

## Double Degree Diploma Means Double Success

Thanks to a double degree program, every student of the Polytechnic University has the opportunity to study abroad. Germany, Great Britain, Finland, and China are major partners of SPbPU. Every year, our students travel to these countries to study in their leading universities. Members of the International Educational Programs Office explained what benefits foreign education brings and how a double degree program actually works.

A double degree program is a joint educational program developed and implemented by two partner universities, which allows its students to obtain a degree of a foreign university along with the SPbPU degree.



### **History and geography**

The Polytechnic University has been developing double degree programs since 2004. In 2007, the first double degree program in English was implemented together with City University London. To this day, our university has been developing partnerships on such programs with the world's leading universities. The geography of these partnerships extends from Europe (Lappeenranta

University of Technology, Finland; University of Hanover, Germany) to China (Tsinghua University, Jiangsu University, Shenyang Ligong University).

As of September 1, 2015, the Polytechnic University has a total of 24 double degree programs: thirteen master's degree programs, seven bachelor's degree programs, and four postgraduate programs. All master's degree programs and one bachelor's degree program are developed and implemented in English. There are also programs that allow students to study in Russian at SPbPU and in the language of the partner university (German, Chinese) or in English abroad. One such example is the bachelor's degree program offered by the Institute of Civil Engineering together with Finnish universities (<http://www.spbstu.ru/international-cooperation/international-educational-programs/dual-degree-programs/>). Such programs allow students to study in Russian at SpbPU first, followed by a year in English abroad. Since the programs are consistent, the students graduate with the degrees of both universities.



Not all SPbPU institutes are involved in a double degree program yet. The Institute of Industrial Economics and Management has the most programs (ten have been developed and implemented), the Institute of Energy and Transport Systems has five, the Institute of Civil Engineering has three, the Institute of Metallurgy, Mechanical Engineering and Transport and the Institute of Computer Science and Technology both have two double degree programs.

## **When credit is a bliss**

International double degree programs use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). "The Europeans came up with this system when they created the European Higher Education Area," explains E. G. Nikonchuk, Head of the SPbPU International Educational Programs Office. "The credit transfer systems aims to establish a single measure of workload universal for all educational systems, which is important for the development of uniform curricula for joint programs, for credit transfer, etc. Here in Russia, workload is measured in hours, while in Finland, for example, it is measured in weeks. As of today, in the countries of the European Higher Education Area, including Russia, one semester corresponds to 30 ECTS credits. Thus, a two-year master's degree program equals to 120 ECTS credits."

A unified grading scale is applied in all international joint educational programs. Studies are carried out according to an integrated curriculum using uniform description of disciplines, which allows disciplines studied at one university to be recognized by a partner university – no need to review the material. Our students and their foreign counterparts can transfer their attendance and exams passed abroad to their native university.

## **Not for fun, but for competence**

During one of the Open House days dedicated to master's degree international educational programs, graduates of double degree programs shared their experience of studying abroad and talked about their current occupation. Most of them agree that getting two degrees – one at SPbPU and one at a leading foreign university – is a great opportunity.

Deputy Head of the International Educational Programs Office O. G. Yemelyanova claimed that two degrees is not the only incentive. It is the opportunity to extend one's area of expertise and enhance personal competitiveness in the labor market, both domestic and international, that really motivate students to engage in double degree programs. "This program serves to increase the competence of students. Universities usually have similar programs, so by integrating the curricula of these programs we provide students with the opportunity to acquire a unique set of skills that would've been impossible to get in a single university. Besides, such integration of curricula is oriented towards the requirements of the labor market. For instance, if there is a demand for narrowly focused specialists in electronics or power engineering, two universities can join efforts to develop a unique educational program which would satisfy the demand," Olga Gennadyevna explained.

During their education, students also gain international working experience, which is particularly important considering that numerous foreign companies open new offices in Russia every year. According to the SPbPU international offices, most double degree program graduates stay in their home country. Many of them continue their education at SPbPU postgraduate studies or find well-paid jobs. "I studied at City University London on a double degree program," one of the

graduates shared. "After graduating with a master's degree, I got a grant from the university and was offered to continue my education at postgraduate studies. The opportunity that the Polytechnic University provides with double degree programs is an absolutely unique experience. Now I feel up to any task. However, after defending the thesis I'm planning to go back to Russia."

### **Price tag**

A joint educational program at a foreign university is an additional educational service provided to the students of SPbPU and partner universities both on fee-paying or state-funded basis. State-funded SPbPU students don't have to pay for their studies abroad either, while fee-paying students pay according to the prices determined by the Academic Council of the Polytechnic University. Most contracts specify that all payments go to the student's native university.

"Today, students are very lucky to have the 5-100 Project, which provides individual financial support not only to our best students, but to talented foreign students as well," E. G. Nikonchuk continued. "In order to study abroad, a student must do well academically. The average grade to be eligible for financial support is above A-. Straight-A students can apply for a scholarship of up to 100,000 rubles per semester. Some countries, like Finland and Germany, for example, have national funds, which support academic mobility. The International Academic Mobility Department regularly posts information on the available scholarships on its page on the SPbPU website.

### **Alien among foreigners, or?..**

Foreign teaching methods are obviously different from those at Russian universities. However, the International Educational Programs Office claims that the adaptation of our students in foreign universities goes smoothly. One of the elements in the development of international educational programs of the Polytechnic University is the training of the teaching staff abroad. SPbPU professors travel to partner universities to see how their foreign counterparts conduct classes and develop curricula. Interactive teaching methods, digital-based interaction, and joint projects are some of the activities successfully implemented in SPbPU international educational programs.

"As part of a trilateral agreement between the student, the Polytechnic University, and the partner university, the student studies according to an individual curriculum," O. G. Yemelyanova said on the features of the European teaching system that our university has also applied. "The curriculum of master's degree students involves a significant amount of self-instruction. Intensive courses and workshops are followed by online control of assignments, video conferences, and heavy use of the Moodle platform. By the end of each education period, the Polytechnic University and the partner university exchange the results of student assessment. Thesis should be defended both here and at the partner university. Having completed the curriculum and passed the exams, students graduate with the degrees of two universities."

Double degree programs are not the only opportunity to study abroad for the students of the Polytechnic University. There are also academic mobility programs, which allows bachelor's and master's degree students to spend a semester at one of the partner universities. According to the SPbPU International Educational Programs Office, in this case the student should be self-motivated, have good command of a foreign language, and do well academically: only the best students are given the honor of representing Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University at the world's leading universities. A student needs a recommendation of the head of the department and the rector to study abroad.

### **Where to go and what to do**

So, who can apply for education at foreign universities and what to begin with? For a student who applies for a double degree program, foreign education is guaranteed. However, in order to apply for such program, one must speak fluent English and have high grades. "Students must pass an interdisciplinary examination. Some universities also require an essay. One should be prepared that workload will be considerably higher than on a conventional master's degree program, because everything is taught in English," E. G. Nikonchuk emphasized.

Both our university and the partner university are responsible for providing organizational support to students during their stay abroad. The SPbPU International Academic Mobility Department helps students choose a university and solve the problems that arise during the preparation for the trip. One can also get answers to any questions they have there.

"A student needs a number of documents to go abroad and come back correctly. There are internal documents, which are produced by the university, and there are those that students must get done themselves – we help with that too," N. A. Stolyarova, Head of the International Academic Mobility Department, explained. "In some instances, the receiving university may ask the student to fill out an electronic form. The student does that and then brings a copy to the International Academic Mobility Department. Visa procurement is up to the student, the university only helps collect the necessary documents, such as an invitation from the partner university, certificate of scholarship, etc."

To find out more about double degree programs and choose the one that appeals to you, please visit <http://english.spbstu.ru/education/programs/double-degree-programs/>

Or refer to the administration of your university, namely the deputy director for international relations, who will provide information on all possible options. Each double degree program has a curator, who can provide additional information.

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Дата публикации: 2016.02.08

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