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Review

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UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES IN RUSSIA



Togliatti State University: SETTING NEW BENCHMARKS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FROM RUSSIA

Established in 2001 by merging the Togliatti Polytechnic Institute (founded in 1951) and the Togliatti Branch of Samara State Pedagogical University (founded in 1987), Togliatti State University (TSU) is one of the leading higher education institutions in Russia. This is confirmed by the high assessment on the national level: TSU is twice the winner of the Russian Federation Government Award for Quality (2009, 2019), the winner of the Commonwealth of Independent States Award for Excellence in Quality (2011), and the Merit Citation of the President of Russia (2022). TSU is a selected member of Priority 2030, the Federal Program for Strategic Academic Leadership for 100 modern and progressive universities, the centres of scientific, technological, and social development of the country. With over 22 thousand students at Togliatti State University, and more than 2,000 of them coming from 24 foreign countries, the institute is recognized amongst students for its 10 institutes - Institute of Architecture and Construction, Institute of Humanities and Pedagogy, Institute of Fine, Decorative and Applied Arts, Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Information Technologies, Institute of Law, Institute of Chemistry and Power Engineering, Institute of Physical Education and Sports, Institute of Finance, Economics and Management and Institute of Engineering and Environmental Safety.

In 2015, Togliatti State University entered the educational market of the Russian-speaking people of the world under the Rosdistant brand. For this, a comprehensive online ecosystem of higher and additional education was developed as an integrated information system containing software products and databases. It also includes a specialized supporting infrastructure for applicants and students - a one-window-service. This "Online Higher Education System" was patented in 2022. The system is also



Mikhail Krishtal,
Rector

Mikhail Mikhailovich Krishtal, Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Professor, a holder of the titles: Honored Worker of Higher Professional Education of the Russian Federation and Honored Worker of Science and Technology of the Russian Federation. Under the guidance of Krishtal in 2017, TSU was granted the status of a flagship university, as well as the center for innovative and technological development of the region.

protected as the know-how and contains more than 40 business process regulations with technological procedures and descriptions. The ecosystem features Big Data technologies and digital footprint operations. The digital footprint allows us to analyze the learning behaviour of students and helps create individual educational trajectories for them.

"Our credo is that the quality of education online should not be lower than that of the full-time study, and

online students should be fully involved in the educational process and extracurricular life of the university," says Mikhail Krishtal, Rector of Togliatti State University.

Nowadays, Togliatti State University with its Rosdistant has become one of the leaders of online education in Russia. Rosdistant received official national scale recognition, winning the largest professional project management competition in Russia, Project Olympus, held by the Analytical Centre under the Government of the Russian Federation.

TSU is now implementing the Rosdistant 2.0 project and coming onto the international market of English language higher education online under the NEWGENUNIV (New Generation University) brand name. In 2022, the Rosdistant 2.0 project and the NEWGENUNIV brand name received the highest scores at the ACE TEAM AWARDS Contest at the Asia-Pacific Quality Organization 2022 International Conference and the 2022 International Quality & Productivity Convention.

TSU ensures that the quality of education online should not be lower than that of the full-time study, & online students should be fully involved in the educational process & extracurricular life of the university

Today, TSU offers 137 undergraduate (bachelor's degree), specialist, and master's studies, and 70 of them (44 bachelor's, 4 specialists, and 22 master's studies) are taught completely online. This means that one can enter the University and study from anywhere in the world without actually attending the campus. The most popular among foreign students being civil engineering and construction, applied computer science, electronics and nanoelectronics, mechanical engineering, energy and resource saving in chemical and petrochemical industries, and biotechnology and chemical technologies.

The college has 13 educational and laboratory buildings/blocks used for the scientific and educational process.

TSU has modern computer technologies and innovative research equipment along with remote virtual desktops which are organized for students of online learning; it is possible to perform virtual laboratory work. To add to it, TSU has one of the largest scientific libraries in the region with more than 1 million storage items. It offers free access to electronic library systems for students of online education. The University facilities also include two sports and recreation centres with swimming pools and equipped gyms, two residence halls, and two canteens.

Thus, international students can start studying online at TSU as an undergraduate and continue their studies at a master's level on the university campus.

TSU boasts 70 Doctors of Science (higher doctorate level in Russia) and 285 Candidates of Science (Ph.D., first doctorate level) among more than 500 teachers at TSU. The faculty members constantly improve their qualifications in the sectors that are in demand by the modern world economy. Thus, in the past three years, teachers have completed internships on the development of digital competencies, including the use of virtual reality technologies in education.

Educational programs of TSU, including IT, are accredited by the Association for Engineering Education of Russia (AEER) with the assignment of the EUR-ACE label. AEER, like the National Board of Accreditation of India, is a signatory of the Washington Accord under which graduates of accredited programs in any of the signatory countries are recognized by the other signatory countries as having met the academic requirements for entry to the practice of engineering. There is a specialized infrastructure at the University for supporting applicants and students with a call centre, a unified online support system, and forums for educational courses.

Gateway of Opportunities for Future

Togliatti State University tries to create comfortable conditions for students to explore and fulfil their potential. "We are aware of the various difficulties that international students face when they come to live and study in an entirely new environment. All university staff members are dedicated to helping each student to adapt as quickly and smoothly as possible", says Anton Kutuzov, Head of the University's marketing team.

“At TSU, we ensure the retention and attraction of qualified personnel in the Togliatti and Samara region. We are one of the leading universities to supply specialists for the main industries and economic sectors of Samara region”, speaks Mikhail Krishtal.

TSU has concluded more than 35 contracts with a variety of enterprises of the Samara region on targeted training of personnel, including AVTOVAZ (automotive industry), Corporation TOGLIATTIAZOT (fertilizers and chemical products), Togliatti Transformer (power transformers), Togliatti Kauchuk (synthetic rubber). This contributes to the training of personnel with competencies and skills demanded by employers. Students undergo internships at enterprises and companies and prepare their theses on topics relevant to the needs of industrial partners of the University.

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Charting the Path Ahead

Developing the TSU is primarily about digitalization. The university operates within its own ecosystem of online higher education. “Our main online Bachelor's Program, 'Software Engineering', is available in English for those international students who are unable or unwilling to leave their country to study, but who want to change their profession, acquire programming skills and get higher education in highly demanded IT and Computer Science academic majors”, says Mikhail Krishtal, Rector of TSU.

The goal of the educational program is to prepare software engineers, skilled software developers, and software architects, software quality specialists, software



development project managers. The need for such specialists is constantly growing along with the global spread of information technology and computerization advance.

The academic program is built on the principles of cross-cutting project work and practical activities. Owing to this, students develop the most important teamwork skills and a real-life approach to software development. After the second year, students can focus precisely on a specific field of programming, learn how to create and apply programming algorithms, and take part in assigned projects related to high-load systems and processing large volumes of information.

Choosing Web Development, students will get one of the most demanded occupations and learn how to design and maintain modern web interfaces. The educational process runs with the use of effective instruments: simulators, code review tools, and graders. The automated verification service Gradescope developed by the University of California, Berkeley, instantly evaluates the correctness of the code. The program is completely based on international standards of Computer Science, Software Engineering, Information Systems, and Technologies (SWEBOK, SWECOM, SE 14). The graduate obtains such skills and knowledge that he can apply for the middle/intermediate level job in the IT sector.

There is a great emphasis at TSU on the involvement of online students in university life. Creative festivals, master classes, intellectual competitions, and national culture days are held. The capabilities of the Rosdistant platform allow online students to participate in all extracurricular activities and feel like members of the overall TSU student community. A number of international students have gone from an online bachelor's degree to a full-time master's degree.