

## Rowan BA French

Embarking on an Erasmus programme presents a variety of challenges to overcome. Not least amongst these challenges, in my experience, were searching for accommodation in a foreign country with little knowledge of the area and no local contacts, battling foreign bureaucracy and liaising with senior members of the school establishment in a foreign language. Hurdling these obstacles provides a huge boost to self-confidence and the development of both professional ability and general life skills that puts Erasmus students two steps ahead of their stay-at-home counterparts. In the current economic climate where experience is everything, having the opportunity to develop these skills and maximise your employability handed to you on a plate is not something to be dismissed lightly.

Part of the reason that I chose the British Council Language Assistantship was to gain an insight into the world of education to evaluate the prospect of pursuing a career as a teacher after graduating. To be able to couple this with exploring the French working sphere more generally was ideal. I can certainly say that now, I have a far greater understanding of the requirements and difficulties of being a teacher and also the rewards and benefits that go with it. In addition to this, I have been able to further my communication skills in a professional environment, my organisational and time management skills (there is no greater motivator for being prepared than the fear of standing in front of a large group of 15 year olds with nothing to teach!) and also to renew my passion for study. In my spare time I have been able to read around my subject and listen to lectures online, and I am greatly looking forward to going back to University for my final year refreshed and eager to tackle all academic challenges ahead.

I have also been able to build an international network of local professionals, travellers and other assistants which has sparked my imagination for new career possibilities. Principal among these is the potential for teaching English as a foreign language in various countries around the world (I have met people who have taught in East Asia, Africa and the Middle East), combined with my enhanced appreciation for the British Council, I feel that this is now something I would feel confident in pursuing in the future. Additionally, I have also been researching opportunities within International Business, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the European Union. In an increasingly globalising world, developing language skills and having experience living and working in a foreign country can do no harm to your career prospects.

But what also really makes an Erasmus year worth doing is all the wonderful and unexpected occurrences not listed on the tin: Perfectly cooked poisson for lunch at one of your teachers' house in an idyllic French village, the enthusiasm of students breaking their French chatter to ask "How are you?" when passing in the corridor, the international community within which you find yourself, the warm welcome from a talented and enthusiastic English department, the casual weekends in North Africa and the every-single-weekend on the slopes....

In sum, I would strongly recommend the Erasmus programme as an excellent way to build an international network, broaden your career aspirations and boost your personal development.

