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Research in Graubünden

Alone among researchers?!

An electronics apprenticeship at the research institute

"Extremely good. One of the best apprenticeships I can imagine!" Laurens Perseus from Davos is visibly enthusiastic about his training as an electronics technician at the WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF. The SLF is recognized throughout Switzerland and internationally for its research on snow, avalanches and natural hazards. Hardly anyone knows, however, that the SLF also trains electronics technicians, polymechanics and IT technicians.

Laurens Perseus is in his third year of training. Originally, he had completely different plans. "At first I wasn't interested in an apprenticeship. My mother drew my attention to the advertisement". After a trial apprenticeship, it quickly became clear to him that training at the SLF was exactly the right thing for him. "Technology suits me. In my spare time, I build race drones." Laurens combines an apprenticeship in electronics with the so-called "Berufsmaturität". This gives him the opportunity to study at a Swiss university of applied sciences after completing a total of four years of training in his field. On Mondays and Fridays, he attends school in Chur. The subjects taught include electrical engineering, hardware, software, programming, materials engineering, drawing technology and welding. For the "Berufsmaturität", there are additional in-depth courses in mathematics, chemistry, physics and economics.

Laurens works three days a week at the SLF. According to Laurens, the training there offers many advantages: "The best thing is that I don't just work in the office or in the workshop, but also occasionally work outside, for example to maintain a weather station. We don't do assembly line work. We often have to develop a completely new device for a research project. The researchers have an idea, which we then implement. To this end, we electronic specialists occasionally work together with the polymechanics. I didn't have much experience in my first year as an apprentice. By now, I can accept more and more assignments myself and discuss them directly with the researchers."



The tree inclination sensor is attached to a larch tree in a waterproof housing.

Picture: SLF

Last year, Laurens designed and built a tree inclination sensor. He explains why: "The device measures the inclination of trees under a snow load. The researchers want to use these measurements to find out whether the trees still offer protection from avalanches when they are being flattened. The challenge for me was to build a device that was as small and energy saving as possible and that would record the

measurement data for a year. We are currently testing a prototype on young trees in an experimental area in Davos."

Laurens does not mind being the only electronics apprentice at SLF. "Now and then it would be cool to have fellow electronics apprentices, but my supervisors are always there for me." He adds laughingly, "We are four apprentices at the SLF. On company outings we are alone among adults, but most of them are relatively young and very nice".

The apprenticeships



The SLF offers these apprenticeships: Polymechanic (2019), IT technician (2020) and electronics technician (2020). Further information on apprenticeships can be found on the SLF website (www.slf.ch) under the menu item "Jobs and Career" -> Apprenticeships. The PMOD/WRC (www.pmodwrc.ch -> Vacancies -> Apprenticeships) also trains apprentices.

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Laurens Perseus

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