

COVID-19: Polytechnic University has gained experience that will be needed

The academic year 2019/2020, perhaps the most unusual in the history of Polytechnic University, is coming to an end. Almost the entire second semester, [starting from March 16](#), students and teachers did not attend the classrooms, classes were conducted remotely and exams were taken in the same mode.



Of course, in the earlier history there were periods when life in Polytechnic Institute would come to a stop. From January 1905 to September 1906, no classes were held because of the first Russian revolution. Later, the Great Patriotic War interrupted regular studies. And now, quite a peaceful year of 2020 brought a new threat, this time from an unknown coronavirus infection that swept the world. But the life of present-day Polytechnic University would not stop for a day. Competent operational management, well-developed high technology and qualified IT-specialists provided the university with the opportunity to continue educational, scientific, and social activities in online format.

Since the unexplored disease turned out to be quite contagious, it was vital to reduce contacts among people, to cancel mass events, including classes in

classrooms and laboratories. Training was conducted remotely and students could study at home without using public transport. The Polytechnic University administration suggested that students from outside the city should return home for this period. But not everybody could do that; strict rules were established and preventive measures taken in dormitories for the safety of residents. However, it was impossible to trace every step of each person, especially when they left the dormitory. The nature of the new coronavirus is such that it is possible to pick it up even going out for a while, as not all Petersburgers consider it necessary to wear masks, violating the requirements of the city authorities. Thus, a student of the Polytechnic College, who lives in dormitory 16, was hospitalized, and 110 people who stayed in the dormitory when his diagnosis was confirmed were quarantined. The university undertook to provide the students with food, water and everything they needed upon their request. For moral support they announced a [flash mob in social networks #Polytechtgether](#), where everyone who wanted to support the guys posted their photos with the appropriate hash tag.

Everything ended safely, the person got well, the observation was removed. But after a while, the story repeated itself in dormitory 13 for international students. And again quarantine was imposed, and now 540 people, complying with the requirements of Rospotrebnadzor, were kept indoor.

Fortunately, thanks to the timely measures taken, everyone is also healthy there. We must pay tribute to the students who found themselves in such a difficult situation: they kept firm, did not whine and did not complain. We asked some of them to share their feelings about the ordeal.

Bibars Bara, graduate of the 3rd course in Advertising and Public Relations: *"The quarantine period was quite difficult, a little chaotic in the beginning, and this is understandable, since there is no experience with such situations, but I think the leaders of Polytechnic University did everything possible. All students living in dormitories were paid material assistance; every day doctors measured the temperature of all of us; masks and antiseptics could be found in the kitchens and corridors; there was an opportunity to contact a psychologist free of charge. It should also be noted that the commandant of the dormitory was always in touch and did everything she could to listen to and reassure the students.*

At first, only three floors were closed and only one person from each room was allowed to go out once in two days to a shop or to a pharmacy, to buy everything necessary for themselves and their neighbors. Then the dormitory was completely closed; groceries could be bought only online and received only through a security guard or volunteers inside the dormitory, who, in my opinion, did a huge and amazing job!

It was possible to cook twice a day, according to the schedule, each block had 30 minutes; cleaners cleaned all the corridors on daily basis, sometimes twice a day.

The staff of the Higher School of Media Communications and Public Relations, where I study, were also in touch with all the students who were in quarantine, supported them morally, and brought food. They even prepared a surprise for a girl

for her birthday: they brought her a cake and gifts!

While we were in quarantine, the session started and the preparation for it took all the time. I can say that this is, of course, was an unforgettable period, although not in a good sense. I am sure that the university management did everything they could to make sure that the quarantine would end safely for the students. I hope that this will not happen again, neither here nor elsewhere."

Abubaker Issa, Master's degree graduate in Software Engineering, ICST: *"There were people who had a hard time withstanding quarantine, but it went well for me. I had time to focus on my dissertation, time to practice what I learned at university, and time to relax. When we wanted to buy groceries, we would order them online, and the volunteers assigned to us by Polytechnic University would bring them. The union supported us financially, and the PolyUnion club helped the students at the preparatory faculties."*

Nguyeng-Hang, graduate of the 2nd year in Advertising and Public Relations: *"During the quarantine, I felt a little scared at first, but I was able to cope. I tried to clean the room thoroughly, wash my hands often, wear a mask while cooking, and follow the rules of the dormitory. Polytechnic University was very helpful, sending us food, masks and gloves. In addition, the university staff cheered us up when we were isolated. I used to exercise in my room to stay healthy and prepare for exams. Of course, it was a hard time, but I had to go through it to protect myself and others. I have good memories about the help from Polytechnic University, which supported us both physically and morally, from which I can conclude that Polytechnic University is a very good and friendly school. Thank you very much, Polytechnic University."*

As of 15 June, Polytechnic University has partially lifted its austerity measures during the pandemic, and as of 28 June, some restrictions in the campus were lifted. However, the university management urges all employees and students not to relax. *"The risk remains, so it is necessary to maintain the increased requirements for the admission regime on the campus and to support the work of the special zone of residence in the Student campus,"* suggested at an online meeting of the SPbPU Academic Council Vladimir GLUHOV, head of the administrative staff of the rector and the operational headquarters to counter the spread of coronavirus infection. *"This experience should be preserved for the future, to use in any situation that may arise there. I also believe that it is necessary to create a special commission on safety and emergency situations aircraft with the highest governing body of the university, i.e., the Academic Council"*.

Rector of SPbPU Andrei Rudskoi supported the proposal to form a commission: *"We need such a working body at the Academic Council, because the challenges arise quite unexpected. Figuratively speaking, it's too early to cover weapons. The situation is very difficult in St. Petersburg; there may be a surge in late August when students from the regions return here. We'll consult with the ministry, but we must realize that maybe we'll continue our distance learning."*

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