

## Erfahrungsbericht über ein Auslandspraktikum

Bitte reichen Sie Ihren unterschriebenen Bericht in ausgedruckter spätestens vier Wochen nach Ende Ihres Aufenthalts (Zeitraum des Volontariats) im Akademischen Auslandsamt bei Frau Rüppell-Wee. Laden Sie außerdem den unterschriebenen Erfahrungsbericht ausschließlich als pdf Scan im alfresco Kursraum hoch.

Dieser Erfahrungsbericht soll zudem insbesondere zukünftigen Studierenden helfen, sich ein Bild von dem Auslandsstudium an Ihrer Gastschule zu machen. Behalten Sie dies beim Verfassen des Berichts im Hinterkopf. Wir würden uns deshalb sehr freuen, wenn Sie uns die Erlaubnis erteilen, diesen Bericht auch anderen Studierenden – wenn gewünscht auch gerne in anonymisierter Form – zugänglich machen zu dürfen.

<b>Name, Vorname:</b>	Muss, Yvonne-Jacqueline
<b>Studiengang:</b>	Bachelor Education Primarstufe Europalehramt Po 2015
<b>Studienfächer:</b> (bei Lehramtsstudierenden),  <b>ggf. Abschluss:</b>	Englisch, Ev. Theologie/Religionspädagogik, Deutsch, Mathematik als Zusatzfach
<b>Name der Praktikumseinrichtung:</b>	Lao-German Technical College (LGTC), Thadeua Road, Kilometer 3, Vientiane, Demokratische Volksrepublik Laos
<b>Praktikumszeitraum von - bis:</b>	15.10.2019 – 15.01.2020
<b>Erhaltene Förderung:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> PROMOS <input type="checkbox"/> Reisekostenzuschuss AAA <input type="checkbox"/> Reisekostenzuschuss Freunde und Förderer <input type="checkbox"/> Reisekostenzuschuss aus Mitteln des Landes <input type="checkbox"/> Keine Förderung über die Hochschule <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Andere, und zwar: Engel-für-Kinder Stiftung×

**Note:** You may adapt the spacing for points 1 – 8.

## 1) Summary

Summarize your stay abroad briefly. Did it meet your expectations? How would you assess your internship abroad?

I did not have many expectations in advance. Overall, the internship was a great experience. I enjoyed my time in Laos very much and would love to go back some day. As this was my first time travelling to Asia, I anticipated to be quite confused or startled by the cultural differences but I did not encounter nearly as many difficult challenges and culture shocks as I had expected. The workload, however, was much more than I had anticipated.

## 2) Preparations for the stay abroad

Please include the following topics: process of application, contact with the training institution, private preparations, support with the preparations by the PH and the training institution.

I first heard of the project back in 2015 when I started my studies but back then I did not dare to think I would once be a part of it. In 2019, while I was working as a Hiwi for Prof. Martin, she asked me whether I was interested in applying for the project. I had been interested before but the more we talked and the more Laos-related Hiwi work I did, the more certain I became that I wanted to be part of the project. After talking it over with friends and family, I applied. The application process was quite quick and easy. I heard back from the project leaders shortly after I had sent in my application. Most of the initial contact to the school was established via Johannes Zeck, one of the project leaders. I only made personal contact with my tandem partners (teachers I was assigned to work with) a few days in advance to my departure. Later, however, whenever I needed help, the teachers at the LGTC were always very welcoming and tried to help to the best of their abilities.

The preparatory workshops given by Johannes Zeck and Isabel Martin helped to shape the expectations of difference. Simply knowing about certain things in advance made it much easier to recognize and deal with once in Laos. Having a few ground rules to stick to also made it easier to adapt as one did not have to worry too much about basics in the beginning.

My private preparations were quite extensive, especially the vaccine injections took up plenty of my time. Also, I read all the required documents such as a comprehensive reader especially conducted for volunteers within this project and an extensive amount of the recommended blog posts on [thelaosexperience.com](http://thelaosexperience.com). The project leaders as well as previous volunteers provided excellent support during our preparations in personal and written form. All of my questions were answered. I started my packing list a few months prior to my departure as I continuously came up with things to add to it.

As I was also writing my Bachelor thesis at the time, I did not have time to learn Lao for example but in retrospective I recommend learning it with Lao teachers or friends once arrived anyway. Its structure is quite easy to learn but the pronunciation proved to be quite hard - for me at least.



### 3) The Training Institution

Please describe the training institution shortly (type of institution, structure, employees, location, student body, if it is a school, etc.).

I worked at the Lao-German Technical College (LGTC) which is a vocational training school. Most of the apprentices are roughly between 15 and 25 years old. The school is divided into 5 sections: Automotive, Heavy Machinery, Electric, General Mechanics, Welding and Plumbing. All the sections are currently to be found on one campus, a new campus which is further away is however being built at the moment and some of the sections are scheduled to move there in April 2020. Although the school is not directly located in the city centre, it is in an area where there are many shops, cafés etc.

Regular lessons at the LGTC are scheduled between 8.00 am and 04.00 pm. There is a 1,5h lunch break between 11.30 am and 01.00 pm. Example timetables and daily life of a volunteer can be found on the blog.

BHS Courrgated, a Bavarian company, supports two of the programmes/sections at the LGTC: the Electricians and the General Mechanics. The volunteers will have the most contact with this group of students.

I do not know the exact number of employees at the LGTC but just to give an example: during my stay there were 5 English teachers working at the school. Many of the employees are able to conduct small talk in English and everyone is very friendly. They all seemed to be very used to having German volunteers on campus. Whenever I had a question or problem, I could always rely on my tandem partner and our contact person at the LGTC to help me.

### 4) Course of the internship

Describe the course of the internship; What tasks did you have? What was the cooperation with the colleagues and other interns like? Did any particularly positive or negative situation arise?

During the 20 working hours required by the project, I taught teachers or students on my own, observed classes or taught them together with my Lao tandem partner. In addition, there was plenty of additional time spent on preparing lessons, writing reports and blog posts, following up with special tasks and general organizing.

We were told to put our focus on working together with our tandem partner as much as possible. My tandem partner and I tried to meet up for 1,5h per week to plan a lesson together which we then usually also taught together. In addition to that, there were plenty of lessons I observed and many occasions of spontaneous tandem teaching. As the teachers at the LGTC, especially the English teachers, are always quite busy as they also usually have administrative duties to take care of, there were always quite a number of cancellations. For example, we did not usually have time to discuss lessons afterwards. My tandem partner was extremely welcoming, hospitable and always made sure of my wellbeing. She was also a very eager student in my teacher class. Our motto was "we're a team". We always helped each other out, often had lunch together and she accompanied me to buy my first Lao sinh, the traditional Lao skirt. Especially our LGTC contact person and my tandem partner always



made sure I was well and they became good friends of mine throughout my stay. But also the others, especially the teachers from my teacher class, made my stay very pleasant. Teaching the teacher class was one of the highlights of my Mondays to Thursdays as they were very quick-witted and noisy students with whom I had lots of fun.

In addition to the daily responsibilities, the project also includes so-called 'special tasks'. My special tasks were being the blog mistress and writing the TOPs (agenda points) and minutes (protocol) for our LGTC team meetings with my fellow volunteer and Johannes Zeck. As blog mistress it was my responsibility to remind my fellow volunteers that they should each write one blog post per each month of their stay. Proof-reading and giving advice on possible topics, content and technicalities of the website was also part of the task as well as communicating with Ms Martin, the blog editor, regarding deadlines and suitable topics. Writing the TOPs and minutes turned out to be extremely time-intensive as everything had to be written in a way which would be comprehensible for other important parties who could not take part in the meeting. This was the first time I had to follow professional procedure like this which caused a rather rough start with this task. As our meetings were usually quite extensive, so were the minutes. However, I quickly improved my style and the minutes can be very useful as they contain all the agreements between project leaders and volunteers and often they also contain tasks for you to carry out.

There were countless occasions of positive situations and only a few negative ones. Only to name a few of the positive occasions: we were invited to accompany one of the teachers to their cousin's wedding, we met a group of Lao students studying German at the National University who have become dear friends of ours throughout the months of our stay, I went on two fabulous vacations to Vang Vieng and Luang Prabang, we became friends with the owner of our favorite café and the LGTC staff held a goodbye-Baci (a buddhist luck ceremony) for us on our last day.

Unfortunately, my stay was a little shadowed by the fire that happened at our apartment in the beginning of December while we were on vacation. Luckily, nobody got hurt and not much was broken afterwards. We had to move out anyways as there was a bad smell of burned plastic. Afterwards, many things changed: I moved to the VEDI teacher dormitory and lived there together with the two VEDI volunteers from my team until my return to Germany. This, however, turned out to be a very good living situation. The girls and I got along perfectly although we shared one bedroom amongst the three of us. We supported each other with our tasks but we also had plenty of fun and lots of coffee. We shared our daily experiences and gave each other advice.

As Team IX, unfortunately, we never managed to have all of our team members in Laos at the same time but what follows counts regardless of the team constellation. We often had lunch and dinner together or explored Vientiane together on the weekends. Whenever it was necessary, I could always rely on my fellow volunteers, also on the ones who were part of my team but worked at a different institution. We always had each other's back (e.g. when someone was sick or faced a problem). Without them, many of the challenges I faced certainly would have been much harder to deal with. I found it to be extremely helpful to have peers to talk to, to ask for advice and much more. I am so grateful I had other people in the exact same situation to share everything with as they were the ones who understood best.



## 5) Assessment of the internship

How has the experience been different from those made in Germany? How can this internship be viewed as more valuable compared to one done in Germany? What did you learn (methods, special knowledge, inter- or trans cultural experiences, personal development as a teacher, etc.)?

First of all, the internship was different from those I had previously done in Germany as I could usually only communicate with my students and colleagues in a language which is not either person's first language. This often made communication more difficult. In addition, it was my first time teaching students who are older than Primary school age. I value the experience very much but it has also confirmed that I made the right choice for me personally when I decided to become a Primary school teacher. In retrospective I have to say I was not aware enough of the cultural barriers Lao learners might face when learning English or when talking to a European. Preparing lessons for and teaching Lao students (and teachers) turned out to be more difficult than I had expected. There were things and concepts I simply anticipated them to know which they did not. My expectation of common knowledge did not at all apply to my students. For example, knowledge of religion(s), countries and their first language was not to be expected with most of the students and teachers. This happened much more frequently than I had experienced it when teaching German students.

As the school is a vocational school for technical professions, the English lessons also have a technical focus and featured plenty of systems and vocabulary which were new to me.

During my time teaching in Laos I have learned to include games and methods in my lesson plans which are suitable for adapting to an unknown number of participants as I never knew how many people would show up. In addition, I always had a few games on hand which did not require any preparation or material in case there was more time or there were changes necessary. In general, my time in Laos has improved my willingness and ability to teach more spontaneously. I find that the best lessons were those when I had prepared myself well but nevertheless paid close attention to the needs and level of my students. This learning process is one which I will certainly benefit from when I teach in Germany.

## 6) Stay in the host country

Please include the following topics: personal experiences and impressions, life outside the training institution, special challenges or difficulties, unexpected or rather elusive experiences.

I expected to be much more shocked by the general surroundings, the infrastructure and everyday life. However, I adapted quite quickly. I knew my way around very soon and came to love walking the streets, the night market, the Mekong, the cafés and restaurants and how friendly most Lao people were. I even came to like the hot weather which caused me to sweat so much people would be worried about me.

Only when I told my friends and family about my life in Laos, through their reactions I realized how different everything was. Things like not having a shower cabin to protect the rest of the bathroom from becoming wet while you shower or the neighbours owning several roosters were not things I initially thought to be strange. My determination and the relaxed attitude of the Lao people surrounding me, of which some has rubbed off on me, have surely helped me overcome some challenges such as worries about hygiene, cockroaches,

electricity, stomach troubles and even the fire. I was often surprised by how relaxed I was regarding most issues.

Lao people are very friendly, welcoming and like to socialize. Also, many Lao like drinking beer on a regular basis and will gladly invite you to join them.

We did not usually cook as eating out is quite cheap compared to food prices in Germany. You can get fried rice for 15.000 Kip which roughly equals 1,50€. We also ate lots of fresh fruit, drank lots of coffee and often had western food, too.

In our free time we often met with our Lao friends whom we had met at the German Embassy event in October. These students, who are all studying German at the National University of Laos, have become dear friends of ours.

I will also never forget about the breathtakingly beautiful nature and landscapes which I have seen. 'Unfortunately' Vientiane felt like home so quickly and there was usually always plenty of work to do, that I barely got to sufficiently appreciate Vientiane's beauty. During my trips to Vang Vieng and Luang Prabang, however, I had time to notice how amazed I was by this country. I am so grateful I had the chance to live here for three months.

#### **7) Practical tips for future volunteers**

- talk to previous volunteers
- generally: read as much as you can about the project e.g. on the blog– especially on all the topics you are interested in
- the more you know in advance, the easier it will be for you to deal with those things once you come across them
- read 'recommendations from previous teams' for more comprehensive recommendations once you have been accepted to the project
- think of lots of games and teaching methods which not require any preparations or material as these are the ones you will most likely be able to adapt with your tandem teachers e.g. 'hangman' or 'who am I?'

#### **8) Miscellaneous**

You are welcome to hand in selected pictures from your stay via Email. Future volunteers can access them along with your final report.



### Declaration of consent

☒ I hereby give consent that this report will be made accessible to other students of the PH Karlsruhe and the foundation Angels for Children for informational purposes with my name being

☐ anonymous

☐ visible only as a hard copy in the Academic Exchange Office of the PH Karlsruhe

☒ visible as a hard copy in the Academic Exchange Office of the PH Karlsruhe and as a pdf file on the project website [www.thelaosexperience.com](http://www.thelaosexperience.com)

Place, Date

Signature

Pfinztal, 07.02.2020 Jacqueline Klus