

## **Exam Stress : The A-Levels at the DFG**

At the end of every student's school carrier, the A-Levels await them. Because of our unique franco-german system, the A-Levels aren't like in any of the countries. Two and a half years before the A-Levels, our students choose a course. There are three courses : the littérature language section, the social-economy section, and the scientific section which is divided into two sectors : biology and chemistry, or mathematics and physics. The A-Level program differs between the different courses. We interviewed Pauline Palandre who passed her A-Levels a year ago and chose the Scientical Biology Chemistry (SBC) course.

### **-What is the amount of time you spent working on your A-Levels ?**

I have to say that I didn't work a lot for the A-Levels because I worked a lot during the year. So, if you work regularly, of course you won't have to work that much before the exams.

### **-When do you work more efficiently ?**

I work more efficiently in the afternoon and the evening, because in the morning I sleep.

### **-Do you have a revising routine ?**

I don't really have a routine or a plan to prepare for exams. But for the A-Levels, I used to take a theme that I wanted to work on that day.

### **-Is your family involved in your revising ?**

No. I imagine that some people can ask their parents to help them recite stuff, but I didn't have that much things to learn off by heart. And my family cant' really explain to me the things that I didn't understand, because none of them studied what I'm studying.

### **-Do you have tricks to revise efficiently ?**

I like to listen to music, but maybe it isn't for everyone.

### **-What subjects did you write in your A-Levels and how long did they take ?**

I did the A-Levels with the course SBC, so the written subjects were french and german, which lasted 4 to 4h30, maths, which lasted 3h, and I chose biology between chemistry and bio, which, like maths, lasted 3h. And the oral subjects were French, German, English and Latin.

### **-Were you surprised by the level of expectancy ?**

Not that much because we were quite well prepared with the A-Levels subjects from last years.

**-What was the day like before the exam ?**

There's a thing that I like to do the day before : not do anything at all. Or watch films and relax. Some people are like : « Yay, let's work again ! » and I say « Just... No. » You didn't work enough, you didn't work enough. I think that it could really help to stop everything before the exam instead of still stressing the day before.

**-Does the exam stress interfere with your performance ?**

No, not really. Maybe at the start of the exams, for example in maths when I'm in total panic at the beginning. Then I calm down and realize that it's just the normal stuff.

**-Are the oral exams more stressful than the written ones ?**

No, I don't think so, because at our school we only have one out of three teachers that we don't know when they question us. And unlike in the written exams, you have a physical person in front of you.

**-Did you have a good or bad feeling after the orals ?**

My oral exams were quite alright, apart from the fact that most of the questions asked were about the only things that I didn't really understand or revise.

**-What was the role of the teachers ? Did they help you ?**

The teacher's role is to first of all listen to you and ask questions, and sometimes help you, like for me in German.

**-Do you have any tips for a successful presentation ?**

Try to have a structured presentation, even though it's harder than in the written exam. Do as if it was a school presentation, prepare a piece of rough paper. Go slowly, especially if it isn't the language in which you are the best. Then, for the style, articulate and do as if you were a professional.

**-What was your result and your reaction when you learnt it ?**

I passed my A-Levels, I had good marks, I was happy. I knew that I'd have a good result. So when I got it, I went to school, talked to some friends, the principal teacher gave me the results again. Nothing special there for me. Some people were stressed because they wanted to have a certain mark, but it wasn't my case so it was okay.

**-How did your family react to your result ?**

I think they were happier than I was. They wanted to do a little party, but I was like « Calm down, it's just my A-Levels. I don't have a job yet. »

**-Is the award ceremony an important event in your opinion ?**

It was really nice to meet my friends and my teachers again, but it wasn't that important for me, maybe because it isn't in my french culture to celebrate like that. But the orchestra was great and I had fun.

**-Do you have any future plans ?**

At the time, I hesitated between medicine and biology. Ultimately, I chose to go at Saarbrücken University to study the human molecular biology. In a whole, it's a binational study, so next year I'm going one year to Strasbourg in France, which is partened at the University.

**-Are you happy to leave your school career behind ?**

There are positive and negative things about leaving school. You don't see your friends that much. On the other hand, you study what really interests you. It's a page you have to turn, otherwise you don't get on with your life.

*Interviewed, translated and written by Katia Tuck and Marie Thirion.*

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