



The University of Manchester  
Alliance Manchester Business School

**2014-2015**

**University Attended - University of St. Gallen, Switzerland**

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## **Feedback 1**

### **INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME**

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

This introduction was very thorough, it included a history of Switzerland/St.Gallen itself. Changes that have been made and plans for the future. At the introduction we were given all the necessary advice and information needed for example; where the International exchange office was, where to get certain forms signed, a map of campus etc. We received a 40CHF voucher for a purchase in the University shop which was a nice gesture. We also got introduced to 'The Buddy System' at the induction and this was great because they organise many events for exchange students such as skiing, football matches, BBQ's, running dinners etc. The Induction lasted about 1hr30min and was followed by a very high standard Aperero with a lot of nice foods and a wide range of drinks and snacks. A bit of a luxury in Switzerland as a student because of the expense.

### **ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

Ranked as one of the best business universities in Europe I expected a high standard of teaching and courses. I have to say I was not disappointed, the calibre of the lectures is exceptional with everyone having a wide range of industrial experience and amazing stories to tell. All of the lecturers are experts in their field and have a working knowledge of the business world as many of them lecture part time or have become lecturers after working in the business environment for many years. Many, if not all of the lecturers are well known and highly rated and respected in their chosen field of expertise. I have to say learning in HSG this year has been a highly educational experience and I have learned many valuable things here that will help for future employment.

My favourite thing about the academic experience here is the number of contacts and networking experiences the University has. It helps that the University is so highly regarded because many of the top companies get involved with the courses and host many information days. In semester 1 I got to work with 4 different companies during my courses including; The European Commission and Raiffeisen Bank. Similarly in semester 2 one of my courses involved a 4 month consulting project with a global packaging company 'Aptar', whose clients include Coca Cola, Pepsi, Unilever and P&G. In my opinion a course like this is far more beneficial than pure theory orientated courses, I feel that having the opportunity to work with real companies gives us a better understanding of the business world and how to put the theory into practice. It also encourages competition and a greater work ethic among the students as we do not want to disappoint the companies involved.

The classes are very different to that of Manchester. Being at HSG reminds me of school again as the classes are a lot smaller and engaging. The teacher is very involved and not just simply giving a presentation every week. Because of the smaller class sizes it is also easier for the teacher to provide good support and is able to answer many questions as it is essential for students to involve themselves in the topic of discussion. Outside of classes I find all lecturers very approachable and are very involved with helping the students via email etc.

The methods of assessment are similar to that of Manchester: papers, exams, individual and group presentations. The only new thing I encountered was an Oral exam for the masters course 'Clean Energy Marketing'. This was a

new experience for me and quite difficult because you were required to know 10weeks worth of work but the questions asked could be absolutely anything as it was only 15mins long. Another observation was the amount of group work that I was involved in which can take up a lot of time and can result in meetings as early as 7am or as late as 8pm just to fit everything in. Although we study in English, many of the home students who study in German have a minimum requirement of English courses to do, so being the native English speaker I found myself being asked to proof read many papers and always required to be the one presenting in the group.

Lastly, the courses at HSG are of a very high quality, However, the University specialises in finance type courses and International Affairs. Therefore if you want to do anything outside of these two areas, I found it quite limited. For areas such as HR there was virtually nothing which was a shame. However, The Masters courses are exceptional and very focused so I found myself applying for as many of them as I could. There are also very good courses that will help massively in the field of consulting. In order to get enrolled on a course the University have a very strange bidding system which can either be your best friend or your worst enemy when trying to get onto course you want. Basically, it's all about luck. During the bidding time it can be very stressful but most of the time it will work out in the end.

#### **MBS INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT TEAM**

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

I found the Manchester team very efficient and supportive and I definitely appreciated the many reminders of things I was required to do. Sending out numerous emails may be tedious but it definitely does help to keep us organised and on track. In relation to Sue, she was fantastic in helping me as she worked very hard (on her own accord) to get me funding to meet the shortfall of the exchange grant. This made my second semester a lot easier and enjoyable.

#### **MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS**

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

I am not sure whether this was touched on in the meetings as I cannot recall. However, with the expense of the trains and transport in Switzerland e.g to get to Zurich airport is 30CHF one way. I think you should provide information on the transport cards that can be purchased, such as the 'half-tax' and the 'after 7'. Initially these cards can seem expensive (250CHF for half tax) but if you travel as much as I did and especially many of my friends it is worth the investment. Also unknown to me when I was debating whether to purchase one, the cards are valid for one year and if you leave before the year is up you are entitled to reimbursement for the value of the unused months.

#### **HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE**

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

The office in St.Gallen are very helpful and send regular contact and updates via email. Any query I had was responded to within a day or so. Also after receiving news that I would no longer be eligible for an Erasmus grant, the University provided a grant of their own which was great.

#### **INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER**

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

The compulsory health insurance was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

#### **INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS**

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Some of the courses at the University have trips away, some as close as Zurich and some as far away as India or China. I did not participate in these courses, however I do know that they required additional costs for the trips that were required. Apart from that, there are no other costs I can think of.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

I lived in B32 (Blumenaustrasse) which was recommended to me from a previous exchange student and I am thankful that she did. There is no 'hall type' accommodation like that of Manchester, so it is very important to get somewhere that you will enjoy. B32 is the famous house for parties and exchange students, it is a must!! It is a short 10min walk from the University up a 'few steps' (not a mountain as I once heard). The house has 13 students in it and is a beautiful old Swiss style accommodation with high ceilings and shutters on the windows to match. Although as beautiful as it is on the outside I cannot guarantee the kitchen or common area is as nice or very clean. The common area and the kitchen is huge and great for parties and when clean is very nice, it just depends who you live with I suppose. However, all I can say is, everyone who doesn't live at B32 wants to!!!

## **DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Switzerland is in the heart of Europe so is perfect for travelling. However, you have to research regularly flight prices in order to get the best deal. The closest airport to St.Gallen is Zurich and unfortunately this is the most expensive airport to fly from. Despite this SWISS air regularly have sales so this can lower the cost eg. I got Barcelona return for approx. £80 and the same for Rome. Usually however this flight would cost approx. £200 return. The transport network in Switzerland is very good; one of the best in Europe and very efficient, but it is expensive. So if you plan to travel a lot you should buy the discount travel cards. To fly to and from the UK to Switzerland I find is always expensive as I have always paid approx. £150 one way.

Social life in St.Gallen isn't great to be honest, it is limited to basically 3 night clubs and the bars are so expensive that you never go out for a social drink like you would back in Manchester. A beer can range from 7-10Fr and a mixed drink is 13-18Fr. Entry into a club is expensive too, on average 10-15Fr. What I would say though, is that the Buddy system ensures that every week there is a big night out with discounts and the pre-party is always in B32 (so you should definitely live there). St.Gallen you are only a train ride away from Zurich which has amazing night clubs and parties, worth the trip!! The buddy system is only exchange students and these people along with your housemates are the people you will spend the majority of your time with and getting to know. Apart from class hours you rarely integrate with the local students, but in my opinion that is no problem because there are so many exchange students who all have the same interests as you (party, travelling etc) and this is more beneficial to you when you are on exchange. Local students are very serious and do not socialise as much. Living in

In terms of student activity groups there isn't much. There are many business orientated societies such as AIESEC, young entrepreneurs club etc. In terms of sports, there is free gym membership which is great and a necessity for all universities in my opinion. However, I would say it is better as a male because there are a lot more sports and teams/activities to offer. This is most likely due to the male:female ratio at the Uni as there are so many males in comparisons to females. I would assume 60:40 at least is not greater.

Overall, I would say that no matter where you go on exchange you will have the time of your life and you will make the best of it. Switzerland is very expensive and St.Gallen is a small city so nothing in comparison to Manchester. Academically, I imagine that I have got one of the best experiences and education in comparison to most other exchanges. It is a top ranked business school in Europe and that is very evident in the teaching and learning material. If you plan to enhance your education and opportunities for employment/working abroad, I would definitely recommend this university. However, if you want to have a more relaxing time and huge city life with many parties etc. I would suggest go somewhere else.

## **DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD**

**Initially a disappointment, but a great experience in the end; It is what you make it so go all out!!**

**2013-2014**

**University Attended: St. Gallen**

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### **INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME**

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

The induction programme consists of two weeks. Those who want to can take a crash course of German these first two weeks. Whether this is totally essential is tough to say. Many of the Swiss are bilingual and with English it would be possible to get by as many of my friends have done. It's difficult to comment on this as I speak German already.

What is essential, however, is the enrolment into the buddy system. These will be the people you will hang out with and get to know well throughout the semesters. The local students don't seem to want to go out as much and you may struggle to really engage with them as they are so study-focussed. The buddy system will show you round and help you find your way and is a great organisation to meet people through their events.

### **ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

The quality of teaching is good. The English of the teachers can be a little difficult to understand because of the accent however I don't feel it particularly hindered anybody. However be aware that even though a class says it will be taught in English, if they are no non-German speaking students, teachers will gladly switch to German anyway.

The style is the same as in Manchester. Teacher lectures and ask questions. Interaction can vary heavily from class to class. Sometimes it can be very enthusiastic whilst on other occasions there is dead silence.

The ease of access to a course however is a completely different ball game. It is all because of the bidding system. The school is great, teaching is good too but this. Oh my gosh! As you can infer I have a personal vendetta against this system. So what is this system you might ask? Well here you go:

I can be likened to a silent auction. At the start you have given 1000 points. The way it works is, the more number of points you put into a course selection the more likely you are going to get it. For example a course has 30 spaces. The top 30 people who put the most points in will get the places. So you have no idea what the bare minimum is to get a course. I missed out on a course once by 1 point! It is the most frustrating thing. Especially if you have to pick 6 courses. So if you split it evenly,  $1000/6 = \sim 166$  points, it is likely you will not get any of the courses, unless they are really not in demand. So what to do best is to prioritise 2 or 3 courses you really want and put all your points in them. Even this however is not a guarantee for success. I put in 370 points into a course and still didn't get it. So be warned! There are multiple rounds and you receive points back if the course you bid on is given to you. I think the problem is that we are very unfamiliar with the way courses are assigned here. The local students are well practiced in terms of getting the courses they require. I could write a list of tips but the problem is there is no guarantee of success even with tips. It is really luck that gets you your courses in the end. Perhaps a guide would be to just focus all your points in 2 to 3 courses in the first round of bidding rather than spreading them evenly. However one positive thing about access to courses is that you can literally pick anything.

The methods of assessment vary. These can be group presentations, papers, oral or examination. When doing examinations always decentralise them. Both in the first and second semester. Otherwise you can say goodbye to

your Christmas and summer holidays. They may say you can't in your first semester but you can. Many of my fellow exchange students who were here for a full year did so. Keep it in mind! The teachers are very accommodating to exchange students so don't be afraid to ask them for the de-central paper.

#### **MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM**

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Tough to say having lived here before so I was quite familiar with everything, hence never found the need to ask.

#### **MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS**

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

Yes, don't rely on your grant to come. Best financial advice is to plan way ahead and see it as a bonus. Luckily I am fortunate enough with well off parents, but I can imagine other students who aren't may really be struggle.

#### **HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE**

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

They are good. Very friendly and helpful!

#### **INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER**

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

I cannot comment on this as I have my own personal insurance with CIGNA registered in Switzerland. I never had to rely on the University of Manchester one. You do need to register it with the local government as it is required by law in Switzerland

#### **INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS**

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

See destination information where I will cover all the costs.

#### **ACCOMMODATION**

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

First of all prepare to pay a lot. 500 CHF is minimum really. However it can go up to 1000 CHF. It is best to be within the valley. St Gallen lies between two hills and you don't want to be walking back and forth. Try to be close to the train station as that puts you in an ideal location. Places like Rosenbergstrasse, Blumenbergstrasse are very good places to live. For the real partygoers try to get into Blumenaustrasse 32. That's where the parties will happen, however cleaning up the next morning might not be as pleasant.

#### **DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

First things first: Switzerland is expensive. Because of the high minimum wage everything you pay for isn't going to be cheap. For 200g of chicken easily expect to be paying 8-10 CHF. Living costs here are very high. Rent as mentioned before can range from 500-1000 CHF a month. Then of course depending on the lifestyle you live and what you eat you can easily add another 500 CHF on top of that for going out and food. Never expect to go to a restaurant. They are darn expensive. The only two I would recommend going to is Dieci, which is a pizza place which has a special student deal, and US Mex for the fajitas etc. Anywhere else isn't really worth it. You are better off cooking yourself.

In terms of travel buy a half-tax card and/or a Gleis 7. A half-tax card pretty much cuts the price of every transport cost in half. The Gleis 7 card means you can travel for free on trains between 7pm-7am so it's great if you want to go to Geneva or far away. These cards really pay for themselves so get them as soon as you arrive.

St Gallen is really a small town which 70,000 people. You will want to go travelling. St Gallen will make you run out of things to do within the month. But Switzerland is perfectly located in the centre of Europe. I highly suggest you take the overnight bus to Prague for example (look up studentagency for prices) or go to the Oktoberfest in Bavaria. Italy and many other places are all options. It is definitely something worth looking into. I had an American friend who went somewhere different every weekend for the whole semester. It is possible. The opportunities are endless.

The social life is good especially with the interaction with the buddy system group. However you may find yourself heading into a routine. Elephant on Wednesdays, Caliente on Thursdays and watching Champions League in Ofive, Meeting Point or Ad Hoc. Plus they organise special trips to go skiing or to Luzern, the lakes you name it.

Getting in to student activity groups isn't too easy from what I can gather. Many of the sports team just do their own thing. This is possibly because the interaction with local students is minimal outside the classroom as they are so focussed on their work. Some will connect with the exchange students and you will see these people frequently at the events the buddy system holds. I think it is highlighted by a sign that is inside the university. It's lights that spell out "happiness is expensive". So many people are just focussing on their studies so they will earn money rather than enjoy university and the moment.

#### **DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD**

A great experience with a costly price but something I have no regrets about.

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