

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.

Name, Vorname:	Hadatsch, Siegfried
Studiengang:	Bachelor Education Sekundarstufe (PO 2015)
Studienfächer: (bei Lehramtsstudierenden), ggf. Abschluss:	Englisch und Geschichte
Name der Praktikumseinrichtung:	Lao-German Technical College (Vientiane, Laos)
Praktikumszeitraum von - bis:	18.02.2019 bis 25.04.2019
Erhaltene Förderung:	<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 Stiftungx

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 first came into contact with the project "Teaching English in Laos" in Ms Martin's "Global Englishes" seminar in April 2018. Initially, I wanted to apply for Team VII for September to December 2018, but I decided against it. Instead, I applied for a stay with Team VIII in the semester break between February and April 2019 to not miss out on too many lectures and seminars at university.

During my interview with Ms Martin and Mr Zeck (the two project coordinators) I expressed my wish to work at the Lao-German Technical College, a vocational training school. My request was granted, and I got a place at the LGTC, where I had to teach English to both (late) teenagers and teachers. At first, I had some concerns that teaching adult teachers and teenagers might prove quite difficult and challenging, but luckily, I was proven wrong. All of my (teacher-) students were very polite and respectful and it was a pleasure to work with such motivated people. Culturally speaking, Laos was completely distinct from what I knew from Germany, and while these differences in culture were sometimes a bit challenging for me, they nonetheless helped me learn more about how I see myself and my surroundings.

I had never been to an Asian country before, so I tried my best to prepare myself for the ten weeks I would be staying in Laos. It already greatly helps to simply realize that Laos will be very different to what one is used to in Germany (or Europe in general). Looking past these differences, however, if one decides to go to Laos, they will experience a foreign yet beautiful world full of surprises and friendly people.

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.

The main part of my preparations for Laos consisted of three workshops that were offered for my team (Team VIII) in the months before our departure. At these workshops, Ms Martin and Mr Zeck told us about our future fields of work and responsibilities in Laos, the institutions we would work in and the people and classes we would work with. Furthermore, they gave us some more general advice for our stay in Laos, such as how to behave publicly, what to avoid doing etc. During the first workshop, we also were given a comprehensive reader, which contained most of the information we would need in Laos and served as a very good introductory reading for the project.

Additionally, we had the possibility to meet some former volunteers during the workshops who we could then ask questions especially relating to their stay. I was lucky that one of these returnees was Nicole Wiesa, who was my direct predecessor, so I could ask her a lot of things that would have been way to specific to otherwise ask during the workshops. Generally speaking, the workshops and contact with returnees were really helpful to get a good impression of what would await me in Laos.

As for private preparations, I consulted with a doctor about vaccinations, read a few travel guides about Laos and also privately contacted a few former volunteers who I personally know to ask them a few questions. Also, I read the project blog to get further insights.

3) The Training Institution

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

The Lao-German Technical College (LGTC) is a vocational training school in the capital of Laos, Vientiane. It is located slightly outside the city center and next to the Mekong river. The LGTC offers different kinds of technical education for young adults in the age range of 15 to 25 years. While the students at the LGTC have a variety of different backgrounds, most of those you would work with went to the schools by the Angels for Children foundation in Ban Sikheut. These students (also referred to as "BHS-students" since they are receiving scholarships by German company BHS Corrugated) are being trained in the mechanical and electrical section of the College. For your support, at least one of these students will also work as your HiWi.

Most of the teachers at the College are quite young and it is very pleasant to work with them. You will most likely find yourself spending time with them even outside of school, and it is commonplace to get invited to other people's homes, celebrations etc. Apart from the regular staff, the head staff of the College, especially the director, are also very happy to work with you and will support you if you have any problems.

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?

My work at the LGTC consisted of teaching two different kinds of classes: The students' class, and the teachers' class. The students' class consists of students sponsored by German company BHS Corrugated and is differentiated in three different skill levels: Beginner, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate. During your stay, you will teach one of these classes several times a week, most likely in the evening.

Additionally, the teacher classes are also differentiated into different levels, one of which you will also teach during your stay. These classes take place in the early afternoon multiple times a week. Something worth mentioning here is the fact that many teachers have additional jobs or responsibilities, so the attendance in teachers' class tends to vary greatly. To a lesser extent, this is also the case for the student classes.

In the mornings, your tasks consist of working with your tandem partner, who will be one of the English teachers at the LGTC. This means you will do hospitations in some of their classes, plan lessons together with them and also do tandem teaching in some of their classes. After class, you reflect on the lesson together and discuss what could still be improved. Working together with your partner helps to both improve or refine their teaching skills more, and furthermore offers you insights into your own ways and thoughts of and about teaching. It is very much a learning experience for both sides.

Generally speaking, the work at the LGTC was very fulfilling and a great learning experience for all parties involved. All students were very motivated to improve their English and it was a truly unique experience to work with them. Although there were a few things to get used to, no negative situations did arise.

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.)?

Teaching in Laos differs quite drastically from teaching Germany. One of the biggest factors here is the language barrier, since if your students don't understand something you try to teach them, you can't simply switch into German and explain it to them. Luckily, I worked with both the most skilled students' and teachers' class, so I managed most of the time. This language barrier impacted my lesson planning quite a bit, since I adjusted every lesson to such a level that everyone would be able to follow without having to resort to "native language explanation". This really helped me to get a proper sense of "didactic reduction" of content for my lessons.

What I learned most during my stay in Laos, however, was how to properly organize an entire schedule of lessons for different classes, and also how to act and react if things don't go the way you intended. The same time it took me to plan lessons and hold them, it also took me to improvise on the spot, readjust lessons as I held them or stray away from the lesson plan. While lesson plans are the norm in Germany, I often branched out and did things differently than I had initially planned. Many unplanned situations arose during my stay at the College (only three students showing up, power shortage in the whole city, among many other things), so I also learned how to be more spontaneous in my teaching. Additionally, I learned to worry less about how my lessons and my personality would be received by my students, and as I became more and more relaxed, every lesson became gradually easier to hold and fun for both me and my students.

I can't give a definite answer if this internship would be of more value than a German one based on my teaching experiences alone. In Germany, you learn how to teach German students from a Western background who have been exposed to and started learning English at a very young age. In Laos, you teach students who, at times, don't even speak and write Lao as their first language as there are part of one of the dozens of ethnic groups within Laos. The country is much more removed from Western culture and thus the English language. Taking this into account, however, I would say this internship will not only provide you with an extraordinary teaching experience, but also with enormous insights into your own understanding of "cross-cultural" working and living. My stay in Laos definitely had impact on how I view myself as a teacher and helped me develop a sense of teaching on a more "global" scale.

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.

One of the things I quickly realized at the LGTC was how close of a community teachers and students are; the Lao in general are an extremely communal people. I didn't suffer from any homesickness at all, this was in part due to the extremely warm and friendly reception I and my fellow volunteers received. We spent lots of time with locals even outside of work, and it was always a pleasure.

Outside the training institution, life was pretty laid back for most of the time. While Vientiane is the capital city of Laos, it is not overrun by tourists (those tend to stick to more "touristy" cities in the North) and generally a quiet city to live in. We spent a good part of our free time in the city, as its center was only a short bike ride away. The bungalow we stayed in was suitable for our needs and had everything we needed. All in all, staying in Laos was a pleasant experience, albeit it took a week to get used to it.

What I really struggled with, though, was that in Laos, the clocks run differently than they do in Germany. Things are often done last minute, and I had to be way more spontaneous than usual.

7) Practical tips for future volunteers

As mentioned before, people in Laos don't have the same attitude towards strict time management like people in Germany do. Things will get done – eventually. Meetings and appointments are often scheduled last minute, classes are sometimes cancelled in the same vein. People in Laos don't stress nearly as much as people in Germany do. Don't worry if you can't fix all your appointments and dates two weeks in advance – even if it is done last minute, it will work out, one way or the other.

Additionally, I simply learned to expect the unexpected. Many unforeseen things happened during my stay: Power outages during my lessons, half of my students being absent due to military training that was announced only a day before, regular last-minute meetings or holiday festivities out of nowhere. After a while, you just need to learn to “roll with it”.

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

Karlsruhe, 14.11.19
Place, Date

[Signature]
Signature