

Exam Stress

In the context of the Erasmus plus program 2018-2020 we were given the task to examine the stress high school graduates are exposed to and how they deal with it.

In 2019, 138 students passed their high school graduation at the French-German High School of Saarbrücken. The school has mainly German and French students who have to pass a mixture of French and German exams.

The high school is very demanding as all students will be getting a French and German diploma. To get a better understanding of the stress level students are exposed to we interviewed three students, one of the scientific section, one specializing in economics and one person focusing on literature.

Before the exam period they have two weeks off school during which they can prepare for the final exams. The exams last four days and have durations between 3 to 4,5 hours.

Everybody takes this very seriously. All of the participants asked spent most of their time studying and limit other activities like meeting friends and sports.

Preparation to the exams took at least two years before the date of the exam. But it is of course more intense before the exams. All of the students asked were working in the evening and only few in the morning.

Many started with the easiest subjects like with the languages and continued with more difficult ones or the ones they are specializing in, like economics, philosophy and science for instance.

To make it easier all of the respondents confirmed using revision sheets which they used up to the very last minute before the exam.

Regarding the written exams most of the topics were no real surprise to the interviewees. Some responded that French was particularly challenging.

Immediately after the exam, all of the participants had a big relief that exams ended and in the same time a good feeling about the potential outcome of the exam.

During the exam respondents had all different routines to calm and keep concentrated and avoid stressing. Some do breath exercises, others eat and very few drink water during the exam as they want to avoid going to the bathroom.

One day before the exam all students have finished studying and did something pleasant to forget the anxiety of the exam to come.

Being used to many exams during school life, all of the respondents were relatively relaxed with no interference to their performance.

It was a surprise for us that some took a medicine called Rhodolia, an herbal medicine known for reducing tension.

After the written exams all had two weeks off school to prepare for the oral exams. All of the respondents perceived the oral exams as less exhausting than the written ones.

The candidates who worked well during the past years felt encouragement by the examiners which made the whole a nearly pleasant experience.

A really useful hint to survive oral exams is to be positive and keep smiling.

Out of all candidates only two failed the final exams. The students we interviewed were happy about their results as they were successful and no surprise as it mirrored their performance of the last years. Being a French-German high school, celebrations were made with Champagne together with friends and family. Parents were very happy and proud of the success of their children to whom they gave so much support during all of these years.

As a closing event an award ceremony took place in the biggest hall of Saarbrücken which is the Congress hall and was appreciated by all the participants and their families.

Now this important step taken, some of the respondents want to study immediately and some want first to travel around the world before.

Leaving High School is for all participants a big step in the adult life and the unknown. So with all the happiness of finishing school successfully there is also melancholy of leaving something they grew up with including friends, laughs and tears.