

# European Studies Report



**Lausanne 2014**

## Why I chose the European Studies Programme

I come from a multi-cultural background and have always loved learning new languages. I started learning French when I was 6 but I lost my fluency soon after moving to Manchester and the European Option was a great opportunity for me to keep up my French! It was in fact one of the main reasons I chose Manchester in the first place – as soon as I read about the programme and the possibility to work in Lausanne I was set on this idea! In terms of extra work that is necessary for the French classes in the first 4 years, I cannot comment much as I only did the bare minimum (mainly the mandatory homework) until the C1 exam in 4th year. Even for that, most of my revision consisted in watching French films and listening to French radio. However, I think most students who thought it was too much work, realised in the first few weeks – I cannot think of anyone that dropped out after first year purely because of the workload.

### Elective

As I was keen to take every opportunity to undertake a placement abroad, I also went on a more conventional elective in block 1. Due to financial reasons I only went to Italy, but I had an amazing experience and would definitely recommend it! I know many people discourage this as you miss all the teaching in Christie block. I was initially quite worried about it too but in retrospect I do not feel it has disadvantaged me in any way. Nobody starts revising until October/November anyway and you can rearrange the important teaching sessions when you're back – if anything, I feel the prolonged summer break, refreshed me and encouraged me to start revision as soon as I got back to Manchester!



## Working in Lausanne

### The Suisse Healthcare system & training

Medical school in Switzerland is 5 years long. Everyone is accepted into first year and the selection of students who are allowed to carry on is done over this first year – only 20-30% pass the year. After that, training consists of different modules with occasional short placements in hospital. Fifth year consists entirely of stages – they have to do 10 months of stages in different specialties before their final exams.

After finals they become 'assistants', which is the equivalent of a junior doctor. Most of them seem to start in internal medicine before choosing their final specialty – job applications are sent directly to the head of department and contracts often only last 1 year, which means that most of the doctors regularly change hospital. They have to do at least 6 years as an assistant before being able to sit their exit exams to complete the FMH in their specialty (from what I understand, this is the name given to the specialty training) - after that, they become 'chef de clinique', which is the equivalent of a senior reg/consultant. I am not entirely sure what happens then – I think the next step is becoming 'médecin

cadre' and, if they want to, applying for a job as 'chef de service'. However many remain 'chef de clinique' for their entire career.

### Working as a stagiaire

I feel that Suisse stagiaires are much more integrated into the team – I felt I was standing around aimlessly a lot less than I do in the UK. And everyone, even the consultants, knew my name!!

It's also a very sociable environment: The stagiaires go for lunch with all the assistants and are invited to all the social events. During my paediatric placement for example we went for a 'randonnée en raquettes' up a mountain to have fondue, and then sled down on sledges – getting lost on an icy mountain in the darkness is a great way to bond with your team.

You also get paid (733F/month), which means you have to be there punctually every day and are only entitled to 2 days off per month.

However, I found the teaching much poorer than in Manchester. There were only a few doctors who were keen to teach and I was very rarely asked any questions - if I did not ask questions myself, I was rarely taught. After passing finals, however, this is quite relaxing!

In terms of working atmosphere, I feel the main difference with the UK is the pace and the workload. The doctors care for a much smaller number of patients than in the UK and therefore have more time for them (although this obviously depends on the specialty). The atmosphere is much more relaxed but the days are just as long (or even longer) than in the UK. However, even though the days start very early, everyone goes for breakfast together after handover and has regular coffee breaks. There also seems to be a weekly 'apéro' in the different specialties, when all the doctors have wine and snacks in the doctor's office!

### Internal Medicine

This was my first and, by far, my favourite placement in Lausanne. Internal medicine at the CHUV is split over a few different wards and the team is very used to having stagiaires which means that I had a much more defined role than on most of my placements in the UK. There were 5 other stagiaires while I was there and we were all assigned to a different assistant, who we followed for the duration of the stage. On the first day I mainly followed the assistant and tried to understand how the system works. From the second day onwards however she gave me all the responsibility I wanted without pushing me to do anything I did not feel comfortable to do - this was a great atmosphere to work in! The day on internal medicine starts at 8 and finishes at 5/6 for the stagiaires. There are quite a few lectures/presentations and the stagiaires have their own teaching session once a week too (where you bring a case to discuss). On the ward, I had the opportunity to clerk all the new patients and write up their 'entrée'. I also had 1 or 2 patients I followed throughout their admission, doing all the necessary work for them, including the ward round, phone calls, referrals, letters etc. It really was like being an FY1 and one of the best learning opportunities I have had! Twice a week there is also a 'grande visite', when the whole team goes to see 2-3 interesting patients with a senior consultant. In my last week I had the opportunity to present one of my patients - this seems quite scary at first, but it is a great learning opportunity!

### Chirurgie pédiatrique

My second placement was paediatric surgery. Compared to medicine I found it quite difficult to settle into this placement as there is not much to do for the stagiaires (especially as there were two of us and we were asked to stay on the ward for the first couple of weeks). The day starts at 7.30 with handover and the mornings are normally quite busy with the ward round and clerkings (many opportunities to elicit interesting signs). The afternoons however were quite boring as there was nothing for us to do, but we had to stay until handover at 5 pm where we were expected to present the patients we had clerked that day.

The last 2 weeks however were much more interesting as we had the opportunity to go to theatre or out-patients nearly every day. The major operations are done in the main CHUV building - this is a

great opportunity to see some very interesting cases, particularly as they specialise in laparoscopic surgery. However, there are normally quite a few people in the room and I was rarely allowed to scrub in, which makes it very difficult to see anything if it is not laparoscopic. There is also a smaller 'theatre room' in the outpatient department where small surgical interventions are carried out, including endoscopies, circumcisions, muscle biopsies etc. As this is a much smaller room it is a lot easier to get involved and great fun if you want more hands on experience!

I also attended a few clinics, which is where I learned the most. Professor Hohlfeld specialises in cleft palates and her clinics are a very good learning opportunity as she loves teaching and takes her time to explain everything. The phoniatic clinic and the urodynamic studies are also very interesting to see!

## Orthopédie et Traumatologie

This was my last placement and therefore 6 weeks long. Unfortunately it was also my least favourite placement. I initially struggled to integrate into the team as the assistants were very busy and less friendly than on my other placements and I ended up spending most of my time with the Chefs de Clinique.

The stagiaire's main job is to assist in surgery – if you want to do surgery this is a great placement! The doctors took a while to allow me to do things (apparently they have had problems with stagiaires in the past) but once they got to know me, they gave me more responsibilities. I got to practice suturing nearly every day and was occasionally allowed to do the incision for the knee replacements and remove or insert screws. On my last day one of the chefs even let me do a full operation (removal of 5 K wires) from incision to closure myself!!

On the few days I wasn't in surgery, I went to clinic, which was quite useful as I got to examine all the patients in front of the chef and occasionally had the opportunity to see new patients on my own.

Clinics were definitely the most useful in terms of learning. In surgery I was only asked very basic anatomy questions and after I had seen 10 knee and hip replacements I felt there was not much more to learn. However, it has been very useful in terms of exposure to surgery as I have never spent this much time in theatre and I feel much more confident scrubbing up, assisting and suturing!



## Living in Lausanne

### Before you go

Switzerland is renowned for its strict policies and much paperwork so they will bombard you with emails and paperwork to complete before you go – the good thing is that they tell you exactly what to do, by when and how. If you forget something they will pester you!

- **Choose your placements:** This is done online in April – they will send you an email with a link to a catalogue where you can search through all the placements they offer and choose a few you. They then let you know whether you have a place in your proposed specialties – if not, you can choose again until you have found placements for the 4 blocks.



- **Forms:** Over the months before you start, Lausanne will send you many forms to fill in and return – do this as soon as you receive them as they build up and you don't want to miss the deadlines. I made the mistake of giving them my home address and lost overview as my parents often forgot to tell me I received post from Lausanne – might be better to give them your Manchester address.
- **Erasmus funding:** In December there are a few lectures organized by the Erasmus organisation itself (funding, safety, healthcare etc). These are mandatory but don't panic if you miss one, just make sure you email them and receive all the paperwork – I was on my SA in Blackburn and could not make it, which seemed a big deal at the time but ended up being absolutely fine. You just have to make sure you pick up your Erasmus Mastercard and return all the forms in order to get the Erasmus funding.
- **Healthcare insurance:** As I am not a UK resident, I am not sure how this works for UK students. However, you will receive a letter asking you to confirm you are insured for your time in Switzerland – from what I understand, you just need to send them a copy of your European Health Insurance Card (make sure it hasn't expired). There is an Erasmus lecture about healthcare abroad too and it is worth looking into – one of my friends got pneumonia and had to go to A&E, which ended up being unnecessarily stressful and expensive.
- **Contact your first placement:** Most specialties will send you a letter telling you where and when to arrive on your first day. If they don't, just search for the number on the hospital website and give the secretary a call a week before you arrive. It's worth letting them know that you have to pick up your white coat and badge (which may take a few hours) and asking whether you should do this before or after going to the ward.
- **Set up UNIL email:** You will receive a letter about it - do this as most emails about the welcome meeting and French classes are sent to this email.
- **Things to bring:**
  - All your paperwork: confirmation of the stages, B2/C1 certificate, UNIL evaluation forms
  - European Health Insurance Card
  - Erasmus Cash Passport (Mastercard)
  - 5 passport photos
  - Money for the first few days (lots of deposits and payments)
  - Skiing equipment
  - Any kitchen equipment you can fit into the suitcase
  - Snacks if you arrive in the evening or on a Sunday as most shops are closed

## Accommodation

In previous years most students lived in hospital accommodation. In order to sort this out you can email [logement@chuv.ch](mailto:logement@chuv.ch) and apply for a room – the problem is they only confirm whether they have a place a couple of weeks before you arrive.

This year, we applied for university accommodation via the FMEL website. There are university halls ('falaises') just opposite the hospital – it takes 5 minutes to walk over and it is very sociable! We paid 600F for a room with ensuite bathroom and shared kitchen. The room is small but the halls are quite new, very clean and if you decorate it nicely it can become very homely, especially with the view onto the lake! Just bear in mind that the room is empty when you get there and you need to buy all your kitchen and bathroom equipment (pans, cutlery, plates, toilet paper, cleaning utensils, etc).

To get a room you have to fill in an online application – it tells you online when the 'inscriptions' open and you have to renew your application once a month until they give you a room. One of the other students received confirmation of a room before me and I actually ended up emailing the halls directly ([falaises@fmel.ch](mailto:falaises@fmel.ch)), asking if I could have a room too as we were travelling together and would like to live nearby – they sorted everything out for me and I got the confirmation a few days later.



### When you arrive

- **Badge and white coat:** Go to human resources with all your paperwork and a passport photo (they will send you a letter about this). You'll have to fill in more paperwork and wait for some time before you can pick up your badge and a form you have to take to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the main building to activate your badge for your white coat. You then have to go to the Orthopedic building (1<sup>st</sup> floor) to pick up your white coat – this will all be explained to you at human resources and if you get lost just ask someone!
- **Contrôle des habitants:** As you're staying for over 3 months you have to let the 'bureau des étrangers' know that you're living in Lausanne and apply for a permis de travail. Go to the contrôle des habitants and fill in the form for arrivals in Lausanne. You also need your passport, confirmation of the Erasmus exchange, your accommodation contract and a form you will receive from the hospital on your first day.

### Before you leave

- **UNIL evaluation forms:** Make sure you get these filled at the end of each stage and return them to the medical school early enough to sort out any possible problems while you're still in Lausanne.
- **Manchester forms:** Educational supervisor forms, UCExs, UCMDs, UPSAs – make sure all your forms are completed as you barely have any time before your final portfolio review.
- **Hospital badge:** Get your money back at one of the canteen tills. Then take your white coat to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor with the form they gave you on the first day. They have make sure you have handed all your white coats back before you can take your badge to human resources.
- **Deposits:** Don't forget to get all of them back before you leave!!

### Transport

The metro in Lausanne is a great way to get around! Tickets are 3.50F full price or 2.20F if you have the demi-tarif card. I got an abonnement for 3 months which was 148F (you can also get it for 1 month at 48F). The demi-tarif card costs 175F and gives you half price tickets for all public transport in Switzerland for 1 year – this is worth it if you're planning on visiting a few places around Lausanne (trains are very expensive).

Because my family lives close to Switzerland I brought my car to Lausanne – I left it in a car park by UNIL for 50F/month and only used it at the weekends. It's only worth it if you're planning on doing further trips and share fuel costs (I went to Marseille, Luxembourg and Germany quite a few times) but most places in Switzerland are reachable via train (although it takes longer and is very expensive).

### Shopping

If you live near the hospital, the closest shops are Migros at Sallaz and Coop and Aldi at Bessières. Aldi is cheapest but often does not have all the things you need. Migros is a little bigger and has some

cheap brands too but I often found I had to go to coop as it has a lot more choice, even if a little more expensive. It's worth knowing that Migros doesn't sell alcohol – Aldi has some nice (and affordable) wines and beers.

In the week they all close at 7pm and at 6pm on Saturdays. On Sundays only a few shops open (there's a Migros and a Coop at Ouchy). You need to be organized with your shopping as you often don't get out of hospital until late.

### Social life

I think social life in Lausanne is what you make of it! There are a large number of bars and clubs, the one we went to most often being 'the great escape' where most international students seem to aggregate. The UNIL exchange society also organizes a weekly night out and occasional events at the weekends – it's particularly good if you want to go to the bigger clubs as the entry is normally free and drinks are cheaper.

However, I found I had most fun on day trips, dinners and flat parties! I was lucky to make some very good friends in our accommodation and rarely spent an evening alone – we all cooked together and sat in the kitchen until late or went for a few drinks. The main problem is to manage sleep and social life – because most other students start later (especially if you're on surgery and start at 7am) you end up having a maximum of 5 hours sleep per night. I ended up having to have naps after hospital, which actually helps a lot more than I thought!

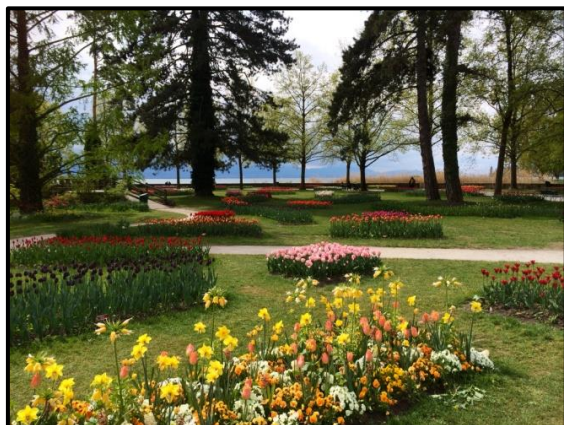


### Places to visit

- **Lac léman:** You will find stunning views anywhere by the lake but I particularly loved the bit near plage de Vidy - it is great for barbecues when it gets warm and it's a great place to go running!
- **Sauvabelin:** This is a small forest near the hospital with a little lake and a tower you can climb up to have an amazing view over Lausanne.
- **Bern:** The capital of Switzerland! I was surprised by how small this city is. Definitely worth seeing if you haven't travelled much in Switzerland!
- **Gruyère:** Cute little village in the mountains where you can eat some great cheesy dishes. If you're around the area you should go to the Callier chocolate factory too - you can try as much chocolate as you want at the end of the tour!!
- **Thermal baths:** These are quite famous around Lausanne! I went to 3 different ones: Charmey, Lavey-les-Bains and Ovronnaz - Lavey was by far my favorite though as it's a lot bigger!
- **Skiing:** I went to Leysin and Les Paccots – they're both quite small resorts with mostly local people but have some nice pistes. Les Paccots is particularly good if you're a beginner, Leysin can be a bit trickier. The more renowned skiing locations nearby are Verbier and Les Diablerets.
- **Montreux:** This is a gorgeous little town by the lake, where it always seems to be warmer than everywhere else! You can walk by the lake to get to the Chateau de Chillon.
- **Sion:** Known for it's Carnaval – Great atmosphere and definitely worth going to!!



- **Europa Park:** This is one of the biggest theme parks in Europe – it's in Germany, about 3 hours from Lausanne.



## What I have gained from this experience

### Linguistic development

I feel my French has improved greatly since my arrival in Lausanne, especially my confidence and fluency. I don't think I have gained much vocabulary (except for medical terms), but I feel I can speak a lot more fluently and find ways to explain myself even when I don't know certain words.

The CHUV is a great place to practice, as many of the doctors are foreign and often don't speak French that well themselves. However, this also means that you may pick up mistakes in pronunciation or grammar – you may end up with a mix of Greek, Italian and German accents.

The French classes organized by the university are very useful to practice your speaking – the teacher can be quite strict at times but I learned a lot more in her classes than I did in Manchester! I also made a great effort to avoid speaking English whenever possible and spoke French or Italian for most of my time in Lausanne – my Italian actually improved more than my French... The only problem is that I am now struggling to speak English!

### Inter-cultural understanding

Lausanne, especially the CHUV, is a multi-cultural place with immigrants from all over the world. It is therefore very easy to integrate and, contrary to my placement in France, it is obvious that everyone is used to hearing different accents and is very understanding. I actually feel I have settled better in Lausanne than I ever did in Manchester!

### Ideas and future plans

I feel like the past few months have been one of the best experiences I have made and feel I have made Lausanne my home. I was very sad to be leaving!!

In terms of future plans, it has helped reinforced my plan of a career in emergency medicine or anaesthetics. It has also made me want to work in Switzerland later on. I actually nearly applied for a job while I was down there – the main reason I didn't being that I wasn't sure whether I wanted to start at the end of FY1 or FY2 and that I wanted to know my foundation placements before applying. However, I am very keen to apply this summer, probably starting with a year in internal medicine after FY2.



## **Important contacts and websites**

### **CHUV**

Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois  
Rue du Bugnon 21  
CH-1011 Lausanne, Vaud, Suisse  
Tél : +41 (0)21 314 11 11

### **Medical school**

Fanny Roessli De Vito – Secrétaire d'unité  
Ecole de médecine  
Faculté de biologie et de médecine  
Quartier UNIL-CHUV  
Rue du Bugnon 21  
CH-1011 Lausanne  
Niv. 05 / Bureau 210  
Tél : +41 (0)21 692 50 11  
[mobilite\\_med@unil.ch](mailto:mobilite_med@unil.ch)  
<http://www.unil.ch/ecoledemedecine>  
Anything to do with Erasmus : [maria.valesco@unil.ch](mailto:maria.valesco@unil.ch)

### **Accommodation**

[logement@chuv.ch](mailto:logement@chuv.ch)  
<http://www.fmel.ch/fr/pas-encore-locataire/obtenir-une-chambre/comment-obtenir-une-chambre/98-pas-encore-locataire/obtenir-une-chambre/211-inscriptions>  
[falaises@fmel.ch](mailto:falaises@fmel.ch)

### **Resources humaines**

Direction des ressources humaines  
CHUV  
Les Allières  
Avenue de Beaumont 23  
CH-1011 Lausanne  
Tél. +41 (0)21 314 70 10

### **Contrôle des habitants**

Rue du Port-Franc 18  
Case Postale 5354  
1002 Lausanne  
Tél : +41 21 315 31 33  
08h00-12h00  
13h00-16h30