

SPbPU student from Tanzania: "Polytech is the best place for an international student in St. Petersburg"

Albright Temba came to Russia three years ago, studying at the Institute of Biomedical Systems and Biotechnology. His program is about biomedical machines, technology in general, which is a mixture of physics and biology. At the time of his arrival in Russia, he knew only English and Swahili well, but has actively begun studying Russian and French. In an interview with the SPbPU International Office, Albright Temba described the challenges he faced and why he was so happy he chose Polytechnic University.



— **What languages are you studying?**

— Personally, I studied Russian as a foreign language, while my classmates studied English. That's why I'm the only foreign undergraduate student studying Russian. In my opinion, it is very difficult to study Russian.

— **When did you start learning Russian?**

— I have been studying Russian for 2-3 years already. In fact, I started studying back home in Tanzania, when the preparatory course began. It was online because

of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there was no opportunity to come to Russia then.

— **How do you communicate with people?**

— For me it's very easy to communicate with other foreigners. For example, someone who doesn't know English but knows French or vice versa, then they communicate with each other in Russian. It's easier because we both don't know Russian well, but we understand each other better that way. However, communicating with native Russian speakers is hard for me. By the way, I don't have many Russian acquaintances who have a desire to communicate with me or try to understand what I'm talking about. But three or four people in the group are used to me. They show interest, listen to me and try to communicate with me. I think it's a little easier for them to talk to me because they've accepted me since my first day at university. I'll be honest, it's very difficult to spend a lot of time alone and to communicate with very few people just during class.

— **Albright, tell us about your university experience?**

— It wasn't that difficult. My aunt had studied in Russia during Soviet times. Now she lives in Great Britain. They have a group of foreign graduates of Russian universities there, where they still communicate with each other. So she sent me information about applying to a Russian university and advised me to get a scholarship to start my undergraduate studies in Russia. She was the one who told me about all the aspects of studying at Russian universities.

— **Do you remember any problems during the application process?**

— I do not remember any. Of course, the process is a bit long: you have to have your documents translated, notarized, and a lot more. However, compared to other cases I know, this procedure is not that difficult.

— **What do you think of our university professors?**

— In my opinion, having studied here for over two years, I can say that Polytechnic University is the best of the universities in St. Petersburg. By the way, my compatriots from Tanzania have the same opinion. I think it's a better place for a person from another country than other universities nearby. Among us, SPbPU is considered to be more adapted to interaction with foreigners, other universities are more adapted to Russian students; they are kind of a Russian type. My friends from Tanzania, who study at another university, often tell me how they cope with the difficulties, how hard it is for them there. In fact, I also face the same problems, but teachers from Polytechnic are more willing to communicate with foreigners, to help and understand how difficult it is for us to go through this. That's why I think that Polytech is the best place for an international student in St. Petersburg.

— **Do you have trouble understanding the teachers at the university?**

— Yes, of course. When you're at least a third-year student, you can understand almost everything during class. However, when you're a freshman or a second-

year student, it's very difficult to grasp what's being talked about. For example, right now I'm studying subjects like anatomy, where the instructor speaks entirely in Russian. I'm not familiar with the names of organs in Russian, so it's hard to listen about the work of the human heart, the heart chambers, arteries, etc. in another language, so I recommend to study independently after pairs, take notes and try to translate everything into your native language.

— **How do you feel living in St. Petersburg?**

— I've been to St. Petersburg and Moscow; I have something to compare it to. So I can say that Moscow suits me better. Now I live in St. Petersburg, and one thing I don't like is the weather, it's much colder here than in Moscow. Also, St. Petersburgers are different from Muscovites. There are more foreigners in Moscow; people there are more used to foreigners. So it's easier to make new acquaintances there. For example, there are more places for foreigners in Moscow than in St. Petersburg: you can join more language clubs there. I think it's harder to find places for foreigners to hang out in St. Petersburg.

— **Albright, what are your plans for the future?**

— When I finish the course I'm taking now, I'm going to go to graduate school in a field related to biomedical systems. It will probably be related to clinical biomechanics or sports. I love doing sports. Right now the main goal for me is to get into graduate school. I am not sure if it will be in Russia or somewhere else, because I don't think many universities in Russia have this field. So first I have to finish my bachelor's degree to do what I really want to do.

Дата публикации: 2023.06.14

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