

# *Cover Letter for Tallinn University*

## *Educational Innovation and Leadership*

- Introduction of yourself
  - Explanation of why you want to study in the master program
  - Description of the expertise, knowledge and personal characteristics that will allow you to be successful in this programme
  - Short description of a concrete "Innovation Project" that you could realistically implement as a part of your studies (the problem that is addressed, the stakeholders you need to involve, the way to address the problem, the resources you need to implement the project)
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When I read, "We are looking for true stars because only the best are suitable for leading education", I knew that I've just found the right course. I am a civil engineer, and yes, my degree is not very relevant to teaching, but I am sure that my story is. It took me two years to discover my passion for teaching and education. I learnt that the only thing I love doing is working with young students. Since my chosen discipline was not much of direct help, I decided to start from basic, which was indeed something incredible. I decided to merge my previous knowledge with my passion in an innovative way. To build a career in education, ignoring practical engineering, was probably the most challenging decision I've ever made.

About a month after my graduation from the University of Engineering and Technology Lahore (UET) in 2017, I was selected by one of Pakistan's finest schools, Lahore Grammar School. My passion and determination for teaching created ways for me. The school was looking forward to merging technology with learning using robotics (Lego EV3). My background in computer programming helped me learn this subject in a matter of two weeks. After that, I gave training to teachers and started working with kids up to 8th grade. Three months later, I was called to conduct workshops for the teachers of senior campus (O and A-levels). I am now working with both the schools as an Instructor and Coordinator for Robotics. I'm working on integrating Robotics and Programming in classes as a tool for creative learning.

Tallinn University has inspired me in many great ways. It is the front-runner of teachers' education and training and a place where new ideas are born and nourished. Educational Innovation and Leadership is one of the many examples. The way the Education System of Estonia is transferred is truly inspiring for young educational entrepreneurs like me. As stated by PISA, Estonia is one of the four highest-performing OECD countries. Not only this, but it is ranked one of the best in Equity in Education. These facts speak for themselves. I learned a long time ago that if one thing can transform a country, it is education. It is the department where most brilliant and passionate minds are needed. I have made it my aim to bring a positive change in the education system of my country, Pakistan, and I know that it's going to take a lot of effort, patience and hard work. I am looking for a place where I can learn the possibility of making my dream a reality, and without a second thought, Tallinn University is my PLAN A.

During my studies at UET Lahore, I've been very active in curricular and extracurricular activities. Working as General Secretary of Pakistan Students' Welfare Organization (PSWO) was the most satisfying experience. PSWO works to educate underprivileged children, including financial support, career counselling sessions, visits to orphanages, and old homes. In these four years of engineering, I learnt the skills that made me a confident lifelong learner. Along with PSWO, I worked as a teacher, wrote for the university's monthly and annual magazine, and participated in different events, competitions, and seminars. All these activities taught me multitasking, communication skills, time management, teamwork, problem-solving and organizational skills. I made mistakes, and I learned from them. I tried new things, some went great, failed a couple of times, but learning didn't stop. The diversity you have at Tallinn University, I am sure that I will exchange a great deal of my knowledge and experience with my fellows.

At Tallinn University, I am looking forward to researching innovative and technology-enhanced learning using different tools. Tools may include Robotics, Programming or science videos. I, however, will be focusing on a combination of Robotics (Mindstorms EV3) and basic programming. This topic is relevant to my studies in two ways. First, I am an Engineer, so Physics and Mathematics have been a significant part of my 16 years of education; second, my work experience as a Robotics teacher.

In Pakistan, the old traditional method of education is still widely followed. I have explored how easily we can make our students learn the concepts if we could just let them have a hands-on experience of their theoretical learning applications. These days we have all the tools to bring our class to life. My Research Project's target would mainly be focused on finding the improvements that technology can impart in learning. I would also be exploring the factors that contribute to learning regarding the use of technology, which method or tool is more effective for a particular group of students based on their age, gender, grade and educational preferences. I'd further investigate the limitations of any chosen method. Once I have the research-backed statistics with me, I can pursue my dream of bringing a change in the education system and ultimately, building my own model educational institute.

For my Research Project, I'll be spending time in different schools. I'll select a few groups of students for experimental and control groups. They will be taught various topics, preferably the ones they're not already familiar with, with and without using learning tools. The results of their learning will then be compared. It is the initial draft of what I am aiming to do. I know research involves a lot of other objectives as well including, but not limited to, literature review, hypothesis testing, collection of data, deduction of experimental results, verification of results etc. I am optimistic that the competent and great teachers of Tallinn University will guide me in a great way to carry out this innovative project.

I would like to mention one more thing here. There are things that words cannot explain. Commitment, passion and desire to learn something are a few of them. I have all these qualities in me. Throughout my life, I've been a student who loves challenges, the kind who looks for immersion in the things he does (decision of change of career is an example). If given a chance, I'll not only prove my passion but will also make this institution proud.

Best,

Umair Ali