

Report of DAAD Scholarship
Strategic Partnership between the Leibniz Universität Hannover
and St. Petersburg Polytechnic University

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Introduction

In the frame within the Strategic Partnership between the Leibniz Universität Hannover (LUH) and St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU) deals this report about the Double Degree Master of Science course of study "International Mechatronics". This course of study is conducted in the first two semesters at the SPbPU and 3rd as well as the 4th one are conducted at LUH. In the end the program will reward after successful completion a Master of Science Degree in Mechatronics from the LUH and a Master of Science Degree in Computer Engineering and Information Science from the SPbPU. In addition this report will also cover the aspects of associated DAAD scholarship, which was established in the Strategic Partnership.

This report has the goal to give the reader, who might consider to apply for the International Mechatronics Double Degree program, an accurate impressions of the author's experiences. Note that not every detail is included in this report. The author has concluded at this time point of writing the 1st semester of the program in St. Petersburg.

About the author and his reasons to do International Mechatronics

The author has studied the Bachelor of Science Mechatronics course of study at the Leibniz Universität Hannover before going for the master double degree program in St. Petersburg. Since the author had an interest in learning the Russian language and selected it as one of his extracurricular studies he learned about the newly founded double degree master program then.

In the following are the author's reasons why International Mechatronics is a superior choice than other master course of studies at LUH or other universities in Germany:

- Two master of science degrees
- Computer sciences as favorite field of interest in SPbPU
- All studies in English, which is an opportunity to improve it
- Foreign country and studying abroad experience
- Improve Russian language skills

Things to do before going to St. Petersburg

Through a lucky mistake by the administration of the office of international affairs was the author able to contact fellow students who are going to study International Mechatronics as well.

HINT: Get in touch with your fellow students and make new friends via email as soon as possible! They're an invaluable asset especially in the beginning!

In order to travel to Russia and study there you need a 90 days one way student visa. To get that visa you need to fill out their application, which you can do on their website. Unfortunately you can't send the application and further required documents by mail directly to the embassy or consulate. You either go personally to the embassy or consulate or engage a visa service. The author engaged the visa service VHS Hamburg, which was recommended by the Russian embassy. One requirements is to hand in the invitation letter by SPbPU in original to the consulate in Hamburg. It turned out to be quite cumbersome to get the invitation letter in original, since the consulate refused to accept a copy of it and SPbPU doesn't send you the original invitation to your address. The administration in SPbPU instead pointed to that it is up to the author to engage a courier service, i.e. FedEx, to get the original invitation letter. Engaging a courier service will cost you about 120€. The author had at this point of

time already spent a considerable amount of money and was not willing to pay so much money for a courier service, because a lot of expenses were already made. By coincidence was a Russian student travelling to Hannover and was so kind to transport the invitation letter to the author. After receiving it, the process of obtaining a visa was concluded and delivered to the author.

Once the visa arrived, a flight ticket was booked going from Hamburg to St. Petersburg directly nonstop. There was also the information that if you tell the coordinator for the program in St. Petersburg about your arrival, you might get a pickup. The author contacted the administration about his arrival in St. Petersburg, but didn't get a reply if someone might come for a pickup or not. The author decided to take a taxi from the airport to the university.

First day

When arriving in St. Petersburg Pulkovo Airport and passing the borders you may take two alternatives how to get to the St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU)

1. Going by taxi: It is very easy to go by taxi from airport. After you passed the borders and picked up your baggage, you have to go in the airport through the Green line and see directly in front of you a taxi service point. There you can order for 1200Rub a taxi which delivers you directly from the airport to the SPbPU. The ride itself will take about 45-60minutes, depending on the traffic jam. Usually only the workers at the service point can speak English, while the driver doesn't need to speak English. It is very comfortable to go by taxi when arriving in St. Petersburg for the first time.
2. Going by bus and metro: The alternative is going by the Bus and Metro. First you take the bus with the number 39 or K39 and ride it until you get to the bus stop *Moskovskaya*. The price is 40Rub per person and 40Rub per luggage. Afterwards you take the metro M2 (blue line) and ride it until *Tekhnologicheskyy Institut* and switch from the blue line to the red line in direction to *Devyatkino*. Your destination is Akademicheskaya. From there you walk 5 to 7 minutes to SPbPU. To use the metro costs 35Rub. In total you spend 125Rub for bus and Metro and it takes you about 1 to 1,5hour to get to your destination.

Once you arrive at the IMOP, you make at first contact with the guard. The author had luck that the guard at that day could also speak German. He asked for documents and papers of the author and after checking all documents he contacted the administration person of the 4th floor. The person then came personally downstairs to pick the author up and show him his room and bed.

The first impression of the student dorm is a bad one, because the kitchen of the apartment was very filthy. Insects, like cockroaches, come regularly out when the light is turned off. The bathroom, which is shared by up to 6 persons was in first look better, but when you turn the water on, it is first brown and it always smells like chlorine. Frankly said, it is disgusting to have such water and you should never ever directly drink from it without filtering it first! The room in which you sleep is used by up to 3 persons. The window consists of two old separate windows, which reminded the author of how windows were back in 1980s in Germany before they were refitted to keep better the warmth inside. The author suspected that this kind of isolation won't be enough to keep the cold out in the winter and the heater can't be strong enough to compensate that. Overall the IMOP dorm made a very shabby and poor impression, where you don't feel comfortable if you are expecting German student dorm standards.

The good thing about the IMOP is that it is directly connected to the classrooms of the master course of studies and you don't need to set one foot outside of the building if you want to go to class. Also

you find there a lot of international students, which is very good to get in contact with fellow students and classmates.

HINT: in case your Russian language skills aren't good enough to speak with authorities, try to befriend people who can speak well enough Russian in order to help you with the registration and formalities process.

In the first day you should also get in personal contact with Elena Selivanova, the program coordinator of International Mechatronics / Intelligent Systems in SPbPU. She can give you additional information regarding your stay in St. Petersburg and provide you with all necessary information you may need in the future to come.

Registration and formalities (payment in advance)

After settling in your dorm in the IMOP, it is imperative that that you report yourself in the migration office in room 112 in the IMOP. You have to do this within the first 3 working days after arrival (note working days are from Monday to Friday). Bring your passport, your migration card, passports and your document certificate of enrollment from LUH. **WARNING:** Failing to report to the office within 3 days will result in paying an extra fee or even expulsion from Russia! In the migration office you get also a routing slip. With that routing slip you have to visit several stations conclude your enrollment at SPbPU.

The next station you have to check are Room 104 for subscribing yourself in a student dorm. Here the author stated to that he studies International Mechatronics, comes from Germany and is going to stay for 2 semesters in St. Petersburg. The secretary there then informed the author that he needs to move to another dorm, which should become the permanent residence in St. Petersburg. Here you need your routing slip and passport. The secretary also issues a bill for the first semester. **WARNING:** Once the bill is issued, you can't change your dorm anymore. If you wish to do a change of location, you do that before the secretary issues the bill out to you out.

Room 228 is the next station for your medical health insurance. There you show to the secretary your routing slip, passport and your health insurance documents. **WARNING:** The secretary also tries to sell to you an additional health insurance, with that you can go to any doctor in St. Petersburg. This must not be desirable, in case you can't speak fluently Russian. Since most medical facilities you can only speak Russian. The Euomed clinic is the only medical facility that offers to speak with its patient in English as well and claim to have the same standard like of European medical facilities.

Also in room 228 you have to do the last step to sign the student contract. There might be additional steps required, which they'll tell you if so required. Most of the administration can also speak English, but they can handle things better and faster if you talk in Russian with them of course or have a friend who can help you through these steps.

Brief summary:

1. Go to Room 112 Migration Office in IMOP
2. Room 104 Dorm formalities
3. Room 228 Medical health insurance (do not ever buy extra insurance!)
4. Room 228 Student Contract

Visa extension

Before you can receive an extended student visa that lasts for 1 year, you need to pay the issuing of the first visa to the university, which costs you 1000rub. Afterwards you order it in office 112 for the extended visa. It takes about one month until the entire process is concluded. It can be also the case that it might take longer for them to do it. The extended visa costs you 2000rub. In case you step over your last legitimate day of stay in Russia with your 90 days visa, you'll get a stamp in your passport that you're going to receive a new visa. So you don't have to be afraid that you'll be deported automatically after 90 days.

Permanent Residence in Student Hostle no. 8

On the 3rd day in St. Petersburg moved the author to another dorm, student hostel no. 8. It is on the southside of the campus of SPbPU and about 15-20minutes by walk away from the IMOP. It is the most recent built student dorm on the campus and therefore the quality of life is a lot better there compared to the dorm in IMOP. In the new dorm you get a proper bed with thick blankets, proper isolated windows and cold water doesn't smell like chlorine. Overall the dorm is quite clean and definitely a good place to live in. The next supermarket is just 5-8minutes walk away. There's also a regularly control of your cleanness of your room once a week.

Intelligent System course of study

In most classes you're required to attend to classes. There is a rule that if you miss more than 30% of the classes, you might not be qualified to participate in the final exam.

The teaching method is different than from the LUH. In general you don't get a complete scriptum of a subject, rather you get power point slides after lectures and have to study with them. Several subjects require also that you do a practical work. Be it laboratory practical work where you have to solve some given problems or write a short seminar paper about a given or chosen topic.

For the various subjects, you don't get a scriptum. The quality of how the lecture are hold is varying a lot. For example in one subject the professor is all the time reading only from a Russian translated word document and the point of learning that subject in class is missing, since this method of teaching is very boring. In addition to that you also to practice lessons with outdated programs and don't run anymore on Windows 7. The author circumvented this problem by installing a virtual machine and installing Windows XP to make it work.

The organization of the classes is determined in the beginning, but changes might occur. The academic calendar (which include the dates for exams) is released very late in the semester, at the end of November / beginning of December. It makes planning of other activities outside of the study difficult, like for example visiting your family during holidays.

After passing the practical work in the subjects, you're allowed to enter the exam. You can prepare yourself for exams very well, since in the end of lectures the professors might release a catalogue of questions that also will be used in the exam itself. The stress during the study comes through the accumulated practical work in all subjects, since the deadline of most of the practical work was at the end of December.

Gratitude

The experience in St. Petersburg is so far a unique one and I'm very grateful to be part of a newly created program between the Leibniz Universität Hannover and St. Petersburg Polytechniy University. I also thank the DAAD for their financial support via a scholarship, which enabled my participation in this program.