

Is it difficult to get two degrees at the same time? Interview with a graduate of the Intelligent Systems international program

Hendrik VOELKER is a graduate of the international Master's degree program in [Intelligent Systems](#), which is jointly implemented by Peter the Great Polytechnic University and Leibniz University of Hannover (LUG; Germany). In the fall of 2020, Hendrik successfully defended his Master's degree thesis in St. Petersburg and, a little later, in Hannover. Hendrik warmly recalls the time when he studied at Polytechnic University and plans to return to Russia in the future to get better acquainted with our country. In our interview, you will find out how he studied at SPbPU, the peculiarities of the double degree program, and plans for the future.



- Hendrik, tell us a little about life in Russia.

- I liked living in St. Petersburg. In general, living in Russia is a completely new experience! After a year I speak a little bit of Russian, I enjoyed meeting new people from all over the world. I'm going to miss it all and want to come back to travel and see eastern Russia.

- Why did you decide to study in Russia?

- As part of my undergraduate studies, I studied abroad for a year. It was great, and I decided to get a similar experience in the Master's degree program. On the website of the Leibniz University of Hannover, I found a dual degree program and I was very interested in the disciplines offered by LUH's partner, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. It was also very interesting to go to a country whose language I do not know. That's how I went to study in Russia!

- How did you cope with the language barrier?

- To be honest, I'm not very good at learning languages. Before I came to Russia, I downloaded an app on my phone to practice a little bit at a time. It was hard, but in the end, I could ask for directions or buy something in the supermarket. Also thanks to my Russian classmates, they helped me a lot.

- In postgraduate school, did you continue to study the field of study that you started in the Bachelor's degree program?

- In my undergraduate studies, I studied mechatronics, specific software development features, and automation technology. In the Master's degree program I wanted to expand my knowledge in the field of software development. And the joint international program of the Leibniz University of Hannover and Peter the Great Polytechnic University was an excellent fit for this. Many of the courses that Polytechnic University offered, I had not previously studied, and it was very useful.

- Was it easy to study at Polytechnic?

- I can't say that it was easy or difficult. Studying in Russia and Germany is different in many ways. I liked that at the Russian university we had a lot of project-oriented classes and homework. It is a good approach because in that way students learn to immediately apply the theoretical information they receive and it gets memorized faster. Of course, with so many homework assignments, you have to know how to manage your time.

- What subjects did you enjoy and remember most?

- "Neuroinformatics and neurotechnologies," this subject was taught by Professor SHKODYREV. I also really liked "Software Engineering" and "Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management," led by Professor ONUFRIYEV. I also liked "Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management," which was taught by Professor RODIONOVA.

- How was your relationship with your classmates?

- We had a very fun group! Students came from all over the world - from Germany, Syria, India, China, and, of course, Russia. We did everything together: celebrated birthdays, went somewhere. Even now we try to meet those who are now in

Germany. Although it's not always possible during a pandemic.

- What is your fondest memory of living in Russia?

- White Nights! Together with friends, we walked around the city at this magical time, when the sun doesn't set for a long time and the evening is as bright as day. I'll never forget it!

- What are your plans for the future?

- I plan to continue my postgraduate studies in Germany and expand on the knowledge I gained during my studies in St. Petersburg and Hannover. Now I am more interested in research work.

- What advice do you have for students who are also planning to attend a dual degree program?

- Just do it! You can't know what will be waiting for you in a new country, so just enjoy this time and try to see as much as possible! Make new friends, travel, and to make it easier, start learning a foreign language in advance!

- Hendrik, thank you for the interesting interview! We wish you success and good luck!

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