

2040 Essay Contest: Hybrid

Essay 2: Hybrid

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It's 7:30 a.m. in the morning, my alarm clock is ringing. Like most days the daily routine ensures that I'm awake a few minutes before it rings. Still, I wait until the alarm goes off. On principle. It's Wednesday, so half of the week is almost done. I decide to have breakfast outside in the park in this beautiful weather. At the buffet I meet Francesco and Aleen, who had the same idea. Francesco grew up in Switzerland like me, but in the Italian-speaking part, and is now studying mechanical engineering with me in the 3rd semester at the ETH, at the location on the Portuguese coast. Aleen, on the other hand, grew up in London and is now enrolled at an English university. The fact that we can be here together is thanks to a fundamental change in university teaching called „Hybrid University“. Hybrid is the teaching of theory, which takes place almost exclusively digitally and is combined with practical research and on-site exercises. This means more research time for teachers, and it made it possible to open second ETH locations outside of Zurich and Switzerland. Now, research is no longer done where the campus is located, but the campus is located where research can be done. I am very interested in solar energy use, which is why I chose the research site in Portugal, where research is being done on carbon capture processes and solar seawater desalination, among many other things.

A similar concept to the hybrid university has been implemented at other universities. The local site is therefore also run by other universities, the reason why Aleen is here. This allows networking within Europe and the combining of different approaches.

The hybrid university brought advantages to everyone. For the professors it means more research time, for the students a more flexible learning arrangement, thus higher efficiency, and more time for other things. For the ETH it means more international students because of the good research conditions at multiple locations and for the Swiss economy an even better international network of researchers.

After breakfast we go to the learning areas in the park. Here it is a bit cooler (in temperature) than in the rest of the campus. Starting at 10 am Francesco and I have a practice lesson until noon, until then we can watch theory videos. There are three different videos for each topic, which vary in detail level, so you don't waste time with things you already understood, but, if necessary, you can get the required explanations.

During midday it is usually very hot. In the park and in the buildings, it is bearable, but the combination of sun and lunch do not make it easy to concentrate, so we usually take a nap. In the

afternoon we meet with our project group. You can either work on the „big“ research projects, the ones because of which the location was chosen here, or submit project ideas yourself. I chose to work on the seawater desalination project, where five of us in our project group are now working on improving the coarse filter cleaning system. I really appreciate that we are both internationally mixed in this group and that we work together across different ages. This way, I can benefit from older master students, and they can gain experience in team leadership.

Afterwards, I go into the evening break relatively early. Together with my friends we go out for dinner and sometimes we play another round of volleyball. While many people end the day this way and get up a little earlier the next morning, I prefer to use the cool evening hours to solve a few more exercises.

