

# Podcast - How to Hochschule



## Show transcript

### Episode 3 - How to Study

00:00:00: Stephan Hanf:

00:00:05: Stephan Hanf: Welcome to How to Hochschule, our audio guide about tackling life and work at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, one of the most international universities in Germany. So grab a cup of hot chocolate, put on your comfy headphones and join us as we explore the world of Hochschule Rhein-Waal.

00:00:44: Stephan Hanf: Today we're on campus in Kamp-Lintfort. But before we dive into the stories and insights of this episode and actually explain what's going on in the background, let me speak briefly about the topic of today's show, a subject that is of utmost importance to every student out there, the art of studying.

00:01:00: Stephan Hanf: It's such a vast and significant subject that we could easily devote an entire series to it. However, it's hard to give general advice because every student and also every study field can be completely different. But if you're pressed for time and seeking quick answers, allow me to capture your attention now.

00:01:18: Stephan Hanf: If you're struggling with your studies, there are plenty of people who are eager to help and they are just waiting for you to reach out. But remember, always refer to the official Hochschule Rhein-Waal sources for reliable information. Be wary of information shared on social media or anything that seems too good to be true, it often is.

00:01:37: Stephan Hanf: So stay with us as we return to Kamp-Lintfort.

00:01:42: Verena Schürmann: I think the main struggle was that I didn't feel that confident, that I had huge self doubts and I think I struggled with perfectionism so that I wanted to get a good grade and I wanted to do it like perfectly and so I think I overthought a lot. And I was struggling with thoughts like, is it good?

00:02:06: Stephan Hanf: Verena Schuurmann is a researcher and a PhD candidate in psychology. She provides support in the study programs, work in organizational psychology and international management and psychology at Hochschule Rheinwald in Kamp-Lintfort.

00:02:20: Verena Schürmann: And I couldn't ask anyone, is that good? Because I was the only one who was responsible for this topic.

00:02:27: Verena Schürmann: Of course I could have asked my professor, but you. I don't want to go ask him or her for every little question. So, yeah, there are some questions you have to deal with yourself. And I think that was the hardest part about it. I thought, um, about it beforehand. How am I going to do that? And because of what?

00:02:52: Verena Schürmann: So I did it based on the literature. But even though afterwards I thought, Oh. Was it right or did I something wrong or like that? And I think this was really hard to understand that, yeah, it's normal to have these self doubts and it's also normal that you do some mistakes and that you maybe discuss them afterwards and try to find a solution for it.

00:03:19: Stephan Hanf: So and this is the idea of the It's a seminar, right?

00:03:23: Verena Schürmann: It's

00:03:24: Verena Schürmann: part of

00:03:24: Verena Schürmann: a seminar. The module is in German, it is Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten und Forschungsdesign. So it's about scientific writing and scientific working. And yes, it's also one part of it to help the students to understand or to learn that Most of us feel like that and it's important to, to talk about it, to maybe, yeah, discuss about it and find solutions on your own and to feel more confident that you have some guidelines where you can look up how to cite, for example, or where you can look up where to find literature.

00:04:04: Verena Schürmann: That you, yeah, have some tools helping you in this process of the bachelor thesis where so many thoughts are so present in your brain and you think about, do I, do I cite, how do I cite right? How do I find literature that is fitting to my thesis or is this literature good? And so on. And this course supports the students in this process, hopefully.

00:04:36: Stephan Hanf: From the outside, writing a bachelor thesis may seem like a straightforward task. You choose a topic, do some research, write up your findings, and voila, you're done. But, as anyone who's been through it will tell you, the process is anything but simple. How is it going so far?

00:04:53: Sophia-Marie Clemens: I'm stressed.

00:04:54: Stephan Hanf: The writing

00:04:56: Stephan Hanf: process?

00:04:57: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. If you focus on one topic, you are quite restricted. And that does help, actually, with your research. I already did the interviews, I transcribed them, and I'm ready to go to work with them, actually.

00:05:13: Stephan Hanf: Sophie

00:05:13: Stephan Hanf: Marie-Clemens and Larissa-Tabea Bettray

00:05:16: Stephan Hanf: are pursuing a degree in psychology. Both students are part of the Communication and Environment faculty, which is based at the HSRW's Kamp-Lintfort campus.

00:05:26: Stephan Hanf: However, Their journey through the bachelor thesis writing process have been anything but easy.

00:05:31: Sophia-Marie Clemens: My main problem at the moment is the literature because I find it really hard to stay focused on just one aspect. You have so much to choose from and the topic of onboarding is quite versatile because it's so individual.

00:05:45: Sophia-Marie Clemens: So for everybody that comes into a new company it's a completely different experience and you can find so many contact points. In different literatures and methods and theories that I'm actually overwhelmed and I do have to get my exposé done quite soon and I'm nowhere near to decide on which theory I want to use and that's a little bit, that applies a lot of pressure.

00:06:14: Stephan Hanf: How did you find the topic?

00:06:16: Sophia-Marie Clemens: I actually did my internship. In the personal management because of Corona, a lot of companies did not hire internships. So I decided to stay at the Hochschule and I did develop an onboarding program for workers in IT and administration. And I find it quite impressive how much impact the first few months have on somebody who just joined a company.

00:06:43: Sophia-Marie Clemens: And I asked myself, okay, Professors have so much different things to do because they have to prepare the lectures, they have to do their researches, and they do have to do all their administration on themselves. So I asked myself, what do they get in the first month? And I noticed that they do not get anything, at least at Hochschule Rhein-Waal, at this point.

00:07:09: Sophia-Marie Clemens: So I was interested what we can do to help them or what other universities do to help their professors get on board.

00:07:18: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: In the bachelor thesis, you have many options. You can choose a topic from a professor. You can do your own thing. You can do it. One million things.

00:07:27: Stephan Hanf: Really at the beginning, right?

00:07:28: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Yeah, yeah.

00:07:29: Stephan Hanf: More, more or less in the research phase still or?

00:07:32: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: No,

00:07:34: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: I didn't start. I also still have to. Write my expose and haven't Ich habe noch nicht angemeldet. What is it?

00:07:44: Stephan Hanf: You didn't register. Did you start

00:07:46: Stephan Hanf: at the same time?

00:07:47: Sophia-Marie Clemens: But we're

00:07:48: Sophia-Marie Clemens: both Not.

00:07:50: Stephan Hanf: Have you registered?

00:07:51: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yes.

00:07:52: Stephan Hanf: Ah,

00:07:52: Stephan Hanf: okay. So your clock

00:07:55: Stephan Hanf: is ticking.

00:07:56: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yes, it is.

00:07:57: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Nice to apply a little bit more pressure.

00:08:00: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, my clock is ticking. I'm ticked off three weeks. So, I have still two and a half months left.

00:08:14: Stephan Hanf: Lesson number one. Mind over body. The art of studying.

00:08:18: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So, my name is Anirudh Madhusudan. I study Mechatronics. I grew up in the UK, but my origin is India.

00:08:23: Ali Ayan: My name is Ali Ayan. I was born in Pakistan, but I've lived in UAE for most of my life. I also study Mechatronics Systems Engineering.

00:08:31: Stephan Hanf: In a world where borders are increasingly blurred, real and digital ones, the experience of being an international student is both exciting and overwhelming.

00:08:40: Stephan Hanf: From navigating the complexities of a new culture to dealing with the pressures of academic life, it can be a daunting journey.

00:08:48: Anirudh Madhusudhan: First semester was quite hard because it was the COVID time and it's a new country. I don't know what to do really.

00:08:53: Stephan Hanf: From the fear of failure to the overwhelming experience of taking exams with hundreds of other students, what is the mental toll that academic stress can take?

00:09:02: Stephan Hanf: And how can the freedom offered by the German education system be both a blessing

00:09:07: Stephan Hanf: and

00:09:07: Stephan Hanf: a curse?

00:09:08: Anirudh Madhusudhan: And it's a quite, it's a different thing, I think, in Germany because the professors, they just give you work and they don't check up on you if you did the work or not. It's totally up to you. So it's a more independent and more dependent on you than anyone else.

00:09:22: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So I think during my first semester, I found it really difficult to, Do my work. So I was used to like my professors saying, Oh, you have to submit in this time. Oh, you have to do this first, but here like nothing. So everything you have to do research on your own, you have to study on your own. No, nothing is provided by the professor.

00:09:37: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So it's all self taught, more or less self found. You should study yourself. And the professor just guides you along the way. So he just steers you into the right ish path, but the right path, so he just helps you to go roughly where you're supposed to.

00:09:49: Stephan Hanf: Did you know that beforehand?

00:09:50: Ali Ayan: No, it was sort of a cultural shock for me as well.

00:09:52: Ali Ayan: Coming from a high school where, in a school, in a small classroom, everybody's so connected, everybody's so, it's like a family atmosphere, let's say, I would say. But now if you come here, it's more like a very formal sort of behavior with the professor. Because, yeah, a professor comes, teaches and goes.

00:10:06: Ali Ayan: There's no sort of connection whatsoever. In the class or in the lecture, the lecture hall, so I get that was one of the adaptation that I had to do and also that thing they have this Germany has a very strong emphasis on self study and research and classroom interaction may, may be more formal than what we are used to.

00:10:25: Ali Ayan: There's this very, we call it like I call it Bible of the university. It's this module handbook of every degree program. So if you go through it, it actually has all your hours listed down, for example, your workload, for example, in mathematics, it's 20 hours of lecture. I'm not sure about the, I'm just saying that it's just 20 hours of lectures, 30 hours of exercises, and 20 hours of self preparation.

00:10:51: Ali Ayan: So I guess that, that's just the very main thing, which I didn't know in the beginning when I came. But then when I came, I got to know more about my degree program. I went there and I saw that, okay, now these hours are for me to block it down because these are for maths. And I think that was a problem for me when I didn't know, and I was like, okay, whenever a lecture comes, I write, okay, yeah, that's it.

00:11:10: Ali Ayan: But that's not the thing, how it goes in the university. It goes like, you study, you take in the lecture, you go back home, you revise at the end of the week, you revise everything that you did for the week, because The moment you drop the moment you get lose the track of your professor and you cannot match the pace of your professor You're lost.

00:11:28: Ali Ayan: It's like completely I would just say you're lost you then there's no way back I would say for at least in my case, but that was a problem for me initially But then as soon as I realized that if I can manage my sort of timings in a way that okay 30 hours for lecture in a week is for maths 20 hours.

00:11:45: Ali Ayan: I'm just exaggerating. I'm not sure about the hours. 20 hours for exercises and 10 hours for my self studies in a week. For example, 6 to 8, I do my self studies of mathematics. So that, that actually really helped. Planning my week ahead, month ahead of all the hours from the module handbook of my degree program.

00:12:02: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So for me, it was a bit of a different path I took, I think. So for me, whatever I do is mostly on intuition. So during the first semester, I was not very organized myself. So I didn't know. So I usually did stuff based on intuition. So I used to go to math exercises, different subjects. Some subjects, it's hard because you look at the subject, you're like, Oh, it's hard.

00:12:21: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So based on that, so not all subjects is proportionate. So some of the subjects I study more, some subjects I don't study at all. And I think that little bit of intuition that I had early on helped me a lot because then I was able to. Proportion my time accordingly. So then as soon as now I'm the fourth semester, now I know how to plan myself.

00:12:40: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Now I do based on planning before I used to do on intuition. So I'm planning. So I think there's a slow learning curve where you have. So initially you start off knowing nothing. And some people have that intuition. Some people don't have that intuition. And slowly and steadily by the fourth, by the sixth, you know exactly what to do.

00:12:57: Anirudh Madhusudhan: You might refer to the course sometimes, or you might even ask the people who are in higher semester, like, oh, what do I do for this subject? How do I study for this subject? That's also a really good way.

00:13:06: Stephan Hanf: So how

00:13:06: Stephan Hanf: do you self organize? Both

00:13:08: Stephan Hanf: of you struggled with

00:13:09: Stephan Hanf: self organizing. I probably would struggle with myself, but how did

00:13:12: Stephan Hanf: you figure it out?

00:13:13: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I think at one moment in every student's life, everything doesn't go according to plan. One day, everything is like going everywhere. It's like a shitstorm. Nothing is going according to plan. So something is there. And at one day you realize, okay, I need to organize myself. I think he also had that one fine day and I had that one fine day.

00:13:29: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I had to go to my labs. I had to go to my, I had to submit some projects and that one day I, a bus was late and I was, had nothing. So something were overlapping to each other and I didn't know they were overlapping. So because of that, I was not able to attend a lab. I wasn't able to subject a project. So I had to.

00:13:46: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I was not able to go to work. So I missed on so much opportunity. So I had to beg the professor to give me an extension to submit my project. I had to go to work saying, sorry, I was late to work. I forgot I had other stuff to do. I think that day, that night, I remember going home and I was talking to my mother.

00:14:00: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I told her, and she told me, okay, so get self organized right now. So after that day, now I self organize.

00:14:05: Ali Ayan: I learned a lesson that sometimes not always all your plan goes as, as you plan them and the best strategy then would be to go with the flow. That's something I've learned and that's something I have developed within me that no matter how much I plan at the end of the day, it's gonna get out of my hands anyway.

00:14:22: Ali Ayan: So I should be prepared for the worst case scenario. So that's what I think I have in my mind. So whenever, of course I have a plan, I have this plan that, okay, this many hours I'm going to give to this many hours I'm going to give to this. But Sometimes it doesn't just, doesn't go your way. So I think the best situation or the best thing that I said, tell myself is that just go with the flow.

00:14:42: Ali Ayan: It's not happening. Okay. Then do this. Don't overstress yourself. Let the things comes to you. And yeah, everything will come in order as soon as we get there.

00:14:50: Stephan Hanf: Are good students?

00:14:51: Ali Ayan: A pretty good student. That's debatable, but I think considering a good amount of A's in the finals sheet, yeah..

00:15:00: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I think I was a pretty good student.

00:15:02: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yeah, I think so.

00:15:03: Stephan Hanf: Number wise, not your course, but like the faculty, it's like one of the hardest ones you can find here.

00:15:09: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. There are a couple of subjects I can quote. Anything with mathematics is really tough and you have some other systems like drive systems. It's hard. So when I came to the university, a lot of my seniors, they scared me.

00:15:24: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So they scared me with math has a 10 percent passing rate, you pass, you really can't pass the first attempt. You have to give an exam, then you can pass the exam.

00:15:31: Ali Ayan: That's really demotivating.

00:15:32: Anirudh Madhusudhan: That is for a guy who is already like in shambles to come and say, Oh, you clearly can't pass. It's something really demotivating because the first one, then you're like, you know what?

00:15:42: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I gave up. So some people do give up. They're like. I will fail, I'll fail. So that leads to, it's like a snowball effect. So that leads to more people failing and that leads to more people failing. And I think that's why T&B has a really bad reputation of courses.

00:15:55: Stephan Hanf: But I think it's every technical field in Germany is quite hard.

00:15:59: Ali Ayan: They really let you know the worth of each credit point so badly that after you get it, you feel like, ah, this was not a bachelor's degree. That definitely a PhD degree, the way that I've done that. The way that I have achieved it. So I guess that's what the HSRW really shows you the worth of each credit point of the semester, of the module.

00:16:21: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I think it's technicalism. It's not a subject that you can learn. It's by, it's learning by doing. So even if I go out in the field, I can't get the thing in first try. So it's by trial and error, trial and error. That's why it's easier. But here you have to get it right in the first go. That's why you have to solve problems.

00:16:35: Anirudh Madhusudhan: You must know how to solve it. Otherwise you can't pass the exam.

00:16:37: Ali Ayan: And theory is sometimes also boring. Theory, theory is also sometimes very boring, like it's not that very interesting to people, more people, they're like, more like practical work, give me the, give me hands on experience, give me a machine, give me a screw and I can open it for you, or maybe I can do something for you, but reading it down in a textbook, okay, that is machine, this is the screw, this is your, how you, that's so boring, that's not out of interest, that's why it's hard to study.

00:17:04: Stephan Hanf: Did you,

00:17:05: Stephan Hanf: um, pass every exam

00:17:06: Stephan Hanf: you had here?

00:17:07: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes.

00:17:08: Stephan Hanf: You're part of the ten percent, actually.

00:17:10: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes, I'm part of the ten percent. Yes, I am part of the ten percent.

00:17:13: Stephan Hanf: Did you pass every exam?

00:17:13: Ali Ayan: I did.

00:17:14: Stephan Hanf: Okay.

00:17:15: Ali Ayan: I did have some backlogs of my first semester and second semesters. So, it was quite a rollercoaster ride for me. One semester it was pretty good, the other semester was pretty down and I was demotivated.

00:17:26: Ali Ayan: The third semester was again on the very high I did my current semester and from the previous semesters. So, I would say it was a rollercoaster ride. It was like a sine wave. It was a sine wave. Intuition took a sine wave.

00:17:38: Anirudh Madhusudhan: It's what all the T&B out there do.

00:17:39: Ali Ayan: Yeah, so, it was quite a challenging ride. Quite demotivating, motivating, but I get that's a part of the experience. That's how you learn. That's how you adapt. That's how you learn about your self. Learn about your, what is your capability? I think I'm happy that I went through this journey that I've learned this, that sometimes it's not always in life.

00:17:58: Ali Ayan: I'll be on the top. There'd be times that I'll be down as well. So I need something to get from down to up. And I get this perfect example to learn that.

00:18:06: Stephan Hanf: And even for you, I mean, you had your breaking

00:18:09: Stephan Hanf: point, even if you pass every exam, you had your point where you said to yourself, okay, now I have to stop, I have

00:18:14: Stephan Hanf: to rethink a few things.

00:18:15: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. So I think, yeah, the breaking point really broke me. I think I remember quite well because it was the stress of being alone, doing everything alone and sheer chaos just broke me that one day. And from that day I made myself organized and made sure that I need to pass every single exam to finish my course on time.

00:18:34: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So it's not like I've given every single course that I have encountered. I have dropped a subject, but for me, it's just to have some sort of stable system. That's why I make this thing a day. It was really bad.

00:18:47: Ali Ayan: I would also like to add that the university resources also helps. There's, we have a study guide counselor at our faculty, T&B, Ms.

00:18:55: Ali Ayan: Elena Buksmann. She really helps us counseling you in how to study, not how to study, but how to plan accordingly, how to get yourself. In the right manner to study, and I guess that's something that was really helpful for me when I first came to the university. She offers onboarding freshers sessions every week for freshers who have recently joined, and I guess that's very underwhelmed, like it's not that much famous in students because they don't know the worth of it.

00:19:21: Ali Ayan: Because when they know it, that what it's actually doing, they would, I would say, be more than excited to join. But then that's where it comes that student wants to learn. . Each university is giving the resources for them to learn, but they're not just utilizing it, I would say.

00:19:37: Stephan Hanf: Why is that so you think?

00:19:39: Ali Ayan: I think because, uh, now that's a really hard question that know the answer, but I'm thinking, how can I rethink?

00:19:45: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I think it's because the students, normal students, they don't want to do more with the university. They just want to limit it to studies. They don't want to participate in extracurricular activities because it's not a compulsory thing and it doesn't really help them in this thing. They don't know that.

00:19:59: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So I think that is one of the reasons people, many people don't appreciate study, study guidance and yeah, that's why you see, because we work in the Welcome Centre, we have events and there are not much people in the events because they. They don't want to be with the university a lot. They just want limited studies.

00:20:15: Stephan Hanf: So

00:20:16: Stephan Hanf: one

00:20:16: Stephan Hanf: of the myths, right? I know that myth. Of course, it's you have to fail the first exam. It's made for students to fail when they take it for the first time. You are a living example that it's not true because you at least, I think that's like the first math test.

00:20:31: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes.

00:20:31: Stephan Hanf: It's famous for something like that.

00:20:32: Stephan Hanf: It happened. It didn't happen to you.

00:20:34: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes.

00:20:34: Stephan Hanf: Did it happen to you?

00:20:35: Ali Ayan: Yeah. I failed mathematics.

00:20:37: Stephan Hanf: Do you think that was on purpose

00:20:38: Stephan Hanf: that you

00:20:38: Stephan Hanf: have to fail it?

00:20:39: Ali Ayan: I didn't know anything about the culture. I didn't know anything about how the exams are conducted. So I went into the examination hall with the intention of getting experience.

00:20:50: Ali Ayan: I did not expect to pass because that, that was just not realistic because I came in the Corona time, my enrolment got late and it was simply not possible for me to cover the entire course that I have to cover in that specific amount of time. So the only, and also when I came there was the Corona free period, free trial, free trial and I guess it was the wise decision for me to go there with an expectation that Okay, I don't want to pass, but I want to see how the exams are, how, what is the difficulty level, because again, when you come here, seniors, or oh my god, they brainwash your mind so badly, so badly, I still remember those nights when I was talking to all these seniors, and they were like, yeah, it's really hard, you have to really waste at least two, two semesters to understand what the professor wants, what is the professor's expectations, because it's not, they made this like so un, unusual that you passed, pass it in the first attempt.

00:21:46: Ali Ayan: They said, it's impossible that you can do it. Even if you have this 10 percent of faith on yourself coming from a high school, that you are a good student, you can do this. But then when someone said you can't do it, how strong you are, you really going to get demotivated somehow. And I guess that was the main part for me here.

00:22:02: Ali Ayan: So Corona free trial, my expectations were not to pass just to go there, see how the paper was, how, yeah, for me, it was the case. I went with that expectation of failing.

00:22:12: Stephan Hanf: So how close did you come to passing?

00:22:14: Ali Ayan: It was, I was very close with my four. I think I got Around 40, 45 or 46 and I have 50 percent was 50 percent was the passing rate.

00:22:24: Stephan Hanf: Oh, that's really close.

00:22:25: Ali Ayan: Yeah, it was really close. But then I was then thanking myself like, it's okay. I did not do because then passing with the four because introductory mathematics is the eighth credit semester, eight credits, and it has the most GPA. It consists of the highest GPA proportion in that.

00:22:41: Ali Ayan: So if you get a four in, uh, eight credit points subject, your GPA is gonna go down so badly. So it was a good decision after all to assess the situation in the first paper and then go with the full flow in the second one.

00:22:56: Stephan Hanf: How close came you to failing? Okay, that is that you were like 100%.

00:23:01: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. So

00:23:03: Stephan Hanf: You're one of these people who, everyone hates

00:23:05: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. I'm the guy who hates. Everybody hates I did really good in the, I think I got a hundred percent in the math exam. But, uh, yeah, I can't really talk about that experience.

00:23:14: Ali Ayan: He's actually the tutor of the . He can't say anything bad about it.

00:23:20: Stephan Hanf: But still, was it easy for you? Because you have

00:23:23: Stephan Hanf: a knack for mathematics?

00:23:24: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes, I think mathematics is one of my favorite subjects. And because my mom is also a mathematician. So I've been grown up with a mathematical background. For me, the exam was okay. It was not that hard, not that easy. So I felt, yeah, it's doable. That's what I felt because some opinions, they weren't like telling, Oh, 10 percent you won't pass.

00:23:42: Anirudh Madhusudhan: But then again, I was like, realistically, what's the chance? So I think I ignored that a little bit. And then I gave my exam.

00:23:49: Stephan Hanf: But you studied for it or

00:23:50: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I did study for it. I tried my best. So I thought I would give my very best to pass the exam. If I fail, I pass, I pass. So I went into the exam with no expectations, but then it came out really good.

00:24:00: Stephan Hanf: Now that you are also

00:24:01: Stephan Hanf: teaching for other students as a tutor, what do they struggle the most with?

00:24:05: Anirudh Madhusudhan: To be honest is they don't struggle at all. The thing is the. It's a mental, it's a mind over body. So the thing is the exam is doable, but the sheer stress behind it or failing is the one that mostly makes them fail the exam or make them do mistakes.

00:24:21: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So they know how to do every single problem, how to do, but that little bit of the mental pressure will make them to do one mistake. And then they start

panicking. So they start panicking and at the end of the day, they'll be like, okay, we'll fail the exam because most of the students I've seen in my tutorials.

00:24:34: Anirudh Madhusudhan: They can really do this stuff. They might not get a 1.0 or a 2.0, but I'm for sure. No, they can pass an exam, but because of that little bit of mental stress, it's again, a snowball effect and everything starts to start failing.

00:24:45: Ali Ayan: It's the sort of overwhelming experience because You only get three tries in Germany.

00:24:51: Ali Ayan: That's also one thing that you shouldn't should know that you only get three ties, three tries per subject. If you lose one, then you have two. And if you lose second, you have last one. And then you have to win, win it. That's the last sort of player you have. If you don't. So I think that's also the pressure in your mind.

00:25:07: Ali Ayan: If I talk from a student's perspective, life is not easy. Stress is from financial thing, new country. Three tries. Seniors trying to demotivate you. Accommodation problem, language barriers, new culture. There's a lot of stress. It's that and like, and the thing I should give credit to him, the main or the one who survived here, it's the one who's strong in the mind.

00:25:29: Ali Ayan: It's all about the game in the mind. It's nothing about the body's, nothing about the how good you are in the studies. It's just about the mind. How good can you control your mind at what scenario? I think that's what the role is over here.

00:25:41: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Then again, mind over body, so. Your mind controls everything. So if you let that slip, everything goes for cascading.

00:25:48: Anirudh Madhusudhan: And then again, because as you said, the problems that especially as an foreign student, you should also have to maintain the credit points because as a foreign student, you have to maintain at least 15 credit points per semester to get your visa extended for normal time. So having that pressure, having the financial pressure, the accommodation stress is something that takes a real toll on one's mental status.

00:26:11: Anirudh Madhusudhan: And, uh, so that will also reflect in his studies and to see it and the math exam being a big scary thing.

00:26:19: Ali Ayan: Just imagine 500 students writing one paper. That's the high end. Eventually, I think in the last examination period, there was a statement that. We don't have enough places to, to accommodate everybody because there were students from, I don't know, from very large semesters, higher semester, like 11th, 12th, 13th semester, they're here and they still couldn't pass maths.

00:26:40: Ali Ayan: So just imagine when you're new here and you said that, okay, 500 students are giving, and then you think, Oh my God, these 500 students cannot do, then who am I? I am nothing. I'm just new here. But that's again, the mind games come if you are confident in yourself. At that moment of time, then it doesn't matter.

00:26:56: Ali Ayan: But then if you're a little weak there, then it might get a toll on you. Yes. In any field, let's not talk about engineering. Let's talk about any lawyer. As long as you don't have a passion for it, I don't think so you can survive in any degree, regardless of engineering or anything. I think the main point here is that Your passion and how motivated are you because I've also seen as a pattern that students come here as an international student They get this sort of freedom here compared to what they used to get in their home country And then they get lost. That is also very severe case that I've no I've seen a lot of my

friends Go on get caught off the track They came here, very A star students, very motivated students, came here, got this freedom sort of thing when, which they didn't get that in their home country and lost the track and sort of couldn't handle the freedom.

00:27:45: Ali Ayan: I get that's also a problem, but coming back to the question.

00:27:48: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. So he made me realize something that's very true. So Germany here allows us so much independence. You're overly independent. I don't know if that's a word. Uh, because in back in home, our countries, we were controlled by our parents to do this.

00:28:02: Anirudh Madhusudhan: And because we have no control anymore, we want to expand, you want to do everything we want. And that might lead to people straying off there, what they wanted to do, like what he said.

00:28:11: Ali Ayan: Not everybody can enjoy or not everybody can control the freedom. That's the statement.

00:28:16: Anirudh Madhusudhan: I know a lot of people who just joined engineering because, Oh, it's engineering.

00:28:20: Anirudh Madhusudhan: It's a, Oh, you better get paid good, but they don't really have the passion. They just want to chase the money behind it. Some people do, are able to pass the course without the passion, but there are some people who don't pass, cannot, because they don't have the passion behind it. So, because Germany allows us that independence, they fail once, thrice, and they have this oh ho moment where they are, because of three attempts, they fail and they have to go forward.

00:28:45: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So then they see, okay, engineering is not my fit, so I can do something else. And Germany does allow that to, allow us to do that. So, because of these three attempts and Because of this Oho movement that they have, eventually not all, but some people will take the course that they're more interested in.

00:29:01: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Maybe because Germany also allows student Ausbildung. I don't know if I got the English word right. It's I think like a training, like an apprenticeship. You can do that also here. And there are a lot of possibilities in this country to do it.

00:29:10: Ali Ayan: But I guess as a terms of international student, you just have 10 years in, it's like a foreigner, foreign office statement that a student, maybe Ani can confirm in this case that you only have

00:29:23: Ali Ayan: 10 years as a student, international student in the, in Germany, you either make just bachelors in your 10 years, you make your, until PhD, until in this 10 years is the only time you're allowed to study in Germany, then you must change the visa or something like that. I think that atmosphere and also having the every semester 15 credit points, it gets a lot pressurizing.

00:29:45: Ali Ayan: When I, now when I think about it, I'm like, oh man, I was very strong, but now that I talk about it, it feels like. I, I ignored all this sort of thing because now that I talk about it, it's all coming in my mind. Now, after this podcast, let's see what

00:29:59: Ali Ayan: happens.

00:30:03: Ali Ayan: It's a very hard life.

00:30:04: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yes. The go to study tips I have the most generic advice possible is to find your way of studying because I have a very unorthodox way of studying is I don't attend lectures.

00:30:14: Stephan Hanf: You're this guy.

00:30:15: Ali Ayan: Yeah, he's the exact guy.

00:30:17: Stephan Hanf: You're

00:30:19: Stephan Hanf: like the guy from the myth. He's never here, gets 100% and just leaves. how?

00:30:25: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Yeah, I do attend lectures for me is, for me, it's not physically possible to listen to a guy talking for an hour and a half. I get bored. So what I do is I don't attend any lectures, but I attend exercise sessions. That's what T&B has. I'm not sure about other faculties, but I attend where we do the practical problems and I understood, I understand through the problems.

00:30:46: Anirudh Madhusudhan: Is that's what I do and I also go to my, there are online simulators there, then I try changing the numbers and I see what happens so I can relate it to what will happen in real life. That's how I understand my topics.

00:30:57: Ali Ayan: Guys, please don't listen to him. He is just that 10 percent of the guys you find in the world.

00:31:01: Ali Ayan: He's very much into the sort of very smart student. Not everybody is as smart.

00:31:06: Anirudh Madhusudhan: But like the thing is that that is my how I do. So I'm talking to that 10%. I do put the time in. I do put the time in. But I do it a different way, but I have friends who are totally opposite to what I do is they go to the lectures and they don't handle exercise sessions is they attend by looking at the slides over there and then, okay, then doing the problems on their own so that they can understand it better.

00:31:26: Anirudh Madhusudhan: And there are also a couple of people who do a hybrid. So they attend lectures and exercise sessions and then somewhere in the middle and they do it. I have also friends who do nothing. They don't attend lectures. They don't have exercises. They do self study and they come out good. So, figuring it out where exactly you land in the spectrum, you will take a semester or two to find exactly where your sweet spot is, and finding that sweet spot will exponentially increase you to doing good in your studies.

00:31:52: Anirudh Madhusudhan: It'll take a semester or two, for me it took two semesters, but now I know how I'll follow my path and I will follow that path. And my recommendation is again, the very stereotypical recommendation is find your lane and then follow that lane.

00:32:05: Ali Ayan: One more, one more thing I would like to share that take advantage of university resources.

00:32:10: Ali Ayan: Again, there are everything is given to you in terms if you have any psychological problems, we have psychological services at the university. If you have anything problem regarding your studies regarding how to get motivated, how to see your module handbook and how to study your study guide at the Faculty of Technology and Bionics and Communication and Environment.

00:32:30: Ali Ayan: The best person to talk with, the best person to deal your solution with if at all you think you need more guidance, come to Welcome Center to us. We'll be there as a

take a student experience from us. I'll be also working with Ms. Elena Buksmann and the study guide and also Welcome Center. So you can come anytime and discuss with us, see what is available.

00:32:47: Ali Ayan: And I would just say. A platform is given to you. Just use it. A quick example would be a fruit is given to you. You just eat half of it and half you just throw. You're just wasting it. It's given to you anyway. It's given to everybody is getting one fruit and you're cutting it half and throwing it half away.

00:33:04: Ali Ayan: Why are you throwing it away? Just eat full, take the full benefit, be as healthy as you could be and the life would be as good as you can imagine. And

00:33:12: Anirudh Madhusudhan: also the tutorials. There's a lot of tutorials happening, and I would love people to come because there are sometimes we talk a lot, we discuss subjects, they ask silly questions, I answer silly things, and it's overall, it's not for study, it's just to hang out, to understand what the topic is.

00:33:29: Anirudh Madhusudhan: If you don't want to study, leave that and you can just have a talk. So using that resource, again, as he said, is very important. You might know that you know something, but not really. So using that advantage, using the offers given by the university is something you have to do.

00:33:42: Ali Ayan: I think one, one last thing would be build a relationship with professors.

00:33:46: Ali Ayan: It is hard. Once you crack this code, believe me, life is far more easier than that. Because those people, just imagine as a very third perspective view, those people have given their half of their life, I would say, to studies. So the same thing that they are teaching you now. Just imagine in that perspective, they have far more experience than that.

00:34:05: Ali Ayan: You really need to build the connection with them. These people are really your ideal or should be your ideal in terms of , because they have learned it. They have experience is doesn't have any money value. I think it's, it's worth it. It has a lot of worth than money itself. And I guess that's what it is.

00:34:21: Ali Ayan: Build a relationship with professors, professors.

00:34:24: Anirudh Madhusudhan: You also keep in mind that professors also were students, but they were exactly in our shoes. in long time, it might be a long time ago, but they were exactly in our shoes. So building a relationship with the professor is, it's a nice thing to have because they might recommend them, you to, for internships, for jobs.

00:34:41: Anirudh Madhusudhan: So it's not only for your academic life, but your work life as well.

00:34:45: Stephan Hanf: From the moment we step foot into the classroom, exams become a fact of life. We spend countless hours studying, cramming for tests, and anxiously awaiting the final grades. But have you ever stopped to wonder what goes into creating and grading those exams?

00:35:01: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: First of all, we have two different types of

00:35:04: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: grades.

00:35:04: Stephan Hanf: Dr. Struck is a professor of theoretical physics in the faculty of technology and bionics

00:35:10: Stephan Hanf: and a

00:35:10: Stephan Hanf: seasoned pro. with years of experience creating and grading exams in the field of math and physics at the university level.

00:35:18: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: We have called attestation, which is just a pass or fail, right?

00:35:22: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And we have the graded exam. So where you actually get, usually you get a number of points. Imagine it like this. You have a couple of exercises that you need to solve. And for each basically step in these exercises, you get a certain number of points. So each exercise gets a total number of points. And then, so my approach is to basically do the key solution, put the points to it.

00:35:44: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Right. So to basically account for the minimal steps that you have to do. Right. And then you get these, get these, these total points and then a grading key is applied and usually it has an official grading key, which you can probably find someone where you say, okay, you need 50 percent for 4.0 and then you need, I don't know, 98 percent for 1.

00:36:05: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: 0. This is sometimes subject to shift a bit, right? Because for example, I do it quite often that I say, since we are giving very generous points for those people who are actually just needing to pass, right? And so we, we really give a point for everything that is also marginally worth a point. Then we say, okay, we need to do this for everyone then, but then we might lower the threshold for the very good grades also, yeah?

00:36:31: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: So then maybe you get a 4.0 with 50 % and a 1.0 with 96%. But this grading scheme is usually applied for the exam. And then, yeah, you grade the exam. So you look what is right, what is wrong. And you get, of course, if that's even the right answers or a right step in between, right, you get points for that, yeah?

00:36:51: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: There is, uh, usually when I grade at least, I give as many points as I can. So it's not that I wait for an opportunity to leave out a point. And some points are easily gotten. Also, what, in physics, what we obviously take care of is that since we use quantities that have units, it's very unprofessional if you can't handle units.

00:37:07: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: So this is one of the learning goals of the first physics class, that people learn that. And so, obviously, you lose a point if you give the result without the unit, yeah? Usually people do this once, and then they have learned. Because it hurts, because these are so easy, if you lost the lost point. On the other hand, usually the number with the unit is just one point, yeah?

00:37:26: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And then, because you need time to produce the numbers, but obviously the points to... Get that numbers are much more and you don't lose them, right? The other thing is good documentation of the results. So we cannot give points for undocumented results. So if someone just says, okay, you calculate the velocity, right?

00:37:45: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And the page is empty. It says  $v$  is equal to 5 meters per second. Okay, if the number is right, you get one point. Yeah? If the unit is there. If the number is wrong, you get zero points. But if this is 20 points, because it took 50 steps to actually get to this result, and they are all not documented, then there are no points given for that, because we cannot basically see where these other students got to this result.

00:38:08: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And so, my advice for writing exams, document as accurate and as much as possible. I know sometimes people are under time pressure and so

on. If not everything is neat, it's still worth something, right? But don't throw away easily some side notes. Don't scratch them out because maybe there's something that is worth a point.

00:38:26: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: On the other hand, it needs to be unambiguous, yeah? So basically having two different solutions with two different results. And for us to pick one usually results in picking the wrong one. Because it needs to be unambiguous and very careful. prepared formulas, because sometimes people are not wanting to show the skills we discussed, but they just memorize some arbitrary formula that are maybe easier, maybe a bit more condensed, but they apply them wrong.

00:38:55: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Yeah. And in this case, we can't give points for that because we don't know where this formula comes from and a bit of documentation again. Yeah. So it's not about getting the right numbers to watch in the end, at least not in math and physics exams. It's more about demonstrating that you can use the skills to solve the problem.

00:39:10: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: This is the learning goal. And it's a very clear learning goal. And this needs to be tested in the exam, so that this is all to say about grading. Yeah. And other subjects, obviously, there's more room for interpretation. Yeah. Physics and maths and basically all the hard sciences have the advantage that the, the results are non negotiable.

00:39:27: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: So they are essentially only right. I'm not holding this against people, but I hear these phrases sometimes. They say, please. Can you let me pass? You see, the phrasing is already like I had an intention of not wanting to let people pass. But no, people are not let pass, they pass. That is, it sounds a bit like just basic grammar, right?

00:39:47: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: But letting someone pass and passing something, it's very different and it basically shifts the activity from the professor to the student. Everyone passes who Get enough points, but getting the points is the job of the student, plus the necessary corrections that sometimes are done, right? So just shifting around a bit.

00:40:07: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: This is our job, but that's the, probably the essence of it. Right. So everyone is welcome to pass, right? But they have to pass themselves. They are not let pass.

00:40:16: Stephan Hanf: There's

00:40:17: Stephan Hanf: I

00:40:17: Stephan Hanf: would say an urban myth that there are some exams that you have to fail the first time.

00:40:23: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: No. And this is a myth. And I think it's very insulting because those people who write this, they have obviously not put enough thought in

00:40:31: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: what effort it is actually to create exams. So I can just speak now for, for our faculty, maybe essentially, I know it from math and physics because this is my area, so to say, but what do we do when we create an exam? Yeah. For example, in physics, I worked since many years with Professor Bastian. with my colleagues, so we know what the difficulties are, and we create the exam, and also with Mr.

00:40:54: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Derksen, with our lab co worker, who essentially does the lab, but he's also involved in this, and sometimes we get feedback also from older exams from our students, where we ask them deliberately what was really the difficulty with this

question. So we have a lot of stakeholders, if you want, who comes from very different backgrounds.

00:41:12: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And at least Bastian and I calculate the exams. Yeah. So we calculate them. He provides some exercises. I provide some problems. Depends on how it works. Right. And then both of us are calculating these things. We give it also also to other colleagues and we really try to make this thing basically doable, right?

00:41:30: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: So we are not assuming that we can order everything by ourselves, but we. Test and counter tested a lot, and we then also make sure that every exam contains the essence of what we have done in lectures and exercises, and in most exams, I would say, math and physics, you can literally demonstrate in which week, which lecture exactly this problem, problem was trained. So we, we have hard evidence actually that this is not true. I would not say that every exercise that we or I ever created was the mostly ingenious one. And obviously there, there are sometimes things that work out differently than we thought.

00:42:08: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Um, it would work out. But also this is something that we usually realize in grading. This is standard tests that we do. We look, of course, how many points have been achieved in every problem. And if there's one problem, where no one has achieved any point, although there were a lot of attempts, then probably something was wrong with the problem.

00:42:25: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: That can happen, but this is not, uh, carried out on the backs of the students. Then we usually say, okay, let's put this out of the, uh, account. Those people who got points there still get the points, but, uh, the overall level is reduced, yeah? Uh, so, uh, the same for time issues, yeah? So this is also not specifically in maths.

00:42:41: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Uh, in physics, we don't, didn't have that so often. Uh, but specifically in maths, there's always the thing, oh, this was, uh, Far too long for this. I would say, yeah, if it really was too long, then this is accounted for always. I don't know of a single case in my, in my time here where this hadn't been accounted for, but obviously I don't know all cases.

00:42:58: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: But no, this is something that definitely is, even if it would happen, it wouldn't be intention. I think it's quite, it's very insulting to just burst this out and say, because what kind of a job would I do? Why would I, would I want to have people fail? Even if people don't believe this to me or think as well, I understand that I'm maybe not primarily targeted yet, but even if, one can see it from the pragmatic way.

00:43:20: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: If I have someone failing the first time. They would come back the second time and I would have to to grade their exam again. Why would I want to do that? I could do so much more sensible things at the same time. No, the best thing would be everyone passes the first time. But quality assurance is the other thing.

00:43:37: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: You can't pass if you Can't do the essential things. And the grading schemes are quite transparent now, right? So you need 50 percent usually for an exam in order to just pass. And you need a hundred percent, 98 percent for 1.0, right? That's, that's what we do. And there's certainly no intention, not by me and by no colleague that I know these sort of things are in there.

00:43:59: Stephan Hanf: You have to tackle the special program that a lot of students from all over the world come here and they have also different mindsets and, um, Maybe different tools, and you have to find a way to put them on the same level.

00:44:12: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: I can try to explain how I do approach it, but by no means I would say that this is the only or the right or the most smart way.

00:44:21: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: This is just my attempt on it. So first of all, I need to work from the premise that we have assembled our study courses as an offer. It needs to be clear to the students that they have to pass all of these courses, obviously, and um, It is not something that they can do per se. I don't think we have a single course that you can just pass by things that you remember from school or that you casually find on Wikipedia or on YouTube, right?

00:44:50: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Although, obviously, the handling of knowledge with the younger generations is a bit like this. And to be honest, if I have to repair my bicycle, I don't read a book anymore. Obviously, I looked into one of these very intelligent and very helpful tutorials on YouTube. Sometimes students think I'm really bashing this down because I do sometimes, but this is not my real intention.

00:45:09: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: I find great contents that can help you on a tutorial base, but science goes more deeper. So you need to basically get to the understanding. What I tell the students sometimes is I need them when they leave our courses to be in the position to create these tutorials themselves. Not just watch them and apply them, but to create them themselves.

00:45:31: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: This is the level of depth that they at least can earn. To be honest, that is not even what is done in science. Science goes much deeper. But then again, we are applied science. For us, it's enough. Although this is a different challenge. We need to build into our students at least that. They have a sound knowledge of scientific methods that they can apply essentially to all the problems that they are facing.

00:45:55: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: Yeah, so they don't need to be experts in one particular subject, but they need to come into a company where their boss throws out a problem to them, which is per se unsolvable. Because if it were solvable, he would do it himself. So our students need to, first of all, create a problem. That they can solve.

00:46:13: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: And then they need to evaluate this model that they have created before they solve it and then sort of send it to their bosses. And so this is basically what I try to plant in them that this is the overall goal. And in order to get there we have to face a lot of difficult problems on the way there.

00:46:29: Prof. Dr. Alexander Struck: But this is what we call studying.

00:46:31: Stephan Hanf: From the outside, Germany's academic world may seem like a well oiled machine with a reputation for excellence and rigour. But dig a little deeper and you'll find a complex system with its own set of challenges and rules. So let us take a closer look at the world of German higher education.

00:46:49: Stephan Hanf: With the help of professor Dr. Petri in Kamp-Lintfort.

00:46:51: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: I'm professor for media production and basically teaching in the design programs of the faculty Communication and Environment. And I'm currently vice president for academics affairs or at this university and by this member of the board, which is the management level of the university.

00:47:08: Stephan Hanf: With his deep understanding of the system, he'll guide us through the intricacies of certain modules and shed the

00:47:13: Stephan Hanf: light on the infamous German

00:47:15: Stephan Hanf: rule that limits the number of times a student can fail an exam.

00:47:20: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: I think there's, there are two perspectives, the one, the first one is from the student's perspective, you could say a Bologna study very much or feel very med school like, there's subjects that you have like same teaching people each week, 15 weeks in a row than an examination or some kind of project or whatever at the end.

00:47:41: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So this is the structure that needs to be built. And the choices that you have are most of the times quite limited. In terms of limited, in terms of in the design program, for example, we have six projects that can be freely chosen. That's 60 credits out of 180. That's quite a lot. In other programs, you can choose four or five, maybe.

00:47:58: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: Also four or five means 20 to 30 credits. And that means all the other credits are already defined. So there's no leverage or there's no space to move. And now from the faculty or universities perspective in terms of resources. So we are not like a big university with 45, 000 students. That means we somehow need to structure the course of studying.

00:48:22: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And the more rigidly we do it, the more we can focus on the specific results or on the specific classes. That means we can't afford offering like 10 different options to go. Or no, we may not only can't, but we do might not want to afford to offer three, 10 different courses to choose from because we might then end up with a class with only two students.

00:48:44: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: In a big university where kind of lots of students can choose same classes, there is more, there's more space to move. In a small university, the space is limited. And in the end, I would argue this is, this is also in our responsibility, responsibility to the students. You could say in a small university, we need to make sure that the things that we offer are actually going to be working.

00:49:03: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And this in the end leads to a more or less rigid structure. That means that the choices are limited. On the other hand, this is something that we can guarantee. So we can guarantee the studies to be working. We can guarantee that you can study every program in, in the time that it's supposed to be three and a half years for us and one and a half years for masters.

00:49:21: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And this is, you could say, this is the promise of the university. And this is the promise of Bologna in general, that's the obligations of students and universities are very well defined with all the good and bad things that come with like the formal level is rigid. Which might feel bad, but it also has very positive

00:49:41: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: aspects.

00:49:41: Stephan Hanf: For students, especially international students, they struggle because I think they really don't understand that even if it's structured in a certain way, that doesn't mean that's enough that you just visit the weekly courses studying means more than that.

00:49:57: Stephan Hanf: You have to prepare in advance for it and afterwards, and, uh, I think that's probably really hard to pin down. What do you think it's the best way to approach that?

00:50:09: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: I only have complicated answers to this. But first of all, the first distinguishment that needs to be made is between bachelor's and master's.

00:50:17: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: In the, on the master's level, we have students that come from, you could say they are already formed by their experiences in their bachelor's. And the international students that come from, from other countries, you could say they expect their bachelor's structure to continue. And this is not always the case, you could say.

00:50:35: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: It depends a lot on where they come from, but the German system is different in some ways and demands a high level of autonomy, especially in a master's class. And this is one of the, say, challenges the university has, that the expectations that the bachelor, the finished bachelors that go into the master's students is strongly forged by their former educational experience in their home countries on the countries that they come from.

00:51:00: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And the main problems arise. from discrepancies or differences between the two systems. And it's very, say, complicated to tell all the differences because you could say for us, it's almost impossible to know what all those differences are. So all we as a university can do is communicate how the structure or how the programs are working here on the bachelor's level.

00:51:26: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: I think in for those students, it's even more, the step is much bigger. Like those students come from their home countries, from their own school backgrounds. And also the German students, they come into into a system that isn't completely different than school. So you could say the freedom that university offers is open to them, although most of them don't use it in terms of, you could study basically.

00:51:47: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: Maybe I'm exaggerating, but you could say if you study a class in the third or fourth semester, that's in the end not matter much, at least. So it has a specific sense in terms of sequence, what's first, what's second. But in theory, at least, you are completely free. Most of the students don't use these freedoms and most of them also don't need these freedoms.

00:52:04: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: But in theory, at least, that's up to your own choice. You could say you're not even obliged to visit the lectures as long as you pass the examinations. Although in real life, we don't. I have never experienced that students that don't visit the lectures have very, really good examination results, but in theory, all those things would be possible.

00:52:24: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: We don't remember who is present at which state, at least for most of the lectures, but this is a freedom that is new to most German as well as internationals. And then the second one is for the internationals, you could say they are entering two different, completely different cultures at once. So they come into a completely different educational system and into a completely different culture.

00:52:46: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: If you have grown up in Bangladesh or today we had a student from, I've heard of a student coming from the Kurdish area of Iraq. And I imagine that coming here is like entering a new world or maybe even a new planet. So it's, you could say both cultures, educational culture, but also the rest of their lives, the social surrounding that is completely changing.

00:53:10: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And this, by nature, you could say is challenging. And you could say for the German students, they only have one culture. or one cultural change to cope with, the internationals have two cultural changes to cope with. And of course that is more difficult, that's more complicated. And maybe a last thing, the effect that we see on maybe from the overall perspective on the, on the university is that in theory, it's not so

complicated to enter this new world of academia, but it's much easier, the more people, how the system works.

00:53:44: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So the more informed your surrounding is, the more likely it is that you're going to be successful and quick and successful in terms of study. And this means that the programs that are more or less where there's a lot of German, where there are a lot of German students, um, or at least a significant part of German students in the end have it.

00:54:04: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: The students. The internationals have it a bit easier because there are people that can ask and there are people that know how the system is working, like how to register for examinations or whom to ask if it's not working. And the less knowledge is in the different cohorts in the different years of the studying programs, the more complicated it gets and the more rumors threatened.

00:54:25: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And the more kind of strange information is flowing through the university.

00:54:30: Stephan Hanf: So I think the reason why so many people fail isn't only because that they're not motivated, but maybe they don't have the right mindset now that that that's not enough to pass because it's in some fields, it's really strict and really hard.

00:54:44: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And now that might sound a bit like evil or harsh, but we are a state run university paid by tax money. And you could first of all, we would need to ask, so what is our obligation? What is our duty? And the duty of each professor is to say, this is my field of expertise. And this is the minimum knowledge, the hurdle that you have to jump to succeed further in the studying programs.

00:55:05: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And in some classes, this almost never happens. In some courses, there's, for example, there are classes where, or programs where the entry level, where it's so complicated or so hard to get actually a place to study. That you say some of those students start to cry if they get 1.7 because they're used to 1.

00:55:26: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: 0s and 1.3s. And there are other fields as especially in engineering where First of all, the grading culture is much different. Like a three is still very acceptable. And secondly, where you could choose to study by will, you could say there is no, there are no entry regulations. And this means that the preconditions for the students

00:55:47: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: are not measured in the beginning and the students would not know how hard or complicated it might be. And in those levels, especially when it comes to the sciences field, then the entry level is somehow defined by the average, say, knowledge of somebody. Coming from a German school, and this would be the level of expertise in a specific field that is demanded, and this means that some of the students coming from other countries might have different levels of previous knowledge, and this the level that is needed is very complicated or impossible to find out unless you actually Study.

00:56:22: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And unless you actually do the examinations. And this is where, say, sometimes the university does not meet up or meet the expectations of the students. And you could say sometimes this is the filter function, the natural filter function of a university. In terms of if you would like to be an engineer and build bridges, we need to make sure that certain things are being understood.

00:56:43: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And even if I wake you up at night at two o'clock, there are things that you need to know by heart. And this is, you could say, the hurdle that we are constantly defining. What is the minimum knowledge that is needed to be successful as an

engineer, for example. And this would also in a study program leads to, you could say specific modules that might feel more difficult to some students because they might lack maybe previous knowledge or where things are maybe more complicated to catch up with.

00:57:11: Stephan Hanf: Often it's like, uh, fields like math for me as well. I guess that would be for me, the breaking point.

00:57:19: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: Math, maybe it's one thing that I would like to add that is, we know that there's, there's some modules in the programs that are very difficult. And so this is nothing that we can change. So it's up to the professors to decide which level there is, the things that we can decide on as a university is, and that's, is also.

00:57:38: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: A part of our responsibility is to have those modules as soon as possible, as early as possible in, in the course of studying. That means it wouldn't not, it would be unfair to have a very difficult module in the seventh semester and then realize, well, I can't pass this module, but I've now studied for four years.

00:57:56: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So it's natural that the difficult, um, complicated modules are at the very beginning of the studies, most of them in the first two semesters. And that's for practical reasons, but also for, I think, the responsibility for the students that we need to communicate to them what is necessary to actually get their bachelors and to have this experience as soon as possible, as early as possible.

00:58:18: Stephan Hanf: Yeah. And I think, of course the thing is math actually, it's a little bit like a language, the language of science, actually really hard to accept. That's the truth, but it's in another discussion we have that, uh, sometimes, uh, I think universities have to suffer from all the horrible math teachers, the students had before maybe my case.

00:58:43: Stephan Hanf: I don't know. I still got the one question in my mind. I know you're not responsible for it, but there is the very German rule that you can't fail more than three times in a test.

00:58:56: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: The thinking behind this, I think is somehow simple. You could say that you're allowed to repeat a specific module for a limited amount of time only.

00:59:06: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: That means on the one hand, If you've passed an examination, you have two more times to, to redo them. So in case you have a bad day or whatever. And on the other hand, it's also our responsibility that those complicated classes that get completely overfilled with students that can't pass or that, that have not passed for the last 10 years.

00:59:29: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: You could say a result of this would be, so what would happen if those limits would not exist? This would lead to classes to be very big with a lot of very frustrated students and likely also lots of very frustrated professors that have to deal with large amounts of, of students and students that kind of, I don't know.

00:59:50: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: are in the number of thousands within a room as it happens sometimes in universities. And we as a university of applied sciences are supposed to be working with significantly smaller groups. On the one hand, it's a decision of , a decision of the specific topics that are being taught. And the other thinking behind it on the political level, I guess, at least, so I.

01:00:12: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: I didn't write this law, but I guess at least is a very simple resource question and structural question. Also, that is, it gives the opportunity to the universities to somehow say, have at least a bit of control over the resources that they would

be spending, just maybe a mind experiment. So if we had a program with two or three or four examinations that would be very difficult to pass.

01:00:39: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And if you had something like an unlimited amount of time to repeat them, where would this lead? This would in the end lead that the faculty would need to spend all the resources that they have on those classes that are not likely to be passed. And why neglecting all the rest of the studies, all the rest of the modules and have not much resources to spend on, you could say, the more important things maybe in the later part of the studies.

01:01:05: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: Because this is how the bachelor's programs are being structured. There's foundation classes in the beginning, and the further you approach the more specialized and challenging or interesting also the modules get.

01:01:17: Stephan Hanf: Yeah. And in a way, I mean, that's like the hand you you've been dealt with as a student. Um, I think I'm lucky that I never had to pass a math test again after my A levels.

01:01:28: Stephan Hanf: But, um, I don't know. Maybe it's also like a hint that after three times, maybe it's not the right field that you studied before, right?

01:01:37: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: If you know that you're facing a third examination, you should be clear of the grievance of your situation. So if you don't, if you fail for a third time, you are, you're going to fail the whole program.

01:01:47: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: And this is something that I think most of the students know. And on the other hand, this is, these are also the conditions that all of our students have signed in. So at the moment they enter the university, these are the conditions that they agree to. All those things are, we're Germany, administration.

01:02:01: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So all those things are written in orders and module descriptions. So it's not that this is completely new. So as soon as you study at our university, these are the terms and conditions that you accept. And a part of those terms and conditions are that there are only three attempts for each module. And now I'm going back to your question.

01:02:19: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: As soon as you realize that you are entering a third attempt, that should make all your alarm clocks ringing. Because this might have significant... effects on your future life and also not only on your academic, but also personal life. And that means after a failed second attempt, you are in a very serious position and need to make sure that you really pass the third one.

01:02:41: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So I would always recommend to, in this case, only focus on these very specific modules and not do too many things by the side, maybe, because that's, we know that this is a very precarious situation for the students to be in. And we know that some of our students experienced this several times during their studies.

01:02:59: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So that's, I agree, that's a complicated position. On the other hand, that's, these would be the terms and conditions that, that all of us have signed into.

01:03:08: Stephan Hanf: So during your academic life until now, what did you learn about the topic, how to study?

01:03:13: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: First, maybe this is one of the things that universities teach the least is like the mechanics of studying.

01:03:25: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: As a university, structure wise, we expect that everybody who comes here knows how studying works. And in real life, we realize this is not always the case, or this is not the case maybe for specific topics. And so I don't want to say, vote in favor of a specific methodology. This is something that everybody needs to get to know for the...

01:03:47: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: That might even change between different topics, like you might approach a more philosophically driven class, completely different than maybe a math class or a class in biology or fundamentals of psychology or in like in micro program. Illustration classes are different than Photoshop classes and their book design classes.

01:04:07: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So you might need, the students might need to find. different, say, concepts to approach the challenges through their studies. But maybe in my experience when speaking to students, the things that I would recommend everyone and always is to start early. Because this is what we very often realize that The students find themselves in precarious positions and realize this at the very late state, like when the examination has already been registered or when they are in front of their third examination.

01:04:40: Prof. Dr. Jörg Petri: So it's always practical. And this is how in theory, at least the university works. And we know that in practice, it's not the case, but in theory, you're supposed to start early and learn your things as early as possible. That would be my first advice.

01:04:58: Stephan Hanf: Lesson number two, the virtual semester. As we enter the year 2023, digital learning has become more important than ever before. With the COVID 19 pandemic forcing many educational institutions to switch to virtual modes of teaching, the benefits of online learning have become

01:05:16: Stephan Hanf: increasingly clear.

01:05:17: Hariharan Arevalagam: So

01:05:17: Hariharan Arevalagam: we're already recording.

01:05:19: Hariharan Arevalagam: Great. Um,

01:05:20: Stephan Hanf: Today our junior correspondent and

01:05:22: Stephan Hanf: renewed German language learner, Hari.

01:05:25: Hariharan Arevalagam: Really happy to have a good connection today.

01:05:26: Stephan Hanf: Takes a deep dive into the world of virtual learning and higher education.

01:05:32: Anezka Konvalinova: So my name is Anezka Konvalinova. I'm from Masaryk University from Brno, Czech Republic. I work there at the Faculty of Social Studies as a department coordinator for, uh, Exchanges and internships.

01:05:46: Anezka Konvalinova: Um, I work there as an instructor as well.

01:05:50: Hariharan Arevalagam: How did you get involved

01:05:51: Hariharan Arevalagam: with the VERSATILE project?

01:05:53: Anezka Konvalinova: Yeah, so I started to working, uh, at the faculty and then, um, my colleague, she became vice dean. So she needed someone to take her job as a departmental coordinator. So I took the job and that's how this project landed to me because we were already involved.

01:06:10: Anezka Konvalinova: So I jumped into the project a bit later than it officially started.

01:06:14: Hariharan Arevalagam: Could you tell

01:06:15: Hariharan Arevalagam: me, um, how the VERSATILE project Actually works and and while you're at it, maybe you can also tell me its history and why it was formed to begin with.

01:06:23: Anezka Konvalinova: So, the project started in 2021 and it came from this response to Corona epidemic and the thing that all educational institution faced and especially higher higher education institution face going online hybrid teaching the fact that students

01:06:42: Anezka Konvalinova: couldn't travel abroad and it's part of their studies to go for exchanges. So the idea was to kind of do virtual semester online, but do it as a framework for the future cooperation between any universities. Actually, the main goal is to do a framework guideline manual for other universities to follow our footsteps and creating virtual exchanges between each other.

01:07:07: Anezka Konvalinova: And it can be full semester, but we hope it's going to be full semester exchanges online, but it can be any other more proper cooperation and we are actually doing a guide

01:07:18: Anezka Konvalinova: for them.

01:07:19: Hariharan Arevalagam: Okay. So at this point, it's more like you're kind of testing the waters in a way to see what works and

01:07:25: Hariharan Arevalagam: what doesn't.

01:07:26: Anezka Konvalinova: To our knowledge, to our, um, uh, research, it was never done.

01:07:30: Anezka Konvalinova: You have, of course, you can take courses in different universities from, for example, Hague Network, but not a full semester. So we actually wanted to do that and we have to test it first. We just started the semester in, in March. So we're actually in the middle of semester. Students are having the first courses, first classes online.

01:07:52: Anezka Konvalinova: So we are actually testing what's working and what's not working just to then get others and, you know, build the guidelines properly for others to follow.

01:08:02: Hariharan Arevalagam: And you mentioned that there were many challenges, uh, in this process. Could you give me some examples of what the challenges were?

01:08:09: Anezka Konvalinova: Yeah, of course. So first, you know, you have, we have four universities in the project.

01:08:13: Anezka Konvalinova: One is in Brno. Then, of course, your German one, uh, uh, Rhine-Waal. Then we have UK and Finland. With that, you have three different time zones. So that was a challenge number, number one to coordinate everything according to time zones. Plus then you have one university, um, uh, uh, Outside the Erasmus, outside the EU institutions.

01:08:35: Anezka Konvalinova: So it was very challenging for us and they have different higher educational systems than we do. So for example, we had to create agreement so we can actually send this to our students abroad. And it was very difficult, especially, you know,

different legal system, different requirements, once you have inside EU, so GDPR, projective rights.

01:08:57: Anezka Konvalinova: And then, then you have one, one university outside of that framework. So this. You know, from the administrative point of view to tackle these challenges, how are we going to store the information, what kind of information we need for the students to enroll in each university, or how are we going to build learning agreements, transcripts of records for the students so they can get fully recognized credit.

01:09:19: Anezka Konvalinova: So these kind of administrative issues as well, then legal things, you know, legal wordings in agreement. University has to get it through to their legal department. So that was challenging. And then, of course, you have a different rules at universities. For example, how, which platforms can you use in Germany?

01:09:37: Anezka Konvalinova: You're only allowed to use WebEx, right? And then it didn't work in different universities. So just like these things. And of course, because we're doing really cooperative semester as well. So the courses are both work of two teachers from different universities. So really cooperation between those teachers as well.

01:09:54: Anezka Konvalinova: It was very challenging for them because every university have different approach, different

01:10:00: Anezka Konvalinova: style.

01:10:01: Hariharan Arevalagam: And I know you mentioned that at the moment, because you're testing this program in a way that you offer instead of an entire semester abroad, like certain modules, right? So what kind of modules are they?

01:10:13: Hariharan Arevalagam: Uh, can you pick any anything?

01:10:15: Anezka Konvalinova: No, so we created, um, eight courses, eight modules. So each university offers two. So then we can, uh, you know, which then again, it's 20 credits, you know, you, you, what do you need for Erasmus exchange? Masaryk University offers, for example, courses on EU sanctions. And European institutions, European integration, so more like European studies, EU, then Finland, the Finnish University in Tampere, Tampk.

01:10:44: Anezka Konvalinova: They have more business related fields, so they are more doing the business studies management and stuff. Uh, Darby came up with like sustainable development, sustainability. So we, we tried to. Compliment each other and do it from one field that it's, you know, similar to us. So it's means like political science business, like within this area.

01:11:07: Anezka Konvalinova: And then because we are building this guidelines, you know, any university from different parts. So for example, for biology medicine, they can use this model and do it in their way in their field.

01:11:19: Hariharan Arevalagam: From the student's perspective, once they join, what does the experience look like? Like, would you walk me through, like, imagine that I'm.

01:11:26: Hariharan Arevalagam: That's going joining. So what would I see from the beginning to the end of the VERSATILE project?

01:11:31: Anezka Konvalinova: You entered our webpage that we dedicated to the project and you applied through this webpage. Then we send you an email like, Hey, welcome to the project. And there you will have a link to the platform where everything is going to be.

01:11:48: Anezka Konvalinova: It's from Tampere university, uh, TAMK university. And on this platform you have everything. So you have the modules. Through the link you join and you have all the information of the courses so you can read everything and there's where the actual semester takes place. So you have everything there.

01:12:07: Anezka Konvalinova: So you have links for the social events. You have links for discord there. So it's very like, we tried to make it as an one. One portal, one online space where you have everything. It's called DigiCampus, so it's actually like digital campus, so you have everything there. So this is where you're gonna have all information, schedule, timetables, and stuff like that.

01:12:30: Anezka Konvalinova: So once you get to this platform, you just have to, uh, take notes where your classes are taking place. You join and then you have the lectures, you put requirement, all the requirements, homeworks in this platform.

01:12:46: Hariharan Arevalagam: Is there some kind of a restriction to entry? Do you have to have certain requirements or do you just have to apply before the deadline?

01:12:53: Anezka Konvalinova: It was the, please apply before the deadline. Then you have to, you know, you have to have signed learning agreement. Um, we require kind of like B2. English level, just for you to be able to, of course, learn in English, um, and to participate in the, in the courses, but no other restrictions.

01:13:12: Hariharan Arevalagam: Simon

01:13:13: Hariharan Arevalagam: Park

01:13:13: Hariharan Arevalagam: and Alexander Hermesen are students of International

01:13:15: Hariharan Arevalagam: and Business Management.

01:13:17: Hariharan Arevalagam: They both took part in the Versatile Project for an online exchange semester. They share their experiences being a part of this semester abroad, as well as the challenge they faced working

01:13:26: Hariharan Arevalagam: collaboratively.

01:13:28: Alexander Hermesen: Uh, my name is, uh, Alexander. And, uh, I am a fourth semester IBM students at the Hochschule Rhein Wahl and, uh, I'm 25 years old.

01:13:38: Alexander Hermesen: I actually come from Kleve, so I went to school here and I grew up in Kleve. I'm really interested in everything that has to do with economics and finance and so on. So, um, and I also wanted to study in English. So that's, uh, that was a given that I should study at the Hochschule Rhein-Waal.

01:13:56: Hariharan Arevalagam: And, um, Simon?

01:13:58: Simon Park: So basically studying the same, yeah, also IBM and, um, in my fourth semester. Before that, yeah, I finished school and I did a gap year in London and then started to study at Hochschule

01:14:12: Simon Park: Rhein-Waal..

01:14:12: Hariharan Arevalagam: I just want to clarify real quick. So IBM

01:14:15: Hariharan Arevalagam: is international business management, right?

01:14:17: Simon Park: Exactly.

01:14:18: Hariharan Arevalagam: Yeah. And both of you ended up doing it in the same

01:14:20: Hariharan Arevalagam: institution, right?

01:14:23: Simon Park: Yes,

01:14:23: Simon Park: as

01:14:23: Simon Park: we, we

01:14:24: Simon Park: weren,

01:14:24: Hariharan Arevalagam: which was it?

01:14:25: Alexander Hermesen: It was the Tampere University. In Finland. We attended everything as normal in Kleve and then it, there was just this one project in addition, virtual to the existing

01:14:36: Alexander Hermesen: classes.

01:14:38: Simon Park: We had basically teams and we had to organize it ourselves. And we had, you can correct me, Alex, but we had four mandatory meetings and that was it basically. Um. And at the end we just had to present what we did in our team. But yeah,

01:14:54: Alexander Hermesen: The main task was basically to conduct market research and give a recommendation to an existing company on how they should approach expanding to another country.

01:15:06: Alexander Hermesen: Um, we just had to kick off a meeting and basically the professor from the Tampere University showed us everything, like the basics, what we have to do, showed us our teams. Then we basically had to write a whole report on our recommendations and everything related to market research, et cetera, then we had to also present that.

01:15:28: Alexander Hermesen: And the presentation and the reports were then graded together. Students that have to self motivate. There are always some that will do like more than the others, but it was, yeah, it wasn't too much, but it was sometimes even a bit more than a normal module. I would say, I don't know if Simon thinks it's the same, but,

01:15:49: Alexander Hermesen: you know,

01:15:50: Hariharan Arevalagam: So how many people were in one group working on one working group?

01:15:56: Simon Park: Uh, five people, uh, five people.

01:15:58: Stephan Hanf: Were you both in the same group?

01:15:59: Simon Park: Nope. No, actually we didn't form our group ourselves.

01:16:03: Simon Park: So the groups were already put you in groups. Exactly.

01:16:06: Alexander Hermesen: There's also like some things that are just like up to luck. For example, that how your team members are and how motivated they are and how much work they're willing to do.

01:16:15: Alexander Hermesen: I mean, that's the problem with almost all work group papers. You will also always have one or two people that's. Pretty much won't do anything. Doesn't matter how much you push them, but that's just the inherent effects of group work. One of the reasons that I learned a lot from though, uh, it's like how to communicate with people for bigger projects, like in a virtual setting, et cetera.

01:16:39: Alexander Hermesen: Yes, there were people that weren't really active and there were some that pretty much didn't attend any meeting. But the communication with the people that actively worked a lot, like that was really helpful because I mean, I have some work experience and it's definitely a challenge to organize projects just via online or via mail or like you're not.

01:17:01: Alexander Hermesen: There, there's always going to be in a modern setting, people that are not at the workplace where you are at. And for example, I work as a working student in project management. And that's versus the project, like the, just the basis and the communications part actually helped me a lot in that regard.

01:17:21: Simon Park: Also at the beginning, we were assigned like roles in officially, and I was the team leader of my group.

01:17:28: Simon Park: Um, one consequence of being a team leader is, if someone struggles, everything comes back to you. And also I had just many struggles with the people really didn't understand what to do and also didn't communicate it properly. If just people don't communicate, you can't do much more. If you just, I don't know, if I just send out reminders every week, just do your tasks, but nothing's coming back.

01:17:58: Simon Park: And then one week before we had to upload our assignment, then I get a message, for example, that, Hey, actually, I wanted to quit this project for a while, but yeah, I'm just in this project because I don't want to feel guilty or something like that. It just, it's just a little bit hard if you are in this role and

01:18:17: Simon Park: yeah.

01:18:19: Hariharan Arevalagam: How did you guys go about managing these group dynamics? And clearly you guys were the more hardworking ones in your respective teams. And Simon, you were even the team

01:18:28: Hariharan Arevalagam: leader.

01:18:28: Simon Park: So from my perspective,

01:18:31: Simon Park: I've learned actually two things. So one, the first thing is it is really important. You especially are the team leader that you need to communicate with every member individually and always ask them, even if they understood it.

01:18:49: Simon Park: Ask them once again, if they really know what to do, because I just, that, um, at least it wasn't my group, the student tend to keep their problems for themselves and just don't ask, even if you ask them and ask for the problems, but nothing comes back. And also if you ask in a group chat, they don't reply.

01:19:16: Simon Park: You need to ask them individually. Um, so you get a reply and also it's for the team leader, a good understanding, okay, where's the problem, how you can approach this problem then. And the other thing is to not get too emotional. You can get stressed out really fast if people in your group, they don't do the task properly or on time, or they just don't reply can also be.

01:19:43: Simon Park: And if you get also too emotional, things don't get better. To have. Yeah. Kind of coolness and just understanding also for them helps a lot. Yeah.

01:19:54: Alexander Hermesen: I can just agree with everything Simon said, especially the first point. What I noticed is, I mean, I was kind of lucky because I already worked a few years and I did my apprenticeship and so on.

01:20:04: Alexander Hermesen: So I had some experience with being in an environment where you need to have your own motivation and drive to accomplish certain tasks. I think a lot of students lack this intrinsic motivation, and that is also like one of the reasons why you might get stuck, especially in the beginning of a project.

01:20:23: Alexander Hermesen: What I found is that just like, it sounds dumb, but just do it. Like it's not, oftentimes it's just this first step of organizing stuff that's like the biggest hurdle. As I said, this intrinsic motivation, not everyone has that from the beginning. So you need to lay out some foundation. So for example, in our group, like in the very first meeting that we had in our group, I said, yeah, before we talk about specific things or so we're just going to split up this project, the tasks and assign that to everyone.

01:20:56: Alexander Hermesen: If there are some problems, we can still switch it up or anything, but you need. To sometimes you need to sometimes tell people a little bit where to go and lead them a little bit.

01:21:08: Hariharan Arevalagam: Just this, uh, collaborating without seeing each other face to face. Did you find it difficult because you had your in presence semesters right after your first semester.

01:21:19: Hariharan Arevalagam: So you've already had a taste of how it is in face to face, um, working. So what would be

01:21:24: Hariharan Arevalagam: the pros and cons,

01:21:25: Hariharan Arevalagam: so to speak?

01:21:26: Alexander Hermesen: It's definitely a barrier, but I would also say that it's a barrier that if you. Get around it or over it, then it's a benefit to you. But at the same time, to be honest, it's not that much of a difference to presence projects, because from my experience, even if it's in presence, there will be people who will just not attend the meeting.

01:21:50: Alexander Hermesen: Like they will just not show up in person. And that is basically the biggest struggle we had. Communication is definitely a con that can turn into a pro if you succeed in it. And another pro is that you can do these studies with different cultures and people from different universities and so on.

01:22:09: Alexander Hermesen: Definitely because we had different discussions around how we should organize the project. Uh, the reports and how we, so for example, from the English university, they had like a specific approach that they always do. And then we discussed this and so on. So that was really nice to see. But yeah, I think there are more pros than cons to be honest, because the cons are also relevant in the presence projects, in my opinion.

01:22:36: Simon Park: When I relate that now where I work right now, I'm working also in a really international company where people also have meetings with people from India and they're working also together, but they didn't, they've never seen the colleagues from India physically, but they work together for years and it works and it only works because everyone knows what to do and everyone have a certain degree of.

01:23:02: Simon Park: Motivation to do their job and obviously we got all the digital tools to have the meetings and also to ask if you don't know. So there are no really barriers because you can solve those barriers.

01:23:15: Stephan Hanf: Lesson number three, but studies are also cool. We're back at the start of our journey at the bachelor thesis writing session in Kamp-Lintfort. How do you try to help each other come along

01:23:31: Stephan Hanf: with your studies or with your thesis, that's what it is.

01:23:34: Sophia-Marie Clemens: So we're actually mostly mental support for each other.

01:23:39: Sophia-Marie Clemens: We're trying to reconnect at least once a week. Yeah. To talk about how we're feeling, how it's going and we're now or. Later trying to discuss, for example, my topic where I can find focus or what I can take off and it's not interesting and I'm just overthinking it. I would say that's the most we do.

01:24:02: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Encouraging each other. Yeah. Because most of it, most of the problems are, I think, in our heads. And sometimes, you or me, like, we are just standing in front of our goals.

01:24:15: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Like, ourselves, we have a problem.

01:24:20: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. Or we try to force each other to take a break. Then we go to the sauna.

01:24:25: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: That it is also okay to take a break and maybe fail sometimes and that the whole process not, it's probably not very clear in the beginning.

01:24:35: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: And yeah, sorry, as we talk about.

01:24:38: Stephan Hanf: And the main difference is that you have to work on your own right now, right? Because

01:24:42: Stephan Hanf: beforehand you were able to exchange.

01:24:44: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. Working on the same topic gives you a little bit of more depth to it. You don't do, you do not have to update every time you talk, because you know what's going on when you're working on the same project.

01:24:56: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Now I will have to give her a brief introduction to my, my studies so she can discuss with me. And it's a lot easier if everybody in the group knows what's going on. And as I said, you can get back to resources each and every person has. and focus where they're really good at. For example, we had somebody in our group.

01:25:18: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Most of the time it was really fine with statistics, not my cup of tea, to be honest. And I was really happy to just push that aside, give it to him. And I focus on something else where I was better at.

01:25:30: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: But it's also later on, we'll just talk about our topics. It's a lot of, a lot easier if you're practicing it.

01:25:38: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: And the. Only speaking it out loud and verbalizing it also helps you understand the topic better and see maybe different aspects of it, yeah. Yeah,

01:25:50: Sophia-Marie Clemens: funny information about myself. I do have Leserrechtsschreibschwäche, my Kindergarten teacher, now we're diving really deep, said I would never even make it to Abitur.

01:25:59: Stephan Hanf: Really?

01:26:00: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. She was my teacher. I didn't even understand that. But she was that kind of teacher that forced me for 45 minutes to read a sentence I could just not read because I could not read. And she...

01:26:13: Stephan Hanf: So dyslexia, I think.

01:26:14: Stephan Hanf: Yeah. Is the English term. Yeah.

01:26:16: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. That's it. Okay.

01:26:17: Stephan Hanf: That's really interesting because the broader thing about the episode is how to study.

01:26:22: Stephan Hanf: Yeah. So

01:26:23: Stephan Hanf: someone who has... Can I say disability,

01:26:25: Stephan Hanf: maybe?

01:26:26: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, actually, it's classified as one.

01:26:28: Stephan Hanf: How did you come so far?

01:26:30: Sophia-Marie Clemens: What's Grundschule in English?

01:26:32: Stephan Hanf: Grammar school? Is that better?

01:26:33: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Grammar school, yeah, I think so. Or prior school? Prior school, yeah. I'm not sure. It was hard. My parents and I decided after talking that I will redo the fourth grade to get back from this specific teacher to back up and because you have imagined I've cried every day.

01:26:49: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Because I was mobbed. What is the English, English term? Bullied. Bullied. Yes, I was bullied. Yeah, from the teacher and my classmates. Yeah, because she let me sit there in front of everybody and waited 45 minutes till I read a sentence or an abstract or anything. She just waited and had me suffering the whole time.

01:27:13: Sophia-Marie Clemens: I was crying. I threw up a lot of time in school early on. Because I just felt that pressure. And I was afraid I could not take a test because I could not read the question. I knew all the things and I was a really intelligent and wissbegieriges Kind.

01:27:30: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Um, curious.

01:27:31: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, curious. I always asked questions when my parents were a little bit annoyed because I was the typical why

01:27:38: Sophia-Marie Clemens: girl, you know, why is it like that daddy? Why is it like that? And I just did not understand why this specific teacher did not acknowledge my intelligence and then I decided to do the fourth grade again with another teacher and start specific training for dyslexia. That was horrible as well because I did not have any time for three or four years I did not even see one of my friends on a regular basis because I always had to go to specific training I guess it was it's three times a week.

01:28:07: Sophia-Marie Clemens: I did go there and I got, after the fourth grade, I got Eingeschränkte Empfehlungen für...

01:28:15: Stephan Hanf: Yeah, I don't know what it is in English. Yeah. It's very German.

01:28:18: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, it's really German. So I got Eingeschränkte Empfehlungen für Gymnasium, aber eigentlich eher Realschule.

01:28:24: Stephan Hanf: But this is really good.

01:28:26: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, you have to imagine, if a kid cannot read or write, there's always a possibility that it's below average intelligence.

01:28:35: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, because as I said, I wasn't dumb. I just could not read.

01:28:40: Stephan Hanf: No, no, it's fine, it's fine, it's fine.

01:28:42: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Where they found that I actually above average. Yeah. I'm intelligent, not to brag or anything. And they found out that I have dyslexia. So I had a certificate. But side note. So, if you ever have somebody that has dyslexia in an early on age, you have to prove it every year.

01:29:00: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. Because my parents and I did not know that and nobody told us about it. But if you get help in your A levels, et cetera, for example, more time on tasks on your exams or the spelling mistakes are not taken into consideration when they're grading it.

01:29:21: Stephan Hanf: Oh, really?

01:29:22: Sophia-Marie Clemens: But... Just when you have an onfollowing streak of official tests every goddamn year.

01:29:31: Sophia-Marie Clemens: And if you miss one year, you do not get anything. Yeah, that was, that was hard.

01:29:38: Stephan Hanf: How long did you have to do the test? Till your A Levels?

01:29:41: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yes, up to the A Levels.

01:29:43: Stephan Hanf: Okay, but now it doesn't work anymore like this,

01:29:46: Stephan Hanf: or?

01:29:47: Sophia-Marie Clemens: You...

01:29:49: Stephan Hanf: But you

01:29:49: Stephan Hanf: still have the dyslexia. It's not gone.

01:29:51: Sophia-Marie Clemens: It got a lot better because I worked hard for it.

01:29:54: Sophia-Marie Clemens: So I can fluently read and write. But I always make a lot of spelling mistakes. And I'm a lot slower.

01:30:00: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: It's not a lot. You don't do a lot of spelling mistakes. You do some.

01:30:05: Sophia-Marie Clemens: I mean, because we're writing on Word, it does correct a lot for me. Also, text message programs do correct a lot. When I handwrite, it's more.

01:30:17: Sophia-Marie Clemens: It's a tremendous amount, but it's still more than average.

01:30:22: Stephan Hanf: We

01:30:22: Stephan Hanf: talk about hurdles or challenges

01:30:24: Stephan Hanf: you have to overcome to, to have a degree.

01:30:27: Stephan Hanf: And some people might think, okay, you make your Abitur and like you will never work in any field again, where this might be hindrance for you could have done

01:30:38: Stephan Hanf: completely different stuff.

01:30:39: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, sure. I, that's a little bit confusing, but. As I moved on to, um, gymnasium, I was actually quite good in school. Uh, that's because I've worked hard for it and I had teachers that did understand my situation and did understand why I do not have this ongoing streak on tests. So they were nice to me and they take it in consideration that I do have dyslexia.

01:31:06: Sophia-Marie Clemens: So I was quite good in school and I formed the self...

01:31:11: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Confidence?

01:31:12: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah, that I'm... Intelligent and I'm able to do my studies and actually I was still traumatized when this one teacher that said I would never even get my A levels so I wanted to prove her wrong So I had this motivation Yeah, a lot of anger Yeah, I mean It, dyslexia did have an impact on the final grade on my A levels because, for example, English was really difficult for me at the first time I've started learning it because it was completely different language.

01:31:45: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Speaking and understanding was never the problem. Never.

01:31:48: Stephan Hanf: Like the writing.

01:31:49: Sophia-Marie Clemens: The writing and reading was the problem because.

01:31:51: Stephan Hanf: You said psychology. You still have to read and write a lot of.

01:31:54: Sophia-Marie Clemens: And read good. I can really. Yeah. Now I can really read good. Yes, but I do need more time. I'm not good at skimming articles So I cannot start there and flip over there and jump to the conclusion That's hard for me to process and that's why I need a lot more time and there's maybe that's the reason why I'm so bad at research Yeah.

01:32:23: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Bad in my opinion. I'm sorry, . Yeah. But that's basically what's still there. And I still do know that I have dyslexia, but I can work around if I'm allowed to add something, I would suggest myself to not be as hard on myself as I was. Be more relaxed. If you go into studies and you start studying after school right away

01:32:49: Sophia-Marie Clemens: you will experience some sort of setback. You understand it's harder to be good in a crowd that's good than being good in a crowd that is average, I would say. And it does hurt your, um, ego? Ego? Ego, yeah. To understand that. And you do not have to be hard on yourself at all, as long as you pass. Actually, as long as you pass, you're fine.

01:33:17: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Because you do get your, your bachelor at some point. If it takes longer, it's fine. It may be that it is better for yourself because you have more time to learn things. Maybe you will remember more when you take your time. Yeah, so do not be so hard on yourself. Choose your time wisely and if you have spare time, spend it with your friends.

01:33:40: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Not always studying.

01:33:43: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: But studies are also cool.

01:33:44: Sophia-Marie Clemens: Yeah. For sure. You learn so much about yourself.

01:33:47: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: Oh

01:33:47: Larissa-Tabea Bettray: yeah.

01:34:03: Stephan Hanf: Thank you for listening to the How to Hochschule podcast. We hope you enjoyed the show and feel free to follow us and recommend us to your friends. If you have any thoughts or suggestions or just want to let us know how you liked the episode, please don't hesitate, take courage and do reach out to us at [podcast@hsrw.eu](mailto:podcast@hsrw.eu). We are always looking for ways to improve and we appreciate your feedback. Also be sure to check out our show notes for links and more information on today's topics and guests. Next time on the How to Hochschule Podcast.

01:34:31: Shashwat Singh Chandel: Hi, my phone is not

01:34:32: Shashwat Singh Chandel: working,

01:34:32: Shashwat Singh Chandel: it's

01:34:33: Shashwat Singh Chandel: night in Germany and

01:34:34: Shashwat Singh Chandel: I have no

01:34:34: Shashwat Singh Chandel: place to go.

01:34:35: Stephan Hanf: Tune in next time when we'll be discussing the ins and outs of finding the perfect place to call home. Thank you very much for joining us today. I'm Stephan Hanf and this is the How To Hochschule Podcast. We'll catch you in the next episode. Tschüss!