

Speaker 1: [00:00:02] Hi, everyone. I'm Emily. I'm the regional manager for sub-Saharan Africa. [00:00:05][3.6]

Speaker 2: [00:00:07] Hi, everyone. My name is Ron Peter and I'm the international officer for the sub-Saharan region. [00:00:11][4.0]

Speaker 3: [00:00:12] Hi, everyone. I'm Blessing. I'm the country manager for the University of Aberdeen and I'm based in Nigeria. [00:00:17][5.2]

Speaker 1: [00:00:18] Welcome to our University of Aberdeen West Africa podcast series. We're going to talk about lots of relevant and interesting topics which we hope you find useful. Join us for this week's episode. Hi everyone. Welcome to this week's episode of the West African Podcast. Today we are delighted to be joined by Latif, who is our senior lecturer in petroleum engineering at the university. Welcome, Latif. [00:00:49][30.5]

Speaker 4: [00:00:50] Thank you very much. Nice to be with you. [00:00:52][2.0]

Speaker 3: [00:00:55] Hi, Lateef. Thank you for joining us today. And my first question would be that you kindly describe your journey travelling from Nigeria as an African to the UK. What was your purpose for travelling to the UK as well? Would you just let us know? [00:01:12][17.6]

Speaker 4: [00:01:13] Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Listen, I moved from Lagos to the United Kingdom, basically around 2006 to start of Ph.D. in petroleum engineering at Imperial College. And when I finished, I moved to the Middle East. And after working in the Middle East for a little while, I decided to come back to the United Kingdom. So mainly because, you know, I found UK more homely and with lots of opportunities that align with my career prospects. And having worked a little bit in the, in England for a little while, particularly specifically now in Salford, United Kingdom, I decided to move up north of to Aberdeen, Scotland. And as you know, Aberdeen is the energy capital of, of Europe, not only in terms of petroleum, oil and gas, but also in terms of sources of energy. So and I've been in Aberdeen now for close to eight years and I would say, you know, is more or less my home and I've really enjoyed my stay here and that's basically my journey to the UK settling now in Aberdeen. Thanks, Alison. [00:02:49][95.4]

Speaker 3: [00:02:49] Okay. So to confirm, do you just teach petroleum engineering or you touch on other arms of engineering as well? [00:02:56][6.8]

Speaker 4: [00:02:57] Yeah, my whole area of teaching has been in petroleum engineering. I do contribute to other areas within the school of engineering, but petroleum is my call for course in. [00:03:11][14.4]

Speaker 3: [00:03:14] So taking you a bit back to your journey, what was your first impression when you arrived the UK? I want to believe that maybe before you embarked on that journey you had not seen the UK before or you could correct us here. But what was that impression when you got in that you think they was a friendly place? People were friendly and it was easy for you to settle in. [00:03:35][20.5]

Speaker 4: [00:03:35] Yeah, that's that's an interesting bit. It was a completely different environment to where I was coming from. It was not just friendly, but I would also say that it was more or less homely. People were so nice, friendly and welcoming, always willing to assist, and I found myself settling in very well. Of course I had to quickly adjust myself to the weather because I was coming from Lagos at a temperature of more than 3556, so nearly coming down to sub zero at times. So that was a bit of a challenge. But with time I climatise and I adjusted myself. And yeah, it was really great to have finally settled in the UK. [00:04:32][57.5]

Speaker 3: [00:04:33] All right. That's that's great to hear. All right, Ron, Emily, do we have any questions? We can continue. [00:04:38][5.3]

Speaker 1: [00:04:40] Yeah, I would like to know, obviously you've been in the UK for quite some time and you've travelled elsewhere in the world to work. What is it about the UK that you enjoy the most and do you like the work ethic and the way in which we do things here? [00:04:56][16.2]

Speaker 4: [00:04:57] Absolutely, yeah. I always say that as you and most people are aware, UK is a place where you that is rule of you know, you just have to play by the rules of of of of the game. So this is one thing that is unique. So if you want to stay in the UK, you want to study or you want to visit, you have to bear in mind that everything is by the rule and you have to follow the rule. So that is one area that I normally like to fly. So if you're moving from other countries to the United Kingdom, be aware that you have to play by the rules. That's number one. Then number two, people are so nice. I know so many people. [00:05:48][51.2]

Speaker 1: [00:05:48] Glad to hear. [00:05:49][0.4]

Speaker 4: [00:05:49] Yeah. People are really nice and very always willing to help and support. And that really makes the

whole environment really welcoming. And I would say the best that I've experienced to stay and work. [00:06:07][18.3]

Speaker 1: [00:06:08] I'm really glad to hear that. And this podcast is aimed mostly at West African students, even although we may have some other listeners, which is wonderful. But can you please tell us about your experience of the West African community in Aberdeen? [00:06:21][12.8]

Speaker 4: [00:06:22] Yes. So since I moved to Aberdeen, I. Uh. Uh. Around 2014, 2015, I was actually a member of Aberdeen Nigerian Research Group. And come 2016, I was actually the chair of that group. And I can see that the group is very active in welcoming, you know, people of Nigerian descent and not only from Nigeria, from other African countries who may not really have friends to, uh, to mingle with when they arrive. For Nigerians in particular, uh, the, we have quite a number of Nigerian students who, who are studying not only petroleum engineering or other courses in engineering, but also in other disciplines like law, like economics and other areas. And this is actually a platform for people to settle in very well and and see people that they know and interact with and ask questions that may be necessary for them in getting themselves set to do so apart from joining that group. I'm also also involved in, you know, representing like, uh, Nigerians and also at West African students in most of the conferences that I attend meetings telling them about our courses and how they may, you know, join the university assertively and very well. And this is inclusive of activities in other places, even in Lagos, when I mean visiting Abuja and talking to students about about the University of Aberdeen. [00:08:29][126.6]

Speaker 1: [00:08:30] Super. Thank you. [00:08:31][0.8]

Speaker 4: [00:08:32] My pleasure. [00:08:33][0.2]

Speaker 3: [00:08:34] So, um, let's give us a teaching staff. I would like to also know, aside from classroom teaching, what form of support to provide to students who are in the school of Engineering. [00:08:45][11.2]

Speaker 4: [00:08:47] Yeah, apart from teaching, quite a lot of other things that are activities. So when students are in different situation, we have a central admin support team, um, residing in the hub university hub. So this is where most students will normally be directed to if they have personal issues or, and know that things that may be required for them to support their, uh, their stay in Aberdeen. And so this sort of support may be from, you know, working wise in the UK. What you need to know about it. Uh, if you need some financial

support, you know where to get best set of support from health issues and all the other personal issues like family, you know, students with family and how they can enrol their children in school and all of that sort of things like that as things that student would normally come forward to us seeking for help and guidance on. And we would normally do that right as appropriate. So we have quite a list of all of these sort of issues, and we will always be glad to point students in the right direction. [00:10:20][93.4]

Speaker 3: [00:10:21] That sounds great. Thank you.
[00:10:22][1.3]

Speaker 4: [00:10:24] Yeah, my pleasure. [00:10:24][0.4]

Speaker 1: [00:10:26] Obviously one of the big things that students ask all of us is what are my employment opportunities going to be like after I finish my degree? So can you maybe give some advice to students who are really looking to get into a professional workplace after they finish, particularly in the school of Engineering? And also, if your school has industry links and how you kind of link students into those.
[00:10:51][25.1]

Speaker 4: [00:10:53] Absolutely. So two things in there, ample employment opportunities wise in the UK and also our links with the industry. So I've said from the second one. So as you are aware about being the capital, energy capital of Europe means that we have direct access to so many local companies. Most of the companies would normally have their offices in in Aberdeen. That's the oil and gas companies mainly. And we normally have access to most of these companies by way of bringing take in students on a trip, visiting them, asking them for support on projects, collaborating with them, coming to the uni to present. And these all bring students very close to the industry as much as possible. Also, students develop links and interactive follow up sessions with most of these companies. Oh, they are representative in some cases. If they do offer students projects that is supervised directly or co supervise indirectly. So all these opportunities are there. In some cases, students go to the company premises, you know, asking for technical support, facility usage and other things. So this means that, you know, students in Aberdeen have unique opportunity as opposed to students in any other places in the UK or outside of the UK. Now in terms of employment opportunity, I would rather say that because we do see those students come to the UK with a student visa which may not necessarily allow them to work immediately after they finish their studies. But in some instances, some multinational oil companies may find some of our students suitable for employment without necessarily having to stay in the UK. They

may be deployed to the country of origin or to other places around the globe. So most of the companies are international, so they will be looking for international opportunities anyway. So when they are here, they have the opportunity to explore jobs and look for appropriate opportunities that is suitable to them. They may not necessarily find one that will make them to stay in the UK due to a number of challenges, including visa, post-study, work, visa and all that. But that doesn't limit their chances of applying for a job that might take them outside of the UK. And then I think if I'm right, I'm aware that there is now POST-STUDY visa now for our students that will allow them to stay for a couple of years to explore for out opportunities. So if that is also a new and very good development for for them. So I would say, yeah, it's all looking bright for, for our students hospitality. [00:14:29][215.9]

Speaker 1: [00:14:30] And I also just want to reiterate that we do now have that graduate immigration route visa, which allows students to stay for two years after graduation to gain employment and work in the UK. And this really is an invaluable opportunity for students and to try and get into, for example, the oil and gas field in Aberdeen, because we are the experts, after all. [00:14:53][23.3]

Speaker 4: [00:14:53] Absolutely. Absolutely. [00:14:55][2.0]

Speaker 2: [00:14:58] Hi Latif. In your view as an Academy child, what makes you one of our best in Unique for our international students? [00:15:04][5.9]

Speaker 4: [00:15:08] Yeah. In terms of academics. For instance, I can tell you in 2017, petroleum engineering programme comes second in the whole world in terms of ranking based on academic performance. And then if you go into times, uh, um, academic review, you will see inverse of Aberdeen and even our School of Engineering is coming top in the list. Even within UK, the School of Engineering is is in the top performing universities. So I would say that we have that unique expertise both in terms of technical delivery and practical exposure for students. And not only that, we also have industry experts, and that's the unique side of our colleagues here. So we do not only teach them the theoretical aspects, we also complement those critical aspects with practical knowledge that that is required so students can graduate and hit the ground, start and start running. As the case may be. So I think this is a very unique opportunity that students can exploit. Why is your dad in the the School of Engineering, University of Aberdeen? [00:16:39][90.8]

Speaker 1: [00:16:40] This really is an invaluable point of our academics having industry experience, and Latif is one of those. He's not playing himself up high enough as he should, but he has lots of industry experience. And so being a student and being in his classroom, learning from Latif really is awesome and can open many doors into different things for you. [00:17:02][22.2]

Speaker 4: [00:17:04] Thank you. Absolutely. Thank you. [00:17:06][2.1]

Speaker 3: [00:17:07] So my question would be for new students who have just arrived at the university and are struggling to cope with the different lending practises as opposed to what is applicable in Nigeria or in Ghana, what would be your advice for them? So they can certainly, you know, and just kick off with good grades from the very start. [00:17:28][20.5]

Speaker 4: [00:17:29] Yeah. I would advise you to come out. Tell us. Talk to us. Don't feel shy. Do not hesitate. We have we do have quite a number of students in such situation. During the induction week, these are some of the things we normally tell them. If you think that anything is bothering you or you're not settling in very well, just talk to your programme coordinator. He would normally arrange a meeting and put you in the in the right direction. [00:17:58][29.6]

Speaker 3: [00:18:00] That's helpful to know. Thank you. [00:18:01][1.5]

Speaker 4: [00:18:03] Welcome. [00:18:03][0.0]

Speaker 1: [00:18:04] Can you tell us about the different modes of teaching the teeth? And if students get access to certain laboratories or equipment and if we have any special things other universities don't have. [00:18:15][11.3]

Speaker 4: [00:18:16] Absolutely. So so in the in terms of the mode of teaching, we do run, particularly on MSc programmes, we have online delivery and we also have campus full delivery. So for the online student can join us from anywhere around the world to be taught in exactly the same way as students on campus, except that they do not have direct access to visit the lab or do have a face to face classroom teaching experience as the campus students. But apart from that, when you are if you are a campus based student, you have access to state of the art facilities in teaching. In our labs, we have a number of labs in electrical and mechanical. You have petroleum engineering lab, we have workshop where we fabricate some of our equipment and students, they can design their

equipment, fabricate seats and use those things as part of their research. And not only that, we also have a number of software packages that students would normally have to use as they finish their studies in in the university. So all the software that any student can think of in the oil and gas or petroleum industry is available in the university repository or addition environment. So they would normally find all of these applications for within their disposal. So this is a unique opportunity for for students to exploit. And not only that, so we complement teaching, which is a practical base and theoretical base, wheat field visit, facility visits for companies that are within the locality of of abiding area or not see a region, I should say. So. So they also have access to talk to them. So that's. [00:20:44][148.3]

Speaker 1: [00:20:44] That's great. [00:20:45][0.2]

Speaker 4: [00:20:45] That's a number of things for student to benefit from. [00:20:48][2.6]

Speaker 1: [00:20:49] Definitely. And I'm aware that there's also an engineering society and is very active and they are also very competitive. Can you tell us about the things that they do yearly, which is super interesting? [00:21:01][12.2]

Speaker 4: [00:21:02] Absolutely. Yeah. So we have a number of engineering bodies and students when they are here. Depending on the background, if they are coming on MSI or if they are coming on bachelor's, that areas of interest. So a student on a mechanical engineering programme can join the respective institute , which is an institution of mechanical engineers. Those doing electrical that can join e electrical electronic engineering society. They can join petroleum engineering society does ESP Society of Petroleum Engineers. They can also join a number of other engineering bodies. But the good thing here is that they have you have access to most of the industry practitioners. So why are you here? You can join and register as a member is free for students and you can also attend meetings on a weekly basis or monthly basis, as the case may be. We also have an institute, so I'm currently the focal point for Energy Institutes. At the Energy Institutes is the awarding body for most of our engineering programmes, and the institutes or institution is under the Engineering Council, United Kingdom, which is the overall body that oversees or awarding institution programmes in the United Kingdom. So that means students that are here, they will be studying programmes that are fully accredited. And not only that, they also have access to the main industry practitioners within the field. So so is usually puzzling and students who have quite a lot of activities to participate in during term time. As regards as

regards to the engineering institution, programmes.
[00:23:16][133.6]

Speaker 1: [00:23:18] Create wonderful opportunities. And one last question I'm going to get in is does the university I'm right in saying has an engineering society, do they? Am I right in saying that they build like a sand buggy or something every year that they race or something? [00:23:34][16.0]

Speaker 4: [00:23:35] Yes, they do. Yeah. So our students, they have a number of activities depending on this societies. So that is the activities involving design of racing, car racing, um, uh, everything, I should say activities. So they design the car, they fabricate seats in our workshop, and then they are presented as part of competition. And in an event where in some instances they come up as winners in some instances and run out there not. And that's okay. So this means that so students take a lot of of joy in being part of this sort of competitive society, that design car racing equipments, which allowed them to compete effectively. And not only that, there are also other engineering disciplines like mechanical engineers, civil engineers, petroleum engineers. So we are there. We do have the opportunity to design a read and present to read to some of our sponsors, to assess and give them some feedback. So the opportunities are there for. Our prospective students as well as Current and Rhodes students.
[00:25:19][103.5]

Speaker 1: [00:25:20] That sounds awesome. Ron, do you have any questions? [00:25:23][2.4]

Speaker 2: [00:25:24] I think from an economic point of view, they cover everything. So any question from your blessing?
[00:25:30][5.4]

Speaker 4: [00:25:31] Great. Blessing. [00:25:33][1.8]

Speaker 3: [00:25:34] I have one last. [00:25:34][0.9]

Speaker 4: [00:25:35] One for. [00:25:36][0.5]

Speaker 3: [00:25:37] You. You've lived in the city of Aberdeen for some years now. And I would like to believe that you've enjoyed doing that. But then you said that it's become a home to you. [00:25:47][9.8]

Speaker 4: [00:25:47] Absolutely. [00:25:47][0.0]

Speaker 3: [00:25:50] Yeah. So what are some of the activities to enjoy doing in so far as teaching? What are the places you love to visit? You know, so, so that perspectives that I would

want to also have that idea of walking away from being in the classroom. I can get to explore the city or the cities close by. What are those things? [00:26:07][17.9]

Speaker 4: [00:26:08] Where for? Yes, for students, I would say that there's quite a lot to explore in Aberdeen, actually. The students have passed from the societies within the university school. There's also the university wide society that students participate in. There's the students union. They do have a lot of activities for students. But in terms of what to explore. So if you are, it depends if you are a spokesperson days endless opportunities for you to to to participate in sports activities. We have the sports village, which is just across the road to University Road, where students can go there to swim. Swim. You can't play football. You can do sprinting. You can do quite a lot of things, actually. And if you like, jogging and kind of jog, there's a very nice topographical regions within Aberdeen where you can go hiking up the hill, you can jog around the city and then you can also walk. You can take a walk around the city and if you like to stay by the beach area. So so you can go down to the the beach area in Aberdeen, you know, particularly in the summer, and have a very nice time there with ice cream and beer relaxing. So after studying a long day or a long week, so take a break and enjoy yourself that are also places to to visit, to eat good food. So when it comes to good food, I can see that so many restaurants in Aberdeen that can have a very nice meal. And apart from that, there are some other areas that you may wish to visit in Aberdeen. And so Bob, you know, from West Hill to, you know, areas around Balmoral Castle, so many castles within within Aberdeen and a few other places that you may wish to, to explore. So I've said, yeah, it's a really nice, uh, very nice city. And when it's this summer is sunny, bright and shiny, just as you can see today and the rest. But when it's cold, yes, you have to be prepared for it. So because when it's cold is usually very cold. So that's it's about Aberdeen. Any other theme that you may wish to know? Happy to tell you more. [00:29:00][172.0]

Speaker 1: [00:29:00] I have one last question to round today's session off, Latif, and you mentioned that you've eaten lots of nice restaurants, but I want to know if you've mastered the art of making Scottish Jollof Rice Yeah. [00:29:13][12.3]

Speaker 4: [00:29:15] That's a that's an interesting one. Yes, I think I do. I cannot do that. Now, the Jalo fries You have different tastes of Jalofries, but if you want to I meant that Lagos or Nigerian as a flavour or or Ghanaian flavour of detail, then you be talking about the style of Jalofries, which I cannot tell you that. Yes, I can. I can do that. So

the next time you you have visited me in the office or elsewhere, so I wouldn't mind bringing just a pour.
[00:30:01][45.8]

Speaker 1: [00:30:02] Oh, that's great. Great. Jollof Rice knew that doing a podcast would get me some Jollof rice. I'll need to do more of these more often. [00:30:09][7.1]

Speaker 4: [00:30:10] Indeed. [00:30:10][0.0]

Speaker 3: [00:30:12] So, Wendy, so are you just. Oh, where did you come up with the Scottish to love rice? This is a new one. [00:30:18][5.9]

Speaker 4: [00:30:20] It is completely new. Well, I need to prepare one and give it to you before you. [00:30:25][5.0]

Speaker 3: [00:30:25] And she can tell the. [00:30:26][1.4]

Speaker 4: [00:30:26] Difference of the taste. [00:30:28][1.2]

Speaker 1: [00:30:29] I mean, they've put haggis in it, Latif. [00:30:31][1.6]

Speaker 4: [00:30:33] Let us see for now, everybody. [00:30:35][1.6]

Speaker 1: [00:30:37] I look forward to tasting it one day soon. [00:30:39][1.9]

Speaker 4: [00:30:40] Yeah, when I serve you, then you can they guess what's in there and. I was special. [00:30:45][5.3]

Speaker 1: [00:30:46] It's perfect. Okay, guys, thank you so much for today's podcast. Latif, we have thoroughly enjoyed having you on this episode and as always, for any people listening, if they wish to ask more questions, please just get in touch with us and we'll be more than happy to help. Thanks, Latif. [00:31:03][17.5]

Speaker 2: [00:31:04] Thanks for your time and see you everyone in our next trip. [00:31:07][2.3]

Speaker 3: [00:31:07] Thank you. Let's see. [00:31:08][0.8]

Speaker 4: [00:31:08] Pleasure. Thanks very much, Emily. Thanks for your time. Thanks, Ron. So thank you. See you soon. [00:31:08][0.0]

[1782.4]

