

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS/ Psychology
Host University	University of Lausanne, Switzerland
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY14/15 Semester 2

## 2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?
- What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?
- Advice on module registration and module mapping

In the Social Sciences faculty, which is equivalent to NUS' FASS, all the classes are taught in French, and each class of 3 ECTS credits will have 2 hours of lessons per week. Class sizes depend on class popularity – as there is no quota on classes, some classes can be really huge (up to 150 or more) while others are almost like a seminar (less than 20). Exchange students in this faculty are recommended to only take "Cours", which are lecture-based classes, as their Seminar classes are usually high in demand and full-time students there will have a priority in this matter. Most classes will incorporate conferences. Lecturers can invite researchers in the domain to give talks about certain topics related to the module. These usually involve exposure to current research directions and new research results.

Academics are generally okay, in a sense that workload is manageable, since most classes are only 3 ECTS (equivalent to NUS 2MCs). However, that would also mean that we would need to take 8-10 modules in order to complete the expected NUS workload of 20MCs. I myself did 7 from SSP (Sciences Sociales et Politiques) and 1 from Faculté des Lettres, on French translation. So for a typical NUS student that is very used to juggling only about 5 modules a semester, this could be overwhelming at first, because there is a lot more breadth than depth. However, it is not intolerable.

In terms of module registration at the host university, there is no online module registration for exchange students. Exchange students would have to submit their modules by paper. Also, it is important to note that exam registrations are not automatic, and require the submission of a separate form. There will be an academic advice session for the respective faculties at the start of the semester, during orientation day. It would be good to attend, as different faculties might have different procedures, and the Swiss are very strict with their deadlines. For instance, registering modules late would incur a 200 CHF penalty.

Module mapping with NUS is usually not difficult. As the university provides a course description in French, students could Google translate the syllabus and include it in the module mapping form. Remember to indicate to your Profs that the syllabus is only a rough translation. My friends and I had no problem with the module mapping procedure.

# SEP Report

Please list the courses that you took during SEP. (Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
	Introduction à la sociologie de l'éducation	6	SC3204	Sociology of education	4
	Introduction à la sociologie des pratiques sociales en ligne	3	SC2XXX		2
	Approches pluridisciplinaires des parcours de vie: Introduction	3	SC3XXX		2
	Approches psychosociales de l'insécurité	3	PL37XX		2
	Introduction à la gérontologie psychosociale	3	PL37XX		2
	Introduction à la psychanalyse	3	PL37XX		2
	Psychologie différentielle	3	PL3241	Personality and individual differences	2
	Autour des textes traduits (Anglais)	2.5		(Have yet to complete mapping procedure)	
	French Summer course	3		(Have yet to complete mapping procedure)	

## 2. Accommodation

**What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?**

**Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?**

**Do you have any other suggestions?**

I was offered a single room with attached bathroom in Maison des Cèdres, one of the residences for students/ interns in Lausanne (mainly University of Lausanne and EPFL). It is considered off campus, as it is about 20-30 minutes away from the university itself.

I would recommend this accommodation. As rent in Switzerland is very high, getting a place with the Foundation of Residences (Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants Lausanne/ FMEL) is probably the most affordable option. You can also meet other exchange/ full-time students here, and even those who might be on a PhD/ Masters exchange. People here come from various countries and are involved in various fields, so it is a good way to meet people and exchange ideas. Such interaction is facilitated by a common kitchen.

# SEP Report

## 3. Activities during SEP

**Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?**

There is the ESN Lausanne network, which is an organization for international/ exchange students. They organize weekly pub and club nights for those who wish to immerse in the rich student night life in Lausanne. Other than that, they also have loads of other activities, ranging from Cultural cafés, where students present a particular culture during each session, to trips around Switzerland. There have been skiing trips, hiking trips, or weekend trips. Students could get a membership card for 10 CHF at the start of the semester, and this entitles you to discounted prices for all the events that the ESN has to offer, and also cheaper drinks at selected pubs.

Before arriving, the university will also offer to find you a buddy that will help you adapt to life (academic and otherwise) in Lausanne. I highly recommend it, as they try their best (using an algorithm of sorts?) to pair you up with someone of the same interests, so in my case, I thought that the pairing was a match made in heaven. My buddy is a Masters student also in Psychology, so she has taken some of the classes I took, and even offered me some of her notes and textbook, and that really helped me a lot. She also enjoys the arts, and introduced me to the theatre group in the university. Furthermore, she is also Asian, though she moved here at a very young age and is practically a local. All these similarities helped us to bond and was probably beneficial for both of us.

If you would like to practice your French, the university also has a Tandem programme, where you can pair up with someone whose mother tongue is French, and who would like to learn your mother tongue. Other than a sharing of cultures, you could also improve your spoken French, which I thought was pretty cool.

## 4. Cost of Living

**Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?**

**Please list travel expenses separately.**

**Total: CHF8200+ / approx. SGD11800**

Accommodation: CHF600 x 7 = CHF 4200

Monthly residence tax: CHF30 x 6.5 = CHF195

Monthly insurance: CHF86 x 7 = CHF602

Bus pass (monthly): CHF51 x 6 = CHF306

Groceries: CHF300 (per month) x 7 = CHF2100

Miscellaneous: CHF800 (train pass, residence permit processing fee, eating out, etc.)

NOTE: To work with this budget, you will have to cook everyday/ most of the time. Also, this budget excludes any other side trips that you might make during the semester.

Although travel expenses can be really subjective, depending on one's travelling preferences, here are some guide on the cost of travelling in Switzerland:

# SEP Report

Hostel/ Dorm: CHF30-40 per bed per night

Meal in a restaurant: CHF20 and up for a main dish; CHF4 and up for a drink

Train tickets (with a Half-fare card): a general rule of thumb of about CHF15 for every hour of journey travelled. Full price will be double of that.

## 5. Challenges

**Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?**

The main challenge for me is the language of instruction. Although I completed 4 language modules before embarking on my exchange, I cannot emphasize enough that these 4 modules are by no means enough to learn effectively in a foreign language environment. Most of the time, especially if you take SSP modules, your classes will be made up of mainly locals/ native French speakers/ those who have sat for the language entrance exam upon admission. As such, I found the lectures really difficult to follow, as the speech is rapid, and my vocabulary is limited.

To overcome this problem, I always attended classes with my laptop, so that I can look up the unfamiliar words immediately on the internet. At times, I also Googled the subject matter taught to get a brief understanding of what it is all about, and this helps me follow the classes better.

I have also recorded my lectures in case I needed to check on something that I am unsure of.

Some modules also have group work, so checking with your group mates about a particular module is probably a good idea as well.

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

**Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.**

My exchange experience is probably not your typical exchange experience, as I spent a large part of the time struggling with the language and hence, with the integration in the student life at the host university. This difficulty is also what made my experience so unique and valuable, for it truly is a learning experience, not only in terms of expanding my horizons, but also in improving my proficiency in French. The anxiety of possibly failing some classes was unpleasant, to say the least, but it was also a force of motivation that pushed me to achieve greater heights. Through this exchange, I've not just created beautiful memories, I have also shown myself what I could achieve if I put my heart and soul into doing something. And this self-development and growth is undoubtedly the experience that I will cherish the most from my exchange experience.

# SEP Report

## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

To those who would like to experience an exchange semester in the University of Lausanne, especially those who do not have breadth/ elective modules that you might be able to take in English, it is important to consider your decision really carefully to do a full semester in French. As I mentioned earlier, language modules in NUS do not prepare you sufficiently for this sort of exposure, and as exchange students are the minority in SSP classes (perhaps only 1-3 in each class), there will be no slowing down of lectures to make sure you understand. Also, most professors do not entertain requests to complete the evaluation (assignments or exams) in English. In fact, it is a written rule on the SSP website that exchange students need to make sure that they have an equivalent of B2 French competency level, and that they need to take the exams in French. As the Swiss are usually pretty strict with their rules, do not expect much concessions or leniency from the professors.

However, it is not to say that it was not manageable. It is, and it can be a very enriching process as it was for me, but it also comes with a lot of hard work. So do consider carefully.