

Polytechnic University student about her studying at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in the First+ program

Darya BORODKINA, a student of the Higher School of Cyberphysical Systems and Control at ICST SPbPU, has participated in educational exchange programs since high school and studied in Finland, Lithuania, and Denmark. After enrolling at Polytechnic University, she also began to look for opportunities to study abroad. She has now chosen Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Finland) as part of the First+ program. Read about the preparation for the trip, the structure of the Finnish university, and the peculiarities of studying in our interview.



- Daria, good to see you! When did you decide that you wanted to study in Europe?

- I started participating in exchange programs when I was in high school and I've been to Finland, Lithuania, and Denmark. True, the training there lasted only for two weeks. It was a very short period for me, so I had a clear desire to go to study in Europe again, but for a semester.

- Tell us, what do you like in the system of training in Finland?

- First of all, I like the possibility to “tune” the educational plan to my interests: here there is a wide range of various courses. Thus, it is possible to make a plan of work for a semester almost individually, proceeding from own desires and needs, being guided by a sight at the future profession and the competencies necessary for a career. I am very glad that Polytechnic University has partnership relations with foreign universities, in particular, with the Metropolitan University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, so I had the opportunity to go there to study.



- Was it difficult to prepare for the trip?

- The most difficult stage of preparation was to pass competitive selection for the exchange program. Once it's passed, everything else is a pleasant hassle. Yes, you need to have good enough English, but any student who is going to study in another country should be ready for that. It also takes a lot of time to prepare documents and get settled in the new place, but you can't even call all this a hardship, these are rather tasks that just need to be solved to achieve the goal you set for yourself.

- You and other students left at the beginning of January, during the pandemic. Weren't you scared in another country?

- I didn't and still don't see any particular reason to worry about it. My training at Metropolia is done remotely, I have regular contacts only with my flatmates who, like me, follow all the requirements and recommendations to avoid getting infected. In general, my life in terms of epidemiological safety is not much different from my life in Russia: I study at home, visit stores and other establishments wearing personal protective equipment in the same way. The rules and requirements are about the same here.

So, no, it wasn't scary. The main thing is to be conscious and try to protect yourself in every possible way, not to panic. I came here to study, and the coronavirus shouldn't stop me from doing that!



- Do you remember your first impressions when you came to a new country, to a new university?

- My impressions of Finland are always very pleasant. It's very cozy and clean here. This winter there is still a lot of snow, snowdrifts look very picturesque, though it is quite difficult to move through them at times. But it was not my first time here, so I paid attention not to the beauty of the city, but to what and how I was taught. I felt very comfortable in Metropolia right away, because everyone and even the teachers talk very openly and friendly and the curriculum is very intensive and practice-oriented. True, it became a bit harder with time, because I had to process a lot of new and not always easily accessible information, but such

challenges are even more inspiring.

- Tell us a little bit about your daily life, where do you live, what are the conditions?

- It's very comfortable! We live in an apartment with several girls, each has a separate room with all the amenities: bed, desk, refrigerator, closets, etc. Everything is done very discreetly, in the same style, the room is quite easy to adapt to your needs.

- Now let's talk about the university itself. What are your impressions of the university campus? How is studying during the pandemic?

- In general, my impressions are the same as those of living there: clean, cozy, and beautiful. Although, to be honest, because of the distance learning format we hardly ever visit the campus, but for the little time that I spent there, I can say that it is really quite comfortable and pleasant.

As for the training, it is the same as at Polytechnic University. Even the distance learning technology and the programs and platforms used are essentially the same. This is quite convenient, because it was quite easy for me to rearrange.

So we are learning in the familiar distance format: listen to lectures and attend practical classes via webinars, take online courses on the platform of distance learning, trying to absorb the material is not worse or even better than would assimilate in person.

- Is it easy to study?

- It is not easy, and that is good. As I said before, there is a very rich and dense curriculum, I have to keep a lot of information in my head. There is another difficulty: they teach me the same things that the students who have been studying here for several semesters already. Because of this, I need to get accustomed to and grasp the knowledge they have received in a fairly short period.

But it's all just more motivating. When you can learn without effort, when you pass all tests at "A" level, with particular efforts, you inevitably lose interest in learning and, consequently, in the quality of the knowledge obtained. So I hope to overcome all difficulties and successfully pass this semester, it is really important for me.



- Tell us, how do you communicate with your professors and other students?

- The common language here is English. Communication with teachers is quite free, and from both sides - as we can write them questions or clarifications at any convenient time, and they sometimes write to us, when we are not waiting at all.

Students are very open and pleasant, and this is understandable - after all, almost everyone with whom I somehow come into contact, is a participant in the exchange program, and therefore was selected and is certainly no less motivated and communicative than, for example, myself. I got to know the students who arrived this semester and the guys who have been studying at Metropolia for more than a year.

- What have you seen in the city, where have you been?

- We've been walking around Helsinki and we've been downtown. There's definitely something to see here, but most of all I'm always amazed by modern Finnish architecture: Helsinki consists of many different buildings, each of which is beautiful in its own way, but they all fit into the single image of this cozy capital.

- In your opinion, what is the advantage of an exchange student internship?

- When you get into a new environment, especially one where you can motivate yourself to work and develop, you become a better version of yourself. You step out of your usual boundaries, discover something new for yourself and face a lot of challenges that you have to and, most importantly, want to respond to.

An exchange study trip is a guarantee of broadening your worldview and awareness of your own place in your profession and in life. You can look at yourself, at your knowledge and competencies, at the learning process, and the world as a whole from a different perspective. And then understand where to move forward and what to strive for in the future. Under such conditions, you discover new opportunities, develop yourself and reach new heights.



- What advice would you give to students who also plan to go to study abroad?

- Definitely don't sit still and wait for offers. We need to offer ourselves. Those who are interested in studying abroad should not put off their plans for the next month, semester, or course, but as soon as the desire is formed, look for exchange programs that Polytechnic University offers, and try!

I generally tend to think that in life you should not miss out on promising opportunities, especially in the period of education, at a time when the formation of personality and the formation of competencies and view of the world takes

place. So, taking the opportunity to try yourself and find out what it is like to study abroad is definitely worthwhile!

- Daria, thank you for the detailed and detailed interview! We wish you good luck and success in all your endeavors!

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