

EXCHANGE REPORT

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A scenic landscape background featuring a green field in the foreground, a line of trees and buildings in the middle ground, and a range of snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky in the background. A small blue triangle points downwards towards the text below.

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[Switzerland] – [FHNW]

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I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

Everybody knows Switzerland and the beauty it offers for all travel fanatics. My semester abroad is filled with the serenity of the calm lake of Lucerne, the adrenaline on the summit of the Zermatt, the excitement of dancing and parties with friends and sleepless nights reviewing lessons and completing homework.

If you are not sure yet whether or not you are making the right decision let me reassure you. If you are an international student in MOMA like me, you pay 170 euros for your 1 year in L3IM + 92 for CVEC which equals to 262 euros. Education in Switzerland even for the locals are not free, if I get my information right, they pay around 800-900 CHF per year. And when the school receive money from students, you see the money. Starting from the infrastructure to the quality of the teachers. Teachers in MOMA is good, don't get me wrong, the curriculum is not bad either. But it is Switzerland, I have to say it is all elevated. *Fachhochschule* is the Swiss IUT. The teachers here are also employees in a well-known companies and accredited practically in what they are teaching. Your fellow students here would have job experiences too or are working. The campus is just truly minimalistic-modern and spacious.

What I was looking for when I got to pick where I wanted to do an exchange is an institution where I would be taken care of, as in, they would care whether I am going to classes or not, I did not want to be in a very big university where I would just be "one of the thousands" of students. I wanted a semester where I can relax and breathe because I know after this, I would have to move to a big busy city. Aside from that, I knew however bad a situation is, I would be in Swiss, it can't be so bad. Like accommodation wise, etc. I met some truly inspiring, kind, amazing people. Not only I had my chance of networking with them but travel with them as well.

Administration wise, both MOMA and FHNW are very helpful guiding my steps. Any questions I may have were responded by both parties and the fuss of looking for accommodation was inexistent during my exchange semester it was easy and affordable. Along my report, I would give you some tips on how to save and earn extra money during your exchange that I know of. Sharing is Caring 😊

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

I think it is very important to set into context that I am an Indonesian (with an Indonesian passport) and a *titre de séjour* in France. So, my requirement may differ from those with other passports or a European one. I will spill as much information that I know in the paragraphs from talking with people around me.

To note : FHNW spring semester starts on the end of February. So, you will have to start your accommodation on the 15th of February as the orientation day is around the 20th. Most of your courses will start on the 1st of March though. As we start late, we will also finish late. FHNW spring semester ends

on the 30th of June. Be prepared to move out on the 30th of June or ask for extension to the Staff House Manager.

1. Visa

For me, yes. I need visa. Since I am not a European, I needed to make an appointment to Paris for a quick application with cost 0 euro for students. I just needed to complete the forms required and a valid passport. My appointment in Paris was in the middle of December and they told me I could pick it up in the Embassy 2 weeks before my semester abroad (around 1st of February)

2. The flight

I did not fly directly to Swiss. So, my direct to Swiss journey was from north west Germany where I was staying while waiting for the semester to start and I bought it through a third party app "Omio", it costed me around 70 euros from Bonn-Olten. I booked it 2 days before since I was positive covid before then. It could be around 40 euros if you book 8 days in advance from the app.

3. My luggage

Since Switzerland is a fairly cold country, I brought a "doudoune" with me and sweaters. Not a lot of summer clothes. DO NOT BRING THE RICECOOKER if you plan on bringing one, since the dormitory (if you choose to live in the dorm) will provide one along with water heater, pans, utensils, plates, basic necessities.

A blender you can bring if you like your smoothies. If you plan on doing some skiing, make sure you bring your ski clothes since you would only have around 3 weeks to ski (spring semester) and it is not worth it to buy new ski clothes just for 3 weeks in addition to the cost of renting the equipment.

4. Bank account

I would advice you to open a bank account in Revolut (an online bank) before coming here, that way you can buy with ease without a hurry to open a Swiss bank account. I was with Banque Populaire du Sud and every transaction was not free of charge (they charged around 5% of each transaction).

5. Insurance

Do not forget to apply for your *Carte Européenne Ameli* (the blue one) even though you have your *Carte Vitale* this blue card will be exempt you from paying swiss insurance. If you are a foreigner like me in France, make sure you have your *Carte Vitale* already and applied for the European Card. You would also need this card in scan when completing the MoveOn website (for MOMA – FRIM *bourse*).

Since Ameli does not provide *Assurance de rapatriement* make sure you have a private insurance. I booked mine for my *séjour* of one semester in AXA. It costed me 85 euros (this will be required for the MoveOn website).

6. Internet

My best decision was to bring my France number. I switched from SFR to Orange because they did not cover Switzerland. I pay 10 euros in Orange for their 70 gb offer (black friday promotion) that covers calls all around Europe including Swiss. So far, no problem with the *forfeit* and no fuss at all.

If you decided to take a swiss provider, check out DigitalRepublic. Its like SFRred in France. You order the card online, with no fees. For the first month you can pay nothing for a slow unlimited internet + free local calls, if you would like a normal speed unlimited internet it is just 6 CHF for the month. Second month and after, it's 6 CHF for the normal speed internet monthly + free local calls.

B. Housing

1. All about the dormitory

I lived in the PersonelHaus, Kantonspital Olten a.k.a the local dormitory. If you take classes in Brugg or MuttENZ or other FHNW campuses you can live here as well. It is a 10-15 minutes' walk to the train station. Please note that there are no dormitory in the other campuses.

There are rumors that the Local Hospital, where the dorm is, will not prolong their partnership. So, verify please. The dormitory is located I front of the local hospital and run by the hospital's management. It is in one building with the administration offices. Some of the interns in the hospital also live there.

The dormitory is equipped with washing machine (1 CHF for 33 minutes of laundry – standard 40 degrees express), there is also drying machine if you need you use it for a more expensive price.

You can search in the internet for the pictures of the room and the facilities. To summarize it, you will have a fridge in your room but no freezer, a very good heater, a lot of compartment. One kitchen for all 14 rooms (usually it is not 100% occupancy) and 3 toilets, 1 shower and 1 bathtub (very facy, I know). There is a cleaning lady coming once a week and you can change your provided bed sheets every 2 weeks. Reminder, bring your own pillow or be prepared to spend 20-30 CHF for a new pillow (you can buy in Coop supermarket) because the provided pillow is not good.

FHNW Olten is 20 minutes by foot from the dorm.

2. Cost

The room cost 400CHF per month. So, the moment you arrive for your spring semester these will be your expenses :

	Description	Price (CHF)
1.	Cleaning lady (one time pay)	100
2.	Deposit/ <i>Caution</i> (pay to school)	150
3.	15 Feb-28 Feb (half month rent)	200
4.	March rent	400
	TOTAL	850

3. Packages and Letters

You will receive your letters in your small, personal mailbox. If you have a package (online shops, etc) , you will receive a yellow paper telling you to pick up your package in the hospital's reception during the opening hours.

III. When I arrive at the university and in Olten

A. Inscrition at the university

Once your application is accepted by the university, you will receive an email containing username and password for the FHNW mobility website. Just follow through the application process given, it is very detailed and easy. Send them a quick mail if you are not sure of certain stuff.

No reregistering is necessary. You will be invited to the orientation day where they would confirm your learning agreement and explain certain stuff.

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) of FHNW is very integrated in your mobility. So, I would advise to tick the box of “buddy program”. It is a program where you will be connected to a buddy and he/she will put you in the group for events.

B. Information on the university

1. Courses

I do not think any of the courses are bad, and the teachers are all SUPER nice. My chosen specialization is International Financial Management, so here is my list, ranked based on the day and time I take them in appendix 1.

2. Advise on “*contrat d'étude*”

Since language courses are not counted for credits in MOMA L3IM, you are not obligated to take one. However, they did not say anything about taking more than 1 course. So, I would advise you to take 1 course more than necessary just in case one of your courses is not to your liking. FHNW allows students to drop their courses until the 31st of March.

C. Swiss Bank Account

I opened a Swiss bank account in UBS. It was super simple. You just need your passport (sometimes they ask for letter of acceptance, you can download it in your mobility online website). You will get 50 CHF in voucher that they call KeyClub which you can redeem in different partner online shops (I recommend Zalando.com as there is no minimum purchase to use the Voucher there). Bring as many friends with you as when you referred someone you will get an extra 50 CHF /person referred. So if you bring 2 friends with you saying you referred them you will get = 50 (you opening your bank acc.) +50 (friend A opening) +50 (friend B opening) = 150 CHF easy 😊 Each of your friend will also get 50 CHF for opening their bank account. The bank will not tell about this program if you do not ask.

IV. When I life there

A. City hall registration and government administration

You will have to register yourself in the City Hall of Trimbach. No appointment (*rendez-vous*) needed. Prepare 20 CHF together with their requested documents. With that, bring your insurance with “*rapatriement*”.

You will receive an invitation from your mail box to go to the Kanton Office in the city of Solothurn (make sure you visit the white church there, it's beautiful) to take a picture and pay for your Swiss residence permit. For

Europeans, be prepared to pay 50 CHF. For foreign passports, be prepared to pay 232 CHF.

Aside from that, you would need to give your prove of insurance (I advise to give the scan of your blue insurance card) to exempt you from paying Swiss's insane insurance price. The administration cost of this will be 100 CHF.

B. Safety

Swiss is very safe.

C. Supermarket

I did my research. This is my ranking list from the cheapest :

- Aldi : Near Olten Hammer Bahnhof
- Lidl : City of Trimbach
- Denner : Sälipark
- Migros : The best compromise of all : Sälipark
- Ideal Market : Best for frozen food and Turkish cookies + open on Sundays
- Coop : The most expensive. It's like German's Rewe or Montpellier's Monoprix near the *Trois Graces*

If you are looking for Asian Supermarket, my recommendation would be *Dai Thanh Trung Vu-Nguyen* which is located 14 minutes by bus from the Olten main train station to the city Hägendorf with bus number 505 (Oensingen)

D. Events

All information of events will be posted by the ESN and Olten Student Council in a Whatsapp group. Make sure you stay informed ! There is also the ESN card if you are planning to join a lot of their events

Aside from the ESN, the International office also do 3 times a semester dinner/lunch to keep up to date on how the exchange students are doing.

E. Sports

If you are willing to pay a little bit for gym. *PureGym* in Olten has the best price. In Olten, there is no sports program unless you would travel to other campuses.

There is a football and basketball court around 8 minutes from the dormitory. If you like running, my preference is to go up the hill beside the

hospital. Going through the park, you will enter a forest with hiking paths that you can run in, they are quite elevated. Sunsets running here is the best.

F. Eating

We mostly cook because one meal here in a restaurant easily cost 25 CHF.

G. Travels transportation

Bicycle : I would recommend bringing your bicycle if you like to cycle a lot. The roads of Swiss is very friendly to cyclist and you can travel far with ease with your bikes. A friend of mine travelled around Swiss with his bike, so it is possible. Parking your bike is also free in front of the dorm.

Car : Bring your car. Parking in the hospital costed around 150 CHF per month (please verify) .

Train : Download the SBB app (it's like France's SNCF). These are their offers for travel passes ;

- Halbtax : If your studies are all in Olten like me and you do not travel for >60 CHF per week. This will cut 50% off any ticket you bought (bus/train). Can be used for supersaver tickets as well.
- GA Jugend (16-25 y.o) : 245 CHF/ month for a minimum of 3 months
- GA Jugend monthly : 290 CHF for 1 month
- Supersaver : Supersaver means booking ticket in advance (>3 hours) and boarding to the exact train. If you take the normal ticket, you can take any of train on the same day to the destination.
- Supersaver day pass : Booking an entire day pass in advance (> 1 day before) for a specific day. The further away you book it from, the cheaper it can be. Price ranges (for Halbtax owner) from 40-80 CHF
- <https://www.sbb.ch/en/travelcards-and-tickets/railpasses.html>

The SBB usually have some very interesting promos. I had the pleasure to benefit from their friends day pass where me and my other 3 friends paid 80 Francs in total (20 each) and used the day pass for all the trains and bus transportations. Always be updated !

H. Student Job

During my exchange semester, I had the pleasure of working in a family-owned restaurant for around 6 hours on a Saturday. This was a good decision as everything here cost 2 times as it is in France and it makes sense because minimum payment per hour here is 20 francs/ hour while in France it was only 10 euros per hour.

V. Appendix

Day/Time	Course Name	Prof	Rank
Monday/13.15-17.00	Business Process Management	Ms. Maja Spahic	6
<p>She is a very fun teacher, definitely. She teaches with kahoot quizzes. So, students have to prepare the night before and then she will give us kahoot in the start while explaining. For the second half of the lesson she would give us prepared cases to work with our team and we can go whenever we feel like it. Works are to be submitted the Sunday before the next class.</p> <p>The negative side about the class is that she doesn't really give expectations and real instructions for the tasks are not so clear since her course is actually pretty complicated.</p> <p>Advise : pick your group as wisely as possible. I had a very fun group, we cook and eat cake together. It compensates the unclearness of the tasks and the extra work we have to do.</p>			
Tuesday / 09.00-12.00	Business Communication 4	Mr. Kevin Stringer	2
<p>This course is all about Negotiation. He is an ISTJ, so strict, good at communication in public and funny too, not in a Haha way but in a he made a good point kind of way. His course is very practical. It's practice, practice, practice. We do a presentation every class with our assigned group at the first course. Unlike BPM where we choose who we want to work with, Mr. Stringer pick who you work with.</p> <p>Some weeks you will need to read some prepared articles and your group will be chosen randomly to present what it was about.</p> <p>Scoring is based on your presentation, so no unreasonable absent is allowed and the biggest part of the scoring the 2000 words essay to be written at the end</p> <p>Advise : Pick this course. It is a very important course for business student and the professor is very licensed from his experiences. Is truly an honor to learn from one of the best.</p>			
Tuesday / 13.00-17.00	Digitalization, Globalization, Employment	Mr. Mathias Binswager	7
<p>It's advanced economics. You will need to master the basic economic policies such as fiscal, monetary and supply side. There will be a final written exam in June but a presentation with a chosen partner about one of the provided topics.</p> <p>Advise : if you do not like economics do not take this class because there is a lot of talk about money creation and how countries are able to survive a lot of debt but still be okay, like Japan, and many more</p>			
Tuesday / 17.15-20.00	Advanced Excel	Mr. Pascal Moriggl	5
<p>Teacher is very fun. He is teaching about Microsoft's programming language VBA. Since I am looking to enter the tech industry, this is a good start for me to start learning a little bit about programming. But since the credits are only 3, I chose to take this course but not list it in my Contrat d'études with MOMA.</p> <p>The final test is the prototype that you have to make out of the dataset given.</p>			
Wednesday / 17.00-20.00	German Basic	Mr. Romano Massimo	1
<p>He is very passionate about languages and you can see that from him teaching. He also speaks a lot of languages so he is patient on teaching German.</p>			



Advise : German is very useful when you live in the german part of Swiss like Olten. Everything is in German and it is very good to know at least a little bit.			
Thursday / 08.15 - 17.00	Specialisation : International Financial Management	Mr. Clemens / Mrs. Silke	3
<p>Consolidation, Earnings management, Accounting and many more interesting stuff. This course teach us a very on-field approach on finance. We look at issued like Enron's and more financial fraud news to be analyzed. It can be hard as some stuff the local student has seen them the previous years and you have not. Make sure you make friends in this class as their help and notes would help !</p> <p>Advise : Well, if you are interested in Finance, this class would be for you. The teachers are very knowledgeable, we also had a guest lecturer from the tech sector which was very interesting. The teaching is very tailored in real life situation, not just theory</p>			
Thursday / 17.15-21.00	Foundation of B.Law	Ms. Anja Nicol/ Mr. Freiburghaus	4
<p>Always read the law script of the going to be discussed topics because the teachers are not going to the basics, they are just there to elaborate and entertain your questions together with case studies. What I like about this class is about the situational case studies that they give. Since law is very ambiguous in answers and a lot of laws exist, examples in the case study put a lot of stuff into context.</p> <p>Out of the two teachers, Mr. Freiburghaus is the best. The best law teacher I have ever had actually even though he would only give 3 classes in Olten. He gives us insights to the reality, explains the course very clearly and entertain our questions with full attention.</p>			

It is truly an amazing experience to learn from these teachers, I sure am learning a lot and really grateful for having the opportunity to be surrounded with intelligent colleagues.