

Applying for an exchange: Learning process and opportunity to reflect

Last update: June 2024

Why learning process and opportunity to reflect?

The process of decision-making, preparation and application is elaborate. However, it can be more than a tedious chore: Use this process to reflect on your academic and personal goals, your motivation and plans. This way you combine the necessary with the useful – and benefit even more from the exchange.

Phase 1: Making your decision

Motivation: You learn a lot about the different countries and universities by finding out about the different destinations and the factors that are relevant to you. That is time well spent.

Questions: What is important to me in my studies and my future career? What makes me happy? How do I want to develop, academically and personally?

- **Academic aspects:** All partner universities meet certain quality standards, but differences and nuances exist. What academic qualities are important to me? High (research) rankings? Innovative forms of teaching? High levels of team and project work? Small groups and personal contact with lecturers? A wide range of courses? Strong selection or high entry hurdles for local students? An academic network for later project work or research? A private business network (involving trade fairs, spinoffs, etc.) for later internships?
- **Language:** The knowledge of the language(s) of instruction will improve. Do I want to learn or improve an additional language? Is the course offer mostly or completely in English, or in another language?
- **Environment:** Large city, student town or campus university? Nature experience or great cultural offering? Active student associations and university traditions? Distance from friends and family? Housing offer? Sports offer? Living costs?
- **Sustainability:** Should the exchange take place within or outside Europe? How can I organise my arrival and departure in a sustainable way (airplane, train, etc.)? How will travel from my accommodation to the campus? How good are the local public transport services? How do the countries, universities and accommodations differ in their sustainability offers and activities?

Resources: Websites ([Student Exchange Office](#), department, host university), search portal Mobility-Online, [Greener Mobility IRO-Kit](#); contact persons within the [Student Exchange Office](#), [departmental exchange coordinators](#), lecturers, fellow students

Phase 2: Application

Motivation: You gain clarity about your goals and wishes, your strengths and weaknesses. This is personally enriching and also useful for future job interviews.

Questions: Why do I want to undertake an exchange? What goals do I want to achieve? What means exist to achieve these goals? What skills can I strengthen during the exchange? What points are central to me in choosing a destination? How will I prepare for the exchange (academically, personally, in terms of language)?

Resources: Study plan for the exchange

Phase 3: After the exchange

Motivation: You realise all you have achieved, how you have changed and what you can make of it after reviewing the exchange.

Questions: What goals did I achieve? What did I learn, academically and personally? What experiences influenced me positively or negatively? How did I develop and change during the exchange? Has my perspective on ETH and Switzerland changed – and if so, how? Are there any impulses from my exchange semester that I want to take up again and pursue further here? What information and experience would I like to pass on to future exchange students? What would I do the same and what would I do differently during a next academic or professional stay abroad? Which acquaintances and friendships that have developed in the exchange do I want to continue to cultivate?

Resources: [Writing your study report for the IKB](#), role as expert at [information events](#); engagement for the [Erasmus Student Network](#), consciously cultivate acquaintances and friendships made through the exchange; benefit from the [Career Center's wide range of offers](#)