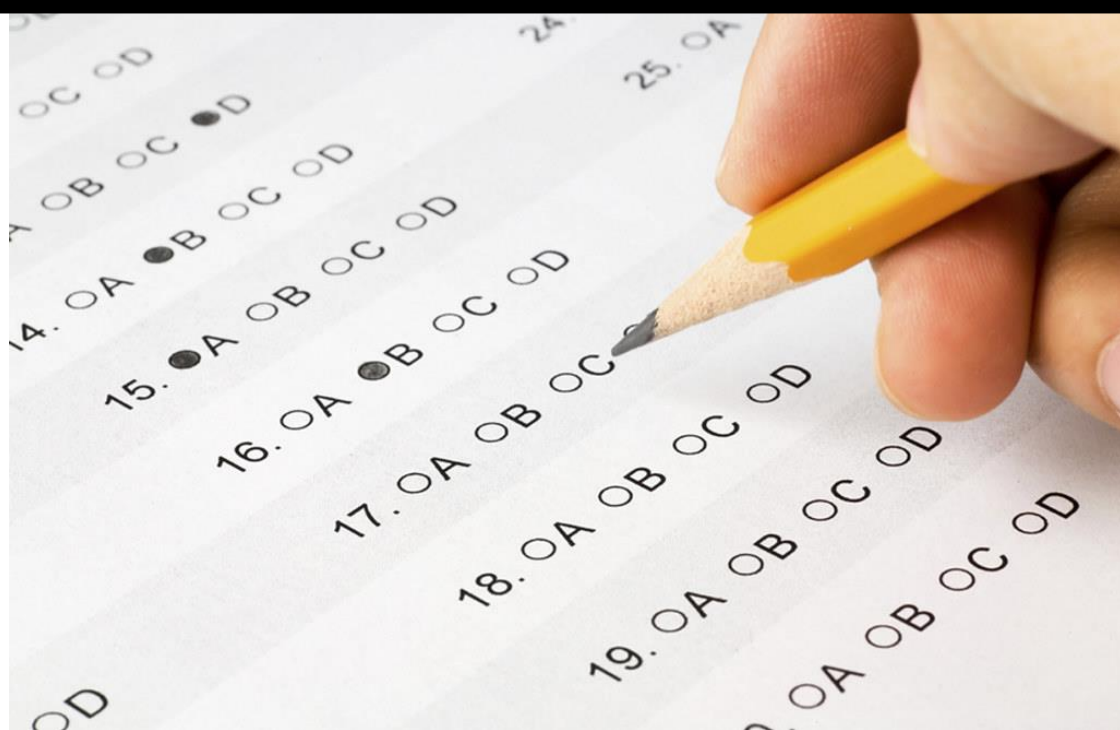


Pressure
that kills:

PanHellenic Exams



Greek Erasmus+ team

Interview with a
graduate of Lyceum
Vrachneikon

Kostas is a graduate student of Lyceum Vrachneikon, Patras (Greece) and after he has taken part in PanHellenic Exams, he succeeded and now he is a student of Electrical Engineering of University of Peloponnese. The Greek Erasmus team took an interview from Kostas before his final exams



Question: How many hours a day do you study?

Kostas: On average I spend around 5-6 hours studying daily.

Question: Has your diet changed lately? Most people put on weight during this period.

How have you been doing?

Kostas: It has changed indeed. I tend to eat less homemade food, since I'm usually out of home for cram school classes and I've gained some weight, though not to the point where I would be considered "overweight" (by medical standards).

Question: Some study while listening to music. Do you?

Kostas: It depends on the type of studying I'm doing. If I'm doing my daily studying, I prefer to have zero distractions. On the other hand, when I'm just revising (not for a test, just to keep myself in a good shape on certain subjects), I may listen to some music.

Question: How do you cope with anxiety? Would it help if the school had a full time

Kostas: Since I'm having my exams for a second time, I can cope with anxiety a lot better than last year. A school psychologist would be a good idea, since he/she could help the students improve with their coping mechanisms. On the other hand, anxiety and stress generally make you shut everyone out and keep to yourself, but this is a mentality that can be avoided if there's someone to support students in their early school years too.

The school psychologist should be implemented in all of the educational echelons, if we seek to maximize the gains of this new (at least for Greek standards) addition.

Question: Do your parents add to or diminish your anxiety?

Kostas: At my first year, my parents tried to be supportive but in a really excessive way. The consequences of this was for my anxiety to spike, to nearly unhealthy levels. The second year was a lot more peaceful since they learned from their mistakes and tried not to pressure me to this degree.

Question: How do they react when they see you getting lazy? What would you do if you were in their place?

Kostas: Generally they would get angry with me and worry about me at the same time. I really don't know how I'd react, since I don't have kids, or the experience that comes with age. I do hope though that if I have children in the future, I won't react in the same way, but rather more calmly, whilst still getting the point across.

Question: Do you have some sort of extracurricular activities since your exams are coming up?

Kostas: Sadly no. My exams took most of my time, leaving me with little to no free time. I was (and am) flirting with the idea of joining a HEMA club though.

Question: Do you sleep enough?

Kostas: Of course not. And even if I didn't have my exams looming over me, I still wouldn't. It has more to do with the phase I'm going through. So many interesting things to do in the time you could be sleeping!

Question: Does your family keep quite in order for you to study?

Kostas: My family isn't really that loud at any time of the day so I can't say they've been a problem. On the other side, I study in a completely different section of our house, so even if they were noisy, it wouldn't bother me.

Question: Do you have extracurricular help or tutoring?

Kostas: Doesn't everyone these days? At least here in Greece, it seems like that. I hope this was different though.

Question: How many hours per day?

Kostas: About 2 hours per day for five days.

Question: Do you think it is necessary or do you believe if you tried on your own you would accomplish your goal easier?

Kostas: A great question. The thing is that this exam system is really... let's say unorthodox. The books you're supposed to study are really badly written and sometimes they leave a degree of uncertainty on some of the topics. The classes that we're having at school are really not enough and don't cover as much as they should, so we're having to rush things. I don't believe that a student can ready himself for the exams without any extra help. Highly unlikely, though not impossible.

Question: Do you have a plan b in case you fail?

Kostas: Yes, I do. Everyone should. Life doesn't always go the way you've planned.

Question: Does your family agree with your choices?

Kostas: Thankfully they do, and I really appreciate that.

Question: Have the choices of your friends played a role?

Kostas: Not really. Friends are people that come and go. Your goals don't. Pursuing your goals can lead you to many friendships, while friendships don't always let you accomplish your goals.

Question: Do you think you should choose a major that you would prefer as a course of study? And only one that you like?

Kostas: Majoring at something that you despise or find truly and utterly bland is a quick way to hate your future job. If you manage to succeed at said major, that is.

Question: What role do you think your choices will play in your family's economic situation?

Kostas: I hope they'll improve it. We'll see how that plays out though.

Question: Would you choose a specific major because you think it will give you work faster in the future?

Kostas: It depends on how economically desperate I am at the moment. When you're under pressure, you tend to avoid thinking outside the box and you usually end up regretting some choices. Generally speaking, my answer is the same as question No. 16

Question: How much have discussions with your teachers helped you with your choices?

Kostas: In my cases, they haven't helped. I knew what I wanted to do with my life since ever, really. Trying to make ends meet is the tricky part.

Question: If you were asked, by the Minister of Education, which education system would you suggest?

Kostas: I hope you are sitting comfortably, cause this is gonna be long. The basis of each education system, should be the student. An education system which covers each and every need of a student, is a successful one. The basis of the education system I'm talking about, is maximizing everyone's potential. Every student has different needs in learning and different aptitudes. By having a general mandatory curriculum, but having extra, specialized classes for students that excel in a certain field, the students would get the general education they need, whilst developing their unique skills. For example, let's say we have 4 students in a class. Everyone gets to do Maths, Greek, History, etc etc. Student A is really good at sports. He takes part in the specialized sports class and he is provided with proper guidance so that he can become a professional athlete, if he so chooses. Student B, is really good with music. Again he take part in the specialized music class, so that he may become a professional musician. Student C is good at maths, etc, etc. Student D is good with electronics, etc, etc. In the end, the student will have both the cultural and technical education he requires, whilst he/she will have greatly developed his skill in a certain field he has a knack for. This may sound really hard to pull off, but it was successfully implemented in the USSR.

Question: Do you think school has helped you developed your social skills correctly and to face practical things in life?

Kostas: No. Not really. You don't really learn how to behave in the society. The only thing you get to experience is social interaction between your fellow students, which doesn't have to do anything, except than being in the same place for many hours a day. To add insult to injury, I can safely say that 75% or more of my practical skills have been

developed during my personal time. I have learned some really interested things in school though, even if they are few.

Question: If so? What are they? If not? What do you suggest?

Kostas: The basics of biology, a couple of interesting and useful things in physics (thermodynamics, waves and mechanics of solids mainly) and how to unclog toilets, repair scratched CD's, treating insect bites and stings, neutralising a couple of harmful chemicals and the behaviour of molecules under different conditions (pressure, temperature) from chemistry. Yeah, I know that it sounds impressive since if you ask the guy that sat next to me, he won't be able to list any of the above, but let's say I have some really interesting hobbies and like to practically implement my theoretical knowledge.

Question: You suddenly realize that school life is ending, how do you feel about it?

Kostas: Indifferent I would say. All things come to an end. A chapter of my life closed, while a new one opened up. I made some good memories, but I'll make new ones that will probably be better, who knows. After all, a man that is stuck reminiscing the past, often forgets to live his future.

Question: What are your best memories from your school years?

Kostas: The things I did with friends. And the school trips that we had. Ok the school trips were the best, but it's still too early to reveal the mischiefs we did. Maybe in a couple of years more.

Erasmus+ team: Thank you, Kostas, we wish you all the best in your life.

Kostas: It was my pleasure. Good luck to your Erasmus+ project