Annual
Queensland – Swiss/German
Year 11 Student Exchange Program
2015 – 2016

Form A

FORM A - GENERAL INFORMATION INCLUDING TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

The purpose of this form is to provide general introductory information to students and parents who may be considering participating in the Queensland-Swiss/German Student Exchange Program. Additional specific and detailed information will be provided upon confirmation of student placement in this program.

The aim of the reciprocal 9-week exchange with students from Switzerland or Germany is to give you the opportunity to:

- make important progress in your understanding and speaking of French, Italian or German languages
- appreciate the customs, culture and life of a non-English speaking country in Europe

Students from both sides of the world must embrace this adventure with a spirit of understanding and tolerance. By maintaining an open mind and an optimistic attitude, you will be able to make the most of this exceptional opportunity. The exchange is solely for the purpose of educational, linguistic and cultural advancement.

Organisation

Students from each country are invited to participate in this annual exchange program. All successful and suitable students undergo a matching process where they are assigned a compatible companion for the duration of the exchange. If the companionship is accepted each student and their family will provide the partner student accommodation and care in their home country. Final numbers are decided after the shortlisting and matching processes have been completed.

In Queensland, the exchange is sponsored and administered by the Department of Education, Training and Employment (‘the Department’).

In Switzerland, it is organised by the Association Romande pour les Echanges Linguistiques (ARPEL), Geneva, and the Servizio Lingue e stage all’estero in Lugano, Ticino.
In Germany, it is organised by the *Bezirksregierung Düsseldorf North Rhine-Westphalia*.

**Dates**

German and Swiss students are expected to arrive in Australia on the morning of **Friday 24 July 2015** and depart **Saturday 26 September 2015**. Visiting students will be collected from the Brisbane airport by Department staff and taken through an orientation program.

After the orientation program, they will be collected by their Queensland host families **after 3.00pm on Friday 24 July 2015** in Brisbane or fly to regional areas where they will be met by their host families at the airport. Queensland students are expected to depart together with Department endorsed chaperones from Brisbane on **Saturday 21 November 2015** and arrive home on **Sunday 24 January 2016**.

**Costs**

The cost of the exchange is **$3,600** subject to final confirmation of airfare costs. This price includes the return airfare from Brisbane to Germany, or Switzerland, chaperone costs, a commemorative student polo shirt, travel insurance, and other organisational costs. An orientation program is held for the Swiss and German students upon their arrival in Brisbane.

There will be two payment options:

- payment in full or
- payments in 3 instalments with the final payment due no later than **Friday 25 September 2015**.

Payment can be made by credit card, direct debit or cheque. A deposit of **$500** will need to be made by **Friday 3 July 2015** to guarantee a place in the program.

**Personal expenses**

Spending money and personal expenses are not included in this cost.

**Parent/Student Information Evening**

Once matching has been finalised, each Queensland student and their family are invited to a Parent/Student Information Evening at Education House, 30 Mary Street, Brisbane. This year it will be held on **Thursday 18 June 2015**. **Attendance is strongly advised** as it is where important information will be given about the exchange. Teleconferencing links will be made for those who are unable to attend in person. Full details will be given closer to the date.

**Blue card**

A working with children check is required of all persons over the age of 18 who are living with the host family. No cost is incurred when applying for the check.

It is mandatory that all persons in the Queensland household over the age of 18 years obtain a Blue Card if you agree to participate in the exchange.
It is the responsibility of the student’s family to obtain a Blue Card for each relevant family member. Please visit the website at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au) to obtain further information. You will be required to provide the Department with the number and expiry date of your current Blue Card by Friday July 3 2015. Should you already have a Blue Card, please ensure that the expiry date covers the dates that the overseas students are under your care.

Although Europe does not have a ‘Blue Card’ system the exchange organisers in Switzerland and Germany undertake processes in checking the student candidates who will also be 16 or 17 years of age and may also include an interview by the exchange organisers in Switzerland and Germany.

**Reciprocity**

The spirit of reciprocity is in the host family providing a happy home environment and daily living facilities including meals, transport to and from school and family outings. What Queensland host families offer should also be offered in return to Queensland students in Switzerland/Germany. The exchange student should be considered and treated as an extension of the host family.

Once students are matched they receive their prospective partner's application folder to view before signing a formal acceptance form.

From this point on students and families are strongly encouraged to establish personal contact by mail, e-mail, phone, Skype or other social media applications.

The exchange is very much a family-to-family arrangement. The Department’s role is primarily one of facilitator which allows costs to be kept to an absolute minimum. The Department also provides support in Queensland and monitors the progress and wellbeing of students offshore.

The organisers are not tour operators and the exchange is not for tourism purposes. Unsupervised independent side trips by participants whilst overseas are not supported.

**Life in Switzerland**

Switzerland is the size of Tasmania with much of the surface area being uninhabitable mountains. As the population of Switzerland is approximately 8.1 million, this tiny country (by our standards!) is densely populated. Of the 26 cantons (states), six cantons are French-speaking, one is Italian and the others are either German or Romansch speaking.

The great majority of Swiss live in towns, in apartment buildings. Occasionally families may have a secondary residence in the country or a chalet in the mountains. Homes outside the city centre are usually two storeys high with a basement and a very small garden. Because of freezing conditions in winter, houses tend to be compact to ensure efficient heating.

The standard of living in Switzerland is one of the highest in the world. This does not mean that all Swiss are rich! The same diversity of economic situations exists there as everywhere else in the Western world. Students from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to participate in this exchange.

In winter many Swiss families head for the mountains on the weekend when the snow has arrived, to go skiing or snowboarding. There is an element of risk in some snow activities, such as skiing or tobogganising. You should feel free to decline to participate in such activities if you are not confident
or comfortable with them.

You should not attempt activities which are beyond your level of capability. Your hosts will not take offence if you decline to participate in any such activities and would be grateful that you do not undertake activities beyond your level of capability.

Similarly, driving conditions in Europe are different than those in Queensland. Even if you are licensed to drive in Queensland, you should not do so when in Europe on this program.

Swiss students are not all that different from students everywhere, in that they like going to parties, movies and "hanging around" with their friends. Visits to the cafés, where they put the world right over a cappuccino or un chocolat chaud, are more frequent than in Australia, especially in winter.

An important difference between family life in Switzerland and Australia is that many families return from work or school at lunch-time. This is when they enjoy their main meal while evening meals are lighter — omelette, quiche, soup, pasta, pizza, cheese etc. The "sandwich" and the tuckshop will be a novelty for your Swiss partner!

**Life in Germany**

The Federal Republic of Germany is situated in the heart of Europe. With its nine neighbouring countries it is more than ever a link between East and West, but also between Scandinavia and the Mediterranean.

Germany has a population of about 80.1 million, the largest in Europe after the Russian Federation. In size, Germany is smaller than France and Spain.

German is the native language of more than 100 million people with Austria and part of Switzerland also being German-speaking. About one in 10 books published throughout the world was originally written in German.

North Rhine Westphalia, your destination, is Germany’s most populous state, almost as populous as the whole of Australia with its 23.6 million people! Being Germany’s “economic heart” there are big cities offering an exciting and varied cultural life. Besides that, it is of outstanding interest both in terms of history (important monuments in Cologne and Xanten) and picturesque landscapes. Marked by the romantic and legendary Rhine, it offers all types of scenery ranging from the Lower Rhine to beautiful hilly and mountainous areas. The nickname “Kohlenpott” (coal scuttle) is a thing of the past, for the state has long since satisfied the call of the 1960s for “blue skies over the Ruhr”.

Each person has his or her own preferences when it comes to structuring leisure time. Though Germans largely prefer to spend their leisure time within their own four walls, they also enjoy participating in sports or musical activities, going to cultural events, travelling, staying with friends or just having a good time out. Australian students may often be unfamiliar with European winter sports such as skiing etc. It should be acknowledged that there is a level of risk when participating in these types of activities. Any student who does not feel comfortable in taking part should feel free to politely decline.

The standard of living in Germany is also one of the highest in the world. This does not mean that all Germans are rich! The same diversity of economic situations exists there as everywhere else in the Western world. Students from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to participate in this exchange.
In winter many German families may head for the mountains on the weekend when the snow has arrived, to go skiing, or snowboarding. There is an element of risk in some snow activities, such as skiing or tobogganing. You should feel free to decline to participate in such activities if you are not confident or comfortable with them.

You should not attempt activities which are beyond your level of capability. Your hosts will not take offence if you decline to participate in any such activities and would be grateful that you do not undertake activities beyond your level of capability.

Similarly, driving conditions in Europe are different from those in Queensland. Even if you are licensed to drive in Queensland, you should not do so when in Europe on this program.

An important difference between family life in Germany and Australia is that most families have their main meal at lunch-time (sometimes not until 2 p.m.) while evening meals tend to be lighter. The “sandwich” and the tuck-shop is sure to be a novelty for your German partner.

**Student's responsibilities**

While staying with your host family in Europe it is expected that you will conform to any rules or obligations of that family. This includes sharing in household tasks, participating in excursions (especially if they have been organised for your benefit), respecting curfews (regardless of the liberties you may enjoy at home), cooperating with other family members, especially those with whom you may be sharing a room.

- You have the responsibility to attend school full time with your exchange partner for the full duration of the exchange program whilst in Australia.
- You have the responsibility to attend school full time with your exchange partner for the full duration of the exchange program whilst in Switzerland / Germany.
- You have the responsibility to attend all timetabled classes and abide by all school rules for the duration of the exchange program.

Apart from any rules which may be set down by the host family and host school, students have an obligation at all times to represent their family, school and state in an exemplary manner through their personal conduct and language. Student conduct at all times should be in accordance with the Code of School Behaviour (for state school students) and for independent and Catholic school students, the code of conduct relevant to your school.

Please note that student participants of the Queensland-Swiss German Student Exchange Program are not permitted to smoke or consume alcohol at any time.

Smoking and consuming alcohol are illegal activities for persons under the age of 18. Students do risk forfeiture of their place in the Queensland-Swiss German Student Exchange Program should they be found smoking or drinking alcohol. Further details can be found at:


In Switzerland, Germany and Queensland, any student whose behaviour or attitude is found to be unacceptable risks shortening his/her stay. In the case of a Queensland student in Switzerland or Germany, the return to Australia will be negotiated between the Australian organisers and the student’s family. **Parents will be responsible for any added costs involved in the early return journey.**
While staying in Switzerland, the host family, in conjunction with the Association Romande pour les Échanges Linguistiques (ARPEL), in Geneva or the Servizio Lingue e stage all'estero in Ticino, will take responsibility for any decision about the student's well-being in the case of emergency where time does not permit contact and consultation with the student's family in Australia. Excellent medical services are available throughout Switzerland and student insurance will include travel, medical and repatriation cover.

Likewise in Germany, the host family, in conjunction with the Bezirksregierung Düsseldorf North Rhine-Westphalia, will take responsibility for any decision about the student’s well-being in the case of an emergency situation where time does not permit contact and consultation with the student’s family in Australia. Excellent medical services are available throughout Germany and student insurance will include travel, medical and repatriation cover.

**Accommodation**

Each student should be able to offer suitably clean and comfortable accommodation for his/her Swiss or German counterpart. This however does not mean that a separate room has to be provided. It is quite an acceptable arrangement for the student to share a room. Time should be taken to explain the household routines to your counterpart to allow him or her to feel as much at home as possible, e.g. using certain household appliances; explaining when the bathroom is available in the mornings; getting one's own breakfast if necessary.

**Host Family Responsibilities – Outings and Excursions**

The activities of the family should include the exchange student by providing one or two excursions during the student’s stay. This does not have to be at an unbearable cost to the host family. Excursions should be kept simple e.g. picnics to national parks or camping weekends, depending on each family's budget. Expensive outings (e.g. visits to amusement/theme parks) should be avoided if the family budget does not normally permit this type of activity.

Information on family activities can be found at the following websites:


If the exchange student wishes to organise such visits for him/herself, this will be entirely at the discretion of the host family.

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The exchange is not a time for Queensland students to visit family and friends throughout Europe. Students may only leave their host country if accompanied by an adult from the host family.
Clothing

Although it is important to wear appropriate clothes because of different climatic conditions, it is not necessary to pack a lot of clothing. As it will be mid-winter when the Queensland students visit Germany/Switzerland, you will require a good pair of waterproof boots or shoes, warm socks (for outdoor activities), a very warm coat or windproof jacket, gloves, scarf, and a hat or beanie. All schools, homes, shops, and transport facilities are well heated but extreme weather conditions may necessitate the need for thermal underwear.

As students do not wear a uniform to school, jeans or pants, and layers for the top (t-shirts, long sleeve tops/sweatshirts, pullovers and jackets) are acceptable school wear.

For most Queensland schools, the visiting German/Swiss students will be required to wear a uniform. Queensland students and families must discuss with the school administration the school’s policy on uniforms and make the necessary arrangements. If black/brown shoes are required, please inform your partner in advance.

Passport and visa

If you do not have a valid passport you must obtain one immediately after you are notified of your selection for the exchange. A copy of the front photo page will be required by the organisers in the Department to ensure that airline bookings correspond with the names displayed in the passport. This is the responsibility of the family and student. A visa is not required for either Switzerland or Germany.

Spending Money

Spending money is essential. Extra expenses may include transport to recreational venues and visits to cinemas, coffee shops or skating rinks and any excursions the student undertakes without the family.

When calculating spending money, be aware that the cost of living is much higher in Germany/Switzerland than in Australia. For the duration of the exchange it would be wise to calculate generously. This will of course depend on the current exchange rate and one’s own personal spending habits. As a guide, past experience suggests that students budget for approximately 60 – 100 Euros per week.

Luggage

Depending on the airline international travel has a limit of 30 kg per person for check-in luggage and up to 7kg per person for carry-on baggage. Size restrictions for all luggage, including carry-on baggage, apply. Unfortunately for participating students from regional areas such as Cairns or Townsville, domestic airline luggage restrictions will also apply. Size limits will be confirmed once airline bookings are finalised.

There is no guarantee that airline staff will allow excess baggage to be checked in without the traveller incurring considerable costs for each excess kilogram. Charges per kilogram can be very high. It is up to the student to pack lightly before leaving Australia, with the expectation of additional weight in Germany/Switzerland in the form of gifts, souvenirs and books.

To be accepted for the exchange with a Swiss or German student is to be given a rare opportunity to expand your horizons and language ability. Think long and hard about how you can showcase your lifestyle and country and give your German / Swiss partner an unforgettable stay.

You will find the same spirit awaiting you in your partner's country.
How to apply

- Read Form A above
- Complete Form (4 copies): B (Application form)
- Give forms B to your language teacher and principal for approval/recommendation.
- Return forms B to:

International Services
Attention: Justin Roberts
Level 18, Education House
PO Box 15050
City East, Queensland 4002

The International Services team can be contacted by email
InternationalServices@dete.qld.gov.au

This will be the primary mode of communication during the program. For urgent matters please do not hesitate to contact the International Services team on +617 3513 5729 or +617 3513 5730 if this is required.

Please ensure you make FOUR COPIES of your original application form B [i.e. original + 4 copies]. Keep one of these copies for your own records and reference. The ORIGINAL application form and THREE COPIES are to be posted to International Services.

All forms must be received in hard copy.

Applications close
5.00pm Friday 20 March 2015