

European Option French



Lausanne 2016

Why did I choose to do European Options?

I have always loved learning new languages and am very curious about experiencing other cultures. I did French at school and wanted to continue it and be able to incorporate it with medicine with a view to possibly travelling around the world and helping people via medicine. The option to learn medical French, do some PEPs in France as well as do a 4 month placement in final year in France or Switzerland was irresistible.

Why Lausanne?

I have already done 3 work experiences in France in very different regions: I did a summer job in Rhone-Alpes in a holiday village as a children's entertainer, I have also worked as an au-pair for a month in Basse-Normandie and I did my 3rd year PEP in Paris. Seeing that I have already explored a large part of France, I decided to give Switzerland a chance.

Language

Due to my previous placements in France, I was quite confident with my French. However, one must note that although Swiss French is mostly like French French, there are some words which are different. A list of this is present on Wikipedia if you type in 'Swiss French'. If you say a word in French French, don't worry, you will be understood anyway.

Medical system

The medical system here is insurance based. Everyone is obliged to have a medical insurance premium, average price of which is 400CHF per month. In a year, you have to pay the first 2000CHF of medical costs by yourself and then after that the insurance pays for the rest. It can also vary depending on your age so this is not necessarily a hard and fast rule for everyone. People have to pay on average 40CHF for a 20 minute consultation with a doctor.

My placements were at the CHUV (Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Vaud) pronounced 'shoov'. The medical hierarchy includes 'Médecins assistants' (junior doctors: F1-CT), 'Chef de clinique' (similar to registrars but not quite), then 'Médecin

cadre' (similar to consultant) and finally 'Chef de service' who you never see.

Everyone addresses each other in a ward with 'Tu' up to the 'Chef de clinique.' You tend to address medecin cadres as 'Vous'.

In every ward, there is bread with spreads for employees to have as a snack.

Lunch in the canteen is 8.30CHF and includes a main meal, bread (this is free for everyone) and a bowl of soup. You can bring a packed lunch as there is a microwave available in the canteen.



Overview of Placements

I did one month placements from February to May in Oncology then Dermatology then ICU (Médecine intensive) and finally ENT (ORL en français). Before coming here, we have to choose placements but Lausanne final year students have priority so the list of options were somewhat restricted.

Oncologie

Oncology is divided into 2 sections: the ward known as UTO (Unité de Traitements d'Oncologie) and clinics on another floor. I did my first 2 weeks in UTO and the last 2 weeks in clinics.

In UTO, the working hours are from 8.00am to 6pm. At 8.00am, there is a short meeting known as a 'colloque' with all the doctors including those in clinic talking about patients they think should be discussed. After that, we go up to the ward and do the ward round. After that, there is a lot of paperwork for the junior doctors known as 'Assistants' to do and so during this time, I tried to occupy myself with other things to do. Sometimes, if you are lucky, they get you to see an uncomplicated patient, take a history, examine and write it up in the notes.

The patients were usually on the ward to get chemotherapy treatment but had to be hospitalised rather doing it in clinic as they had other complications e.g heart failure. On Tuesday or Wednesday lunchtime there were teaching sessions – very specialist, too complicated for me, but there was usually a buffet of sandwiches and salads which made it nice.

In clinics, my role was mostly observational and to be honest quite boring. It may be better to sit with 'Chefs de cliniques' rather than 'Asistants' as you can ask them questions that they would know the answer to.

Everyday, there was a different clinic ranging from Breast, Sarcoma, Urological cancers, gynaecological cancers and GI cancers. Most of the patients were there for follow up or to talk about how the treatment was being tolerated and any side effects.

The main thing I learnt from this placement was the mechanism of action of chemotherapy drugs and their side effects, pathophysiology of a range of cancers and their follow-up.

Dermatologie

One of my best placements as there were more chances to do things. The placement is divided into 4 weeks: one week in clinics, another week in emergency clinics, one on the ward and the last week, any which one you like. Every afternoon at 1.30pm, there was a 30 minute 'Colloque' where someone would do a presentation, usually on a research article they had read. On Thursday morning, the colloque was in the morning and not at lunchtime. Students had to do one presentation at the end of the placement. Working hours were from 8am to 5pm.

I started in emergency clinic. People just turn up to this if they want to see a dermatologist urgently. The dermatologist then does a triage to see if it is really an emergency or not. If not, they are sent away with an appointment at a later date, sometimes months. Most of the cases seen were not necessarily emergencies as you would think, usually things that could not wait for a later appointment e.g. an itchy rash.

After the triage, I saw patients that had been chosen by myself and then presented back to the doctor supervising me. I enjoyed having autonomy and being able to think carefully about symptoms.

In clinic, people who had appointments would come and be seen but my role here was mostly observational. When there were chances to do biopsies or remove sutures, I would take them.

In the ward, I started at 8.45am and finished at 5pm. Ward round started at 9am and I would take notes of what was said and type it up. If they were chances to do biopsies, I would do them. Apart from that, the pace of life was slower.

Soins intensifs

The placement starts at 7.15am and finishes at 5pm. These are very long hours! The colloque usually happened first and a handover from the night team was done. Afterwards, the ward round took place, then the doctors reviewed their patients till lunchtime. Sometimes doctors were 'au tir' which means they could also be called to resus to help stabilize emergency patients. There is a lot of opportunity to observe intubation, putting in arterial lines, nasogastric tubes and bronchoscopy. However, there was not much opportunity to do anything hands on. It was mostly a very observational experience which for very long hours can be very draining. I used this opportunity to revise medical conditions I saw as well as ABGs.

This placement is most suited to people who stick their oar in and try to get involved as much as possible as a lot of the initiative has to come from the student and not from the doctors as they don't have much experience having stagiaires and are usually busy with their duties.

What would make this stage better would be shortening the amount of time the student has to stay as it was very draining.

ORL

The day starts at 8am and finishes at 5pm. The first week was spent in the clinics in which I accompanied doctors seeing patients. I also had the option to be with the on call doctor and see emergency patients by myself and then report back to the doctor. This was interesting and helped me practice ENT histories. The second week was spent with the doctor dealing with airway procedures such as laryngoscopy, tracheostomy etc. I also got the chance to see some paediatric cases. There is also opportunity to see oncological cases and clinics, neck ultrasound to revise neck anatomy and teaching sessions on common ENT cases. Overall, I enjoyed this placement as it was easy going and you learnt a lot as well as had autonomy to see patients by yourself.

Living in Lausanne

Accommodation

There are several options to get accommodation in Lausanne: house shares online, renting a flat etc. I found that the easiest and cheapest option is to get one with either the hospital or the FMEL (Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants de Lausanne: www.fmel.ch). The FMEL have various apartment blocks around Lausanne. The closest one to the hospital is called 'Falaises' but you can live anywhere as by metro you would only be maximum 30 minutes away from the hospital. I got a studio with the hospital.

I emailed the CHUV at Logement@chuv.ch to get accommodation. They offer accommodation 15 minutes away from the hospital in an apartment block consisting of studios only. Most of the other inhabitants are doctors who recently arrived, PhD students or sometimes exchange students. There is no common room or concierge.

The hospital only allocates a room 1 or 2 weeks before I came to Lausanne. At first, they gave me a studio without internet costing around 712CHF per month but I emailed back telling them I could not afford it so they gave me a studio costing 610CHF. I think the cheapest studio you can get is at 600CHF. The deposit is 1000CHF and you need to open a special free bank account for this deposit to go into, where it will be locked. After you move out, the money will be released from this bank account and returned to you.



The studio is small with a single bed and kitchen worktop with 2 hobs. There is no microwave, no kettle and no oven as well as no sockets on the worktops. There is no cutlery or pots and pans or even toilet brush provided so you have to bring your own. There is a separate bathroom with a shower and toilet. There is a laundry room which works via a top-up card.

Wifi is not included and so you have to get your own, which is very expensive. Some people asked their neighbours if they could share their wifi with them and pay half of the costs. I opted to go wifi free and use all the internet I needed in the hospital which was 15 minutes away by foot from the



accommodation. When you leave Lausanne, make sure to clean the studio very thoroughly as any little imperfection can be deemed unsatisfactory and you run the risk of being charged 250CHF to 500CHF for cleaning. I spent the day cleaning the room the day before but the surveyor was unsatisfied due to minor issues like limescale in the toilet which was there when I arrived and the mirror being unpolished. Despite the fact that the room was clean, I was told I would have to pay 250CHF which I contested. A way to avoid this, which I was unaware of, is to get the room checked a day before you leave, so if it's not up to a standard they want, you still have a day to make changes.

In hindsight, I think staying in Falaises or in any other FMEL accommodation would have been a better option as most students were there so it would be less lonely, it is cheaper, there is internet via an Ethernet cable which can be bought for 30CHF, the kitchens are equipped with ovens, microwaves and kettles and the bathrooms are also adequately equipped. Don't worry if the accommodation is further from the hospital than you would have liked as Lausanne is well linked up with metro services and no journey ever takes more than 30 minutes. A monthly travel pass is 50CHF. Here is their email Fmel-falaises@fmel.ch

Bins

In Switzerland, binmen only collect bins from a specific standardized bin bag. This particular bin bag costs 20CHF for a pack of 10, which is clearly very expensive. The whole purpose of this is to encourage people to 'tri' or sort their rubbish out e.g. putting perishable food in the compost bin, recycle plastic and glass etc. However anything non recyclable such as plastic wrappers and plastic bags need to go into the bin bags. I got round this by recycling what I could recycle. (I took 3 small plastic cups that I used from water fountains in the CHUV and put my perishable food waste in it before throwing it into the compost bin at the end of the week.)

Public Transport



In the city of Lausanne, the means of transport are buses and the metro. The tickets for buses and/or trams are bought at a machine at the bus stop or metro station but it only takes coins and card but no notes. You can buy a 'Demi-tarif' which is a bit like a railcard in that it allows you half price on all tickets even interregional train journeys.

You can get a 'Demi-tarif' at Lausanne Gare. It costs 165CHF for the whole year. Even if you are not staying for the whole year, it is worth it if you will be travelling around a lot

across Switzerland by yourself. (If you plan on only doing trips with the ESN, I don't think a demi tariff is necessary as it tends to be by coach.) You can also get the 'Voie 7' if you have the Demi-tariff and are under 25 years of age, for 129CHF, which allows you to get free transport between 7pm and 5am. You can also get a monthly pass for the whole of Lausanne for 50CHF.

When you buy the tickets from the ticket machine, choose 'Grand Lausanne' which allows you to go to zones 11 and 12 which is practically the whole of Lausanne.

If you have a 'Demi-tariff', you can select the half price 'Grand Lausanne' tickets. Tickets are valid for any type of transport: metro or bus so you can change mode of transport if you want, however, there is a time limit of 1 hour. After 1 hour, tickets are no longer valid. If you are only making a short journey, you can choose 'Court parcours' which is a cheaper ticket, allowing you to travel a maximum of 3 stops and is valid for 30 minutes only. You can also get the 'Court parcours' ticket cheaper if you have a demi tariff. The price of tickets with and without the demi tariff are listed on the table.

Ticket type	Without Demi tariff	With demi tariff
Grand Lausanne ticket (zones 11 and 12)	3.60CHF	2.40CHF
Day ticket	9CHF	6.90CHF
Court parcours	2.20CHF	2.20CHF

Monthly passes are 49CHF if under 25 years of age and 72CHF if 25 and older. For more information about ticket types in Lausanne, visit <http://www.t-l.ch/>

In the rare case of an inspection on buses or metro, if you don't have a valid ticket, you will be fined 100CHF.

For interregional train travel, the main rail company is CFF (Chemin de fers fédéraux). Its acronym in German and Italian (the 2 other official languages in Switzerland) are SBB and FSS, respectively.

Shopping

Seeing the very high prices here can prove to be a daunting experience especially when you arrive and if you are a cheapskate like me! The prices to



put it bluntly are ridiculous. It costs 20p to get a packet of Paracetamol in the UK whilst here it costs 2.25CHF and I've heard instances of it costing 5.00CHF. A standard pack of chicken breasts would cost you 10CHF on average. The Swiss supermarket chains include Migros, Coop and Denner. Of these, Denner is the cheapest. But the cheapest of them all is Lidl or Aldi, but they are not Swiss. Even then the prices are higher than in the UK. Below is a list of the price of groceries in **Aldi** (May 2016):

<i>Food item and weight</i>	<i>Price</i>
Rice 2kg	2.29CHF
Pasta 1kg	0.95CHF
Freshly baked bread 300g	2.49CHF
Milk (carton) 1l	1.15CHF
Crate of 10 medium sized eggs	2.19CHF
Gruyère cheese 100g	1.99CHF
Cailler swiss chocolate 100g	2.29CHF
Nutella 630g	3.99CHF
Flour 1kg	0.89CHF
Broccoli 500g	1.29CHF
Frozen veg(green beans, broccoli etc)800g	3.49CHF
Frozen chips 2.5kg	7.89CHF
Apples 1kg	2.99CHF
Kiwi 1kg	1.99CHF
Banana 1kg	1.49CHF
Potatoes 1kg	2.49CHF
Chicken breasts 500g	6.99CHF
Salmon 100g	2.69CHF
Tomatoes 1kg	1.99CHF
Mushrooms 250g	1.99CHF

I was aware of how expensive Switzerland was before I came so I sent a huge suitcase of non perishable food such as a 5kg bag of rice, a 3kg bag of pasta, olive oil, toiletries etc so I would only spend money on perishables and fun stuff like travelling.

The hospital pays you 733CHF per month and the university gives you a bursary of 1440CHF but we got it at the end of March so in the meantime and also when you first arrive, money for me was a little tight.

Trips



I really recommend joining the ESN (Exchange Society) as they do a lot of events where you meet new students as well as trips around Switzerland such as to Geneva, Bern, Gruyères and the Cailler Chocolate Factory and a weekend in Ticino, the Italian part of Switzerland.

Pic: Lugano, Ticino

The cost of going with the ESN is much cheaper than going on your own on these trips. You can see which trips and events have been planned for the whole year by going on the ESN website (<http://unil.esn.ch/>) or emailing the ESN team (esn@asso-unil.ch).

Of course, one can ski here but it can be a bit dear especially when you come first in February and haven't yet received your bursary. A cheaper and lighter option if you're not gifted at skiing is to do cross country skiing ('ski de fond' in French) which is basically ski hiking. You can do it for free at Diablerets Ski Resort but need to hire skis for 20CHF.



University and free time

Make the most of your free time after Exempting Exams by joining clubs and societies in the university. There are many sports clubs to join, just check the Unil website. I went to basketball club as it was free and it was so much fun! You slowly meet new people too. On Sundays, I also went to the local church and also met people there.

When you arrive

Stuff to bring: Passport, Contrats de stage, 5 passport photos, Unil attestation (if sent before you get here, if not, go to the SASC)

Order of actions on arrival

1. Sort out your accommodation stuff.

2. If you did not receive your Unil Attestation by post in the UK, go to the SASC at the Unil Dorigny campus to collect this.
3. Next go to Bureau des étrangers, located in Lausanne Flon metro stop, armed with your passport, passport photo and Unil attestation as well as 30CHF to get your Permis de Résidence. They will give you a receipt after you pay, keep this as proof you have registered so you can use it when opening your bank account. (It takes 2 weeks for them to send you the Permis de residence itself.) You don't necessarily need to buy an attestation to be able to open your bank account.
4. Go to a bank of your choice and open a bank account. You will need your passport, Unil attestation and the receipt of payment of the Permis de residence. The CHUV can pay you in either cash or by bank transfer and the University bursary is paid end of March so opening a bank account can be deferred to a later date.

Things to note:

Many things here close at 6pm and may not necessarily open in the weekend so if you don't manage to complete the above list, just ask for maybe an hour or two off from your placement if you still need to do some things. The doctors will understand.

What bank to choose

The best bank to choose is UBS as it is free to open a bank account as a student with them and use of this bank account is free. It is the only bank that allows you to withdraw money free of charge from any ATM of any bank in the whole of Switzerland. It also gives you 40 free KeyClub points which give you discounts at a range of stores, amongst other perks.

In terms of opening a bank account, if you are not confident in your banking French, bank employees in Switzerland speak good English!

Insurance

When you get here, the Canton de Vaud, specifically the ECA (Etablissement cantonal d'assurance) expects all inhabitants to pay an insurance against damage to your own property by fire and natural disasters. Note – this is insurance for your own property and not for the property in the building you live in. For example, if you are renting and don't own e.g. the bed in your flat, you don't insure it. So I ended up insuring my few

possessions and only had to pay 10CHF for a year's insurance even though they say the minimum is 20CHF!

Students living in University accommodations said that they did not remember having to pay this insurance.

The secretaries of the accommodation also said I needed to get insurance for damaging accidentally other people's property but I didn't...

The Human Resources also told us to get a Work Permit (Permis de travail). I never got round to doing it and nothing happened. After all, we are only there for 4 months doing placements!

Things to do when leaving:

1. Fill in the Avis de depart (you can find it online by typing 'avis de depart lausanne' on google) and send it by post to the Controle des habitants/ Bureau des étrangers.
2. Contact your bank to close your bank account a few weeks before leaving.

Reflection on the experience

This was quite a unique experience as it was the first time I spent more than 1 month in a foreign country by myself. I have been on short trips of 1 month in length to other countries and felt fine. However, I found it quite difficult to navigate all the paperwork needed to live in Switzerland, the prices, certain aspects of the culture and the homesickness and the solitude. This experience has taught me a lot about myself in that I now know that I am a people person which I would have never described myself as before. I now realize that I like being around people, even if I don't have much to say to them.

As Switzerland is a trilingual country (to be exact quadrilingual but no one ever remembers Romansh), I took advantage of the experience to practice my German and Italian. I did an Italian tandem with the University Tandem group. You sign up to the tandem website and put up a language profile. You can then contact people who speak a particular language or they can contact you and you can practice the language together. It was a good way to meet new people and improve speaking ability. I also took advantage of the library and read some German and Italian literature which is

something I would have been less likely to do in the UK. Of course, I have also had the opportunity to practice my French too!

In terms of intercultural differences, I have learnt not to underestimate the importance of 'la bise' – kissing on the cheeks as a greeting. It is not done in formal settings such as the hospital but in social gatherings such as meeting a group of friends or going to a dinner party, it is a must, on arrival and on leaving. This surprised me as in other countries I have been to like in France and Spain, it's not the end of the world if you don't bise every single person in the room on arrival. Here the bise is 3 times on the cheek which is quite exhausting especially if you are expected to do it to everyone on arrival. So if there are 10 people, that makes 30 head movements! Very exhausting...

The only acceptable excuse for not bising is if you have a cold.

The general culture here is less 'polite' than in the UK. People are a lot more direct towards each other and customer service is not quite the same. The customer is not necessarily always right here. In the hospital, the hierarchy is very rigid, in that there is little camaraderie between seniors and juniors. There is always that cold distance that is kept in order to remind you that seniors are superior to you. I don't like such an atmosphere as I find it unnecessary and makes it difficult for junior doctors to be honest about issues they are having. Although I feel it is important to respect your seniors, a more human ambiance would also be appreciated. I rarely heard positive feedback given to doctors when something good was done but negative feedback and criticism was common. I feel that positive feedback is very important to know what you are doing well so you can keep on doing it.

This experience has helped me improve my language skills and improve my understanding of a different culture which could come in handy as an F1 in multicultural Britain.

This experience has also helped me appreciate the UK a lot more for what it is especially the NHS. We are very lucky to not have to pay 40 pounds each time we go to the GP. We are very lucky to have a positive ambiance that is promoted in hospitals in which positive feedback is valued and doctors are encouraged to reflect on their feelings, attitudes and talk about difficulties they may be having. As an F1 I will appreciate the positive culture that is promoted in hospitals and make the most of it by seeking help when its needed and being a helpful and positive role model to juniors and students as I gain seniority.

I have also learnt to be more curious and not be afraid to get stuck in and ask lots of questions.

I hope to start my F1 in August this year in Bath and am interested in Paediatrics as a specialty.

Useful emails

Socio-cultural affaires (SASC) UNIL Info.sasc@unil.ch

Hospital accommodation: Logement@chuv.ch

FMEL accommodation: Fmel-falaises@fmel.ch

FMEL website: www.fmel.ch