

ERASMUS Work Placement – British Council Language Assistantship

My year abroad job is working as an English Language Assistant in a grammar school in a rural German town. Depending on the teacher and the class, I have had various different tasks, some of the most common being preparing a game or activity related to the topic or to practise a grammar point in a more fun way; giving short presentations about school in Britain or other topics; and helping individual pupils with tasks set by the teacher. There are also the less interesting lessons, in which I'm required to rely heavily on the text books, which leaves less room for imagination or creativity. A highlight of my time so far has been the opportunity to start an English club for some of the most able and keen pupils. This has mainly been a way to provide more scope for speaking activities, for which there is little opportunity in classes of up to 30 pupils. I was also able to organise a Christmas Box exchange project with my former High School, to share important traditions and aspects of a 'typical' Christmas.

To begin with I was concerned that although my spoken and aural German would improve, my academic skills would get a bit rusty over the time spent away from uni. However, I've been able to join one of the history classes at my school and use various resources to deepen my knowledge of aspects of recent German history, which is particularly helpful with my dissertation just around the corner. A couple of the benefits of this kind of job have been becoming more confident and getting better at using my initiative/thinking on my feet. It's not always easy going – the early morning starts in German schools were quite a shock to the system! – but I would definitely recommend becoming a language assistant. It's something different to studying at uni, and is excellent experience if you want to test out what a teaching job is like before making any big decisions. The 12 hour flexible timetable allows plenty of time to travel and to pursue other interests (for example I sing with two local choirs), and I've made some great friends by getting to know other language assistants in nearby areas.

Photos:

One of the school buildings

Exploring the region – a visit to Erfurt Christmas market

