joined him from 9 to 13 April and visited companies and organisations in Warsaw and Lodz to gain greater insights into current business there.

"Lodz, for instance, used to be a centre of heavy industry but this all collapsed," Hirsiger explained. "So they've had to reinvent themselves and have now become a creative centre with vibrant companies in the fields of software and film." The Intense Programme Abroad: Central and Eastern Europe was launched to not only focus on a cluster of countries of interest as an interesting market, but also to offer opportunities to have an international study experience for part-time students. "This is a flexible and easily transferable programme where the amount of time and money required is doable for part-time students, who often cannot join the longer seminars abroad or go on a semester exchange," according to Hirsiger. "This year we're heading to Poland - but we can transfer the destination to other Central and Eastern European countries a next time." ■



Students enjoy an outdoor presentation in Warsaw.



27 April: The Bid for a Boss networking event is open to all School of Business students and alumni.

Over a dozen senior professionals are up for auction in the Bid for a Boss event on 27 April. On offer are a 2-day trip to Brussels to participate in a Swiss-EU relations workshop, lunch and Q&A in the Roche tower, an opportunity to be coached and toured through SRG studios by a business journalist and many more. Most of the proceeds go to the charity Catalyst4Change, set up by IM Alumnus John Uwaeke which provides laptops and training to school children in rural Nigeria.

The IM Alumni Association's flagship event also features networking events enabling students and alumni to broaden their networks and meet senior professionals from diverse companies and in various roles. Similar events in the past each raised CHF 4'000: beneficiaries were a secondary school in Uganda and health insurance for children in the Philippines as well as the IM Alumni Graduation prize (students vote for the most community-minded graduate). For the first time, the event has been opened to all FHNW School of Business students and alumni.

To register go either to imalumni.com or the IM Alumni Facebook page. ■

AACSB Accreditation Process in Full Swing



Smiling FHNW School of Business professors under the corporate umbrella on their way to Kingston University to discover more about AACSB accreditation.

A delegation of programme deans, institute heads and the International Office visited three universities in the United Kingdom late in March to attain greater understanding of the process for AACSB accreditation. Aims were to discuss quality assurance and best practices need-ed achieve accreditation as experienced by business schools who have attained the prestigious label.

"We were greatly impressed by the willingness to share information on the very complex process by all the institutions we visited. They shared with us how they measured the quality of education and how to show students what the concrete benefits of accreditation are," reported Prof. Robert Buttery who accompanied the delegation. "AACSB is a guarantee of quality for business schools around the world and achieving approval from an external body is an articulated seal of approval." The delegation visited the business schools at Manchester Metropolitan University, at Keele University and Kingston University. The FHNW School of Business is currently in the approximately 3-year accreditation process. ■

Who's Where?



Géraldine Monticelli, BSc in International Management student, part-time, doing her 6th semester at Università degli studi di Palermo, Italy
Photo: Monica Guerrero

Planning for my semester abroad already began well over two years ago. I started a new job at the same time as my studies in Brugg. I'd known I really wanted to have this experience so I informed my employers at the time and began organizing my absence over a year ago. It wasn't easy. I needed to prepare different bosses and work ahead but luckily I have a colleague who was interested in temporarily taking over my tasks and this has worked out for all the team.

I also knew I wanted to go to Palermo. My father was from southern Italy but Italian was never spoken at home because my parents divorced many years ago. And one of my best friends is from Sicily and always raving about it. So this was my golden opportunity to discover southern Italy and really learn the language. I'm in a small language class and we have eight lessons a week so this is challenging. I need to especially learn about building sentences and

past tenses. But I hope to be fairly fluent when the semester is over. The classes I have chosen here are all taught in English and very good in content. They're all at Master's level. But the organization is pretty chaotic. My classes are spread across different faculties and the rooms and the starting times are pretty fluid. Sometimes we're in one room and then it's double-booked and we march off with the professor in search of another room. On the other hand, the university has been well organized in supporting me here - there are numerous interesting Erasmus events and I was allocated a buddy who looks after me. He'll always tell me where to go or not to go. Actually, that is what I find most amazing about my semester here. The people everywhere are incredibly friendly and always willing to help you. So far all my expectations have been met. *BS*



Ignacio Alvarez Luque. Exchange student from Carlos III University, Madrid
Photo: Jeannette Merguin

I came to Switzerland merely expecting to have a good Erasmus semester - learning some German, skiing, travelling. Instead, it has been life-changing. As I have some experience working in hotels, I applied for a job at the nearby Hotel Arte and was immediately given a part-time job as a waiter. This was such an enjoyable experience, as well as the classes I had here and the people I met that I decided to apply to extend my stay here and do another semester. This turned out to be more complicated than I expected but the International Office here helped and in the end my university gave permission. I've always wanted to improve my German. I speak Spanish of course, and the degree I am doing is entirely taught in English. But to have a third language would be useful and working at

the hotel certainly supported this. So, I then decided I would apply for an internship. I began looking in November last year and was very fortunate to be hired by AO Spine, a medical foundation that organizes conferences. I've just started with them as a Team Assistant for the regions Europe, Middle East and Africa. It's an amazing opportunity. I'm gaining experience in project management and help coordinate all the events at the conferences, the travel and accommodation. It was all a progression of little steps, one leading to another. I'd quite like to stay even longer and my employer has indicated there might be options. Ideally, I'd like to work in Sales or Marketing in a German-speaking country after I graduate.



Puneeth Krishna Suresh, from Bangalore in India, now studying MSc in Business Information Systems

I have this vision of wanting to be a Venture Capitalist by the time I'm 55 years old. I've already experienced starting up a business - in Bangalore I was a bootstrap entrepreneur who co-founded product and web development projects with zero capital. I'd also completed a Master's degree and worked for two years as a software engineer. I was ready for the next step and that was to learn about business. It was clear to me that I wanted to go to Europe. England was not an option - I have friends there who advised against it after the Brexit vote. Once I started searching for suitable programmes, where technology and business are combined, it soon emerged that the MSc BIS was the best and even the only one fulfilling my expectations. I hadn't ever been to Switzerland - though I have travelled a great deal. I was a solo-backpacker who went to about 14 countries mostly in Asia

but also to Slovakia and the Czech Republic. And while I was travelling I discovered I often felt restless and could be short-tempered. I met two yogi's during this phase who inspired me and I decided to work on my weaknesses to make them my strengths. So I trained as a yogi myself. I practised many different forms of yoga and have become very dedicated to integrated yoga. This also involves anit-gravity yoga. We practise in a hammock and do all the asanas there. Since I started studying here in Switzerland in February I have been searching for a yoga community to practice with. Yoga is transforming and should be about this and not about business. So even though I want to set up a venture, it would for me not be a yoga venture. There are unfortunately too many yoga courses or schools which are about business and not about the essence of the practice. *BC*



Ifeko (Abeti) ilofo - Swiss, Congolese, Romanian Master's student conducting her research in Romania
Photo: Kierin Mulholland

In 1981, I was born in Gala in, Romania, which is a city located on the Danube River. At the age of 3 years, I arrived in Switzerland with my Romanian mother and my Congolese father. After my Bachelor's degree in Neuchâtel, I lived in the UK for two years. After more than 9 years, experience in various business areas in the UK and in Switzerland, I decided to start the Master's program in International Management at the FHNW. With this Master's I aim to strengthen my skills set and widen my knowledge with an interest to combine sustainable project development and education at all levels to empower people. My dream is to start something on my own - a company or a project - involving Romania, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR) and Switzerland because I feel very attached to my roots. That is also the reason why I started writing my Master's thesis in relation to Romania. I want to know what are the decisive

factors for women in Romania to launch their own business, what were the problems they faced when they set it up and how they perceive entrepreneurship trainings. This should hopefully be the starting point to raise awareness towards the growing Romanian women entrepreneurship environment and encourage even more women to start their own enterprises in Romania. I would like to support them and be a bridge builder between the institutional level and the female entrepreneurs. On the one hand, I would like to encourage funders on the European or national level to support women entrepreneurship in Romania through entrepreneurship education. On the other hand, I want to be committed to actions dedicated in building women confidence and self-esteem. This way I can combine my personal background, my professional education and the one thing I am extremely passionate about: Educating and training people to pursue their dreams and feel empowered. *MdB*



Scherezade Borges - Venezuelan Master's student now settled in Switzerland
Photo: Kierin Mulholland

Originally, I am from Venezuela, where I was born, raised and educated. Unfortunately, conditions worsened in my home country, which changed from a lively and happy place to a country with unstable economic and political situation. Especially for me, who wanted to work in the public policy field, there was no chance to develop myself and reach what I wanted to do. As a result, I started looking for different Master's programmes around the world, which covered my two key interests: public policy and marketing. Finally, I decided to start at the FHNW, because of its good reputation but also due to my Swiss partner. When arriving in Switzerland, I had to adapt to some aspects of the Swiss culture. For example, it is not a problem for me to take the next bus - even if it means that I arrive late. Especially here in Switzerland where the next bus arrives in 5 min - so it is fine, no? However, punctuality is

a key value in Switzerland, which I had to learn. Another challenge at the beginning was finding a job in my field, despite having gained some work experience in Switzerland and obtained some basic German skills. In the end, I applied for more than 40 jobs. Although I wrote a personalized motivation letter and CV for every single application, I was rejected every time. However, as soon as started my Master's and put that on my CV, the interview requests starting rolling in. Luckily, one interview was successful and now I am working in a marketing company in Zurich and my role has quite a funny long title: project manager global content and campaigns. Due to the current circumstances I have not planned to go back to Venezuela, and I have fully acclimatised myself to the Swiss environment. Even though I miss the beach, I really enjoy swimming in the river in Zurich. Sometimes my boyfriend even says I am the Swiss one in our relationship. *MdB*



Dr Johan Paul Lindeque - Academic at the FHNW and at the Amsterdam Business School
Photo: Kierin Mulholland

My academic career started in the UK, where after completing my PhD at the University of Bath School of Management, I worked as a lecturer in international business at Queen's University Management School in Belfast. Today, I work as a researcher at the FHNW with a focus on energy and international business strategy, primary related to the European energy sector. As a South African born British citizen I have an external view of the European integration project and consider it a uniquely ambitious institutional project that through the efforts of researchers can be critically supported. Cooperation is at the heart of the European project, one might say that this is where the magic happens, so I seek to focus on instances when different stakeholders from various countries in Europe within one sector are collaborating. Besides my work at the FHNW, I currently also work as an assistant professor at the University of Amsterdam Business School, where I teach a course on the MBA programme and supervise Master's theses. While I no longer do it as often as in the past this means that I continue to regularly travel to Amsterdam from Freiburg im Breisgau, where I live with my

family. Especially during the time I worked in Amsterdam fulltime I learned to deal with long travel times, which is not always easy, I would say this requires you to be very organized and learn how to be productive in places that might not be ideal to work such as airport lounges or the train, being productive while mobile is essential under these conditions. Personally, I love taking the ICE, which takes maybe one hour longer than a flight, but uses ecologically sourced electricity for the long distance journeys and allows me to be far more productive; as I can simply use the full six and a half hours to work. This is not possible in the same way when flying. My move to the FHNW in addition to the stimulating professional environment I joined, has allowed me to be home far more often, which I really appreciate as I think such long distance commuting cannot be done indefinitely. I know there are some people who enjoy such arrangements, but I am not one of them and I am enjoying a more settled professional and private life. I am professionally and privately very happy with the decision to join the FHNW. *MdB*

A Day in the Life of Mirjam Beer

Foto Mirjam Beer

Mirjam Beer (Photo: Kierin Mulholland)

Since 2012, Mirjam Beer works in the international office at the FHNW Basel and supports the exchange students from start until the end for their semester abroad. Having lived in London herself for one year, she knows about the emotional roller-coaster ride when going on an adventure abroad.

The most important part about my job is to stay calm. Studying abroad is a very existing part of your life but it can be extremely demanding and sometimes even scary. Students are overwhelmed with facing a new culture, being far away from their family and friends and all the administrative work such as organizing a visa, finding an apartment or just finding the right courses. Then, my task is to be the helping hand and support our students in mastering all these challenges.

Most of the challenges are sudden and usually at the beginning of the semester. They need to be resolved quickly but this is what makes my job also so exiting. For instance, I remember not long ago when a student from Shanghai could not get in touch with his buddy in Switzerland, who was supposed to pick her up from the airport and be there for her to make her feel welcome. Unfortunately, until shortly before her flight she did not manage to contact him. As a result, she became distressed and worryingly emailed me to inform me about the entire situation. I promised her that someone would be at the airport to welcome her, so she could get calmly on her plane. Quickly, a student had to be organized who would pick her up at 10.00 in the evening from the airport in Basle. Luckily, a very committed student came into my mind who subsequently offered his help. The next day I received a mail

from him with a picture of him and the exchange student. He welcomed her at the airport holding up a sign with her name written in Chinese. He picked her up, drew her to her flat and ensured that she was well supplied for the first. These are the small stories that make my job so beautiful.

Thanks to such stories, there is no day like the other. Of course, there are routine tasks but at the end of my day, when I go home to my family, I have always a new funny and crazy story to tell. Another great story happened a few semesters ago. We had an exchange student from Cologne, who decided to drive down his tuned van to our region and live in the van for one semester. He installed everything in this van that someone could possibly need for living and studying. The only downside of it was that he was not allowed to stay permanently on one campsite for one semester only. Nevertheless, in the end he changed the campsite every time and completed his exchange semester successfully.

I always hear such existing stories at the end of the semester. At our final semester lunch, they tell me about their experiences, how they made friends with other local students and the memorable time they spend with us. A lot of them are very grateful for this time and the personal development they experienced. I also see this personal development. Most of the exchange students I only see once at the beginning of the semester when they are rather shy and not very open yet. Then, after one semester, I feel a massive development. With excitement and great pleasure, I listen to these stories and observe their developments. I am happy that I could contribute to this life experience, even if it was only a small contribution.

Personally, I also think that Basle provides the right environment for an exchange student to flourish. Being born and raised in Basle, I think Basle is an extremely beautiful city. This might sound biased but looking at Basle in comparison to other global metropolitans, Basle might be a small city but has so much to offer with a diverse cultural programme but also lots of events for young people. Additionally, the location of Basle at the boarder triangle to Germany and France is truly unique. It is an ideal point to start your travels. You can easily and quickly move within three countries without any restrictions. Finally, Basle is a very international and open city. There are many expats living here and people from Germany and France cross boarders every day for work. You can feel this cultural diversity within the city but also on campus. I think there is an international but also very personal mind-set on our campus. You can quickly get in touch with students from other faculties, lecturers and personnel from the university. As the exchange students have classes together with our local students, they integrate easily. In other words, the campus located in this international environment of Basle breaks the barriers quickly and students feel welcome from the start. ■

Max de Boer