



EXCURSIONS AND OTHER NEWS

Small insights in student's or professor's points of view, field trips, and other stuff we do.

Training Camp For BioS Students

Sophie Merz

As the colors are changing all around us, October is calling for the beginning of a new season. To test whether new BioS students are able to handle whatever is thrown their way, the week-long getaway was added to the calendar. This year, 16 individuals were brought to the Ostrau youth hostel in Saxonian Switzerland to be trained with the help of daily guests. Since (almost) everyone arrived at the hostel on time, the first social experiment was for them to find three people to share a room with. This was done quite fast, so they could move on to the more serious stuff! During the day, their focusing skills were tested with information-packed lectures about various topics that they'll have to face out in the wild. From good scientific practice to Bioethics and legal issues, every lecture was a four-hour long marathon. But the students handled it so well that, on Wednesday, it was time to reward them with a four-hour "walk" to the Schrammsteine.

Here some thoughts:

"It was really hot, I sweated a lot!"

"It was exhausting, but amazing and beautiful!"

"Yes."

After the very interesting guest lectures, it was time for the new students to socialize and get to know their fellow colleagues. Some with alcohol, others without, the darkness was filled with laughter. From harmless games like Dobble and Uno, to a fun and embarrassing pub quiz (thanks to Prof. Zierau) and a killing spree by ruthless werewolves – everyone had an opportunity to discover a new trait in their fellow travelers! Although the energy level on the last day was low – due to a long night – everyone seemed well prepared for their upcoming studies. Prof. Reinhardt and Prof. Zierau were able to manufacture highly motivated students with lots of knowledge – Thank you for everything!



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Who does (not) join in 2023?

Klaus Reinhardt

For 2023, BioS received 77 applications of 20 nationalities. India, Germany, Iran (in this order) were the top three countries. Applications contained between 7 and 326 (!) pages. The latter did not include a letter of motivation and the candidate was out. Sixty-one applicants identified as female. Fifty-five were from outside Germany, markedly increased from 2021 (6) and 2022 (32); 16 from Germany, less than half as previously (39 and 42 in 2021 and 2022) (Table 1 for a full break down). The main panel members Prof. Klaus Reinhardt and Prof. Oliver Zierau ranked applications at three levels, they disagreed on 13 applications but only by one level. Four applicants did not turn up for interview. Six of the suitable applicants let us know they chose another place, from five people we had not heard after our invitation letters, at least three had difficulties to obtaining their visa. So, we boarded the train to Bad Schandau without knowing how many people will join even the introductory week.

Table 1:

	total	EU	non-EU
Applied:	77	20	57
Interview:	44	20	24
Suitable:	29	18	11

What should future BioS applicants learn? First, write a good letter of motivation (see our website, how) and you will get an interview. At least writing one at all will already help. Second, consult the BioS homepage at least once if you got an interview. Third, be honest and realistic about your language abilities. Fourth, if you are from a country that has a hand on the internet communication, we will still find a way to interview you! A wish from our side would be to not pick a coffeshop or a noisy corner if you chose to do the interview per mobile phone. BioS staff are looking forward to working with all the 2023 students!

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Behind the Scenes at the Museum – Lab Rotation

Helen Rothfuß

Science can sometimes seem like an abstract and complicated concept. But that doesn't always have to be the case. If done well, scientific topics can be conveyed in a universally understandable and easily approachable way. This is central to science communication, and something that I find exciting. To try myself at real-life science communication, I chose to do my lab rotation in Frankfurt am Main at the Senckenberg Naturmuseum. In the permanent exhibition, the Aha?! Science Lab, guests can have a hands-on experience of natural science. People are invited to touch and examine some exhibits using microscopes, to join in on real research projects and talk to scientists from the museum. Exhibits ranged from (fake and real) animals and their parts like furs or teeth, to minerals and rocks, to shells and insects, to learning games and livestreams where animals could be observed in their natural habitat. As part of the Aha?! - team I was involved in the daily running of the exhibition: welcoming guests, getting into conversations about the exhibits with visitors and discussing their questions. I quite enjoyed the challenge of adjusting my answers to questions based on the previous knowledge visitors had on that topic. The more you know about a topic, the easier it is to find age and knowledge fitting answers. Behind the scenes I was doing research for new exhibition topics, writing short info texts about exhibits for visitors, and creating a guided learning game about the differences between shells of snails and mussels. All in all, I learned a lot during my lab rotation, not only about the exhibits but also about different aspects of science communication, specifically in the museum context.

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(Re)write, Review, Rejoice! - BioS Writing Workshop

Helen Rothfuß

"Vasoconstriction due to cold temperature may also reduce fluid diffusion into the interstitial space and locally diminish inflammatory reaction." This sentence is hard to understand, even for biologists. However, it is a great example that writing texts is not necessarily easy, especially if the aim is to write enjoyable and understandable pieces. Throughout writing and reviewing there are many variables to consider. What audience do I want to address? Do they already have some knowledge of the topic I am writing about? Is it a scientific text or is it more journalistic or creative? To get into some of those facets in writing, BioS Reports held a writing workshop to cover basic writing rules for structure and clarity and implemented learned rules through short games. This workshop was organised as a part of the FOSTER funding programme. BioS students from both years joined us in putting theoretical writing concepts into practice. Thank you for coming and creating a welcoming and comfortable work environment, also for us.

