Classes start at private universities

Tips for new students

Hammad Ali

SINCE almost all the private universities in Bangladesh tend to follow the same academic calendar as those in North America, the spring semester is about to start within the next few weeks. A large number of students who completed their HSC or A Level examinations towards the last quarter of last year are about to start their university life in this semester. This will be a big move, no doubt, and there will be a lot of things that the entering students will have no idea about. However, as a recent graduate I can at least vouch for the fact that it will be a magnificent journey, there will be a lot to learn and do and in the end, it will all hopefully be a lot of fun.

However, the first few steps will be tough and often the entering students will feel completely clueless as to how they will ever make it past the first semester, let alone the full undergraduate program. So today, we at Star Campus try to offer some help on how to put on a brave front, what to expect and how to cope with the first few steps of University life. As a science and engineering major, I will target mostly those students entering engineering schools.

Firstly, you will have to understand one thing: university is much bigger than your last school, regardless of which school you went to. The course contents are different, the manner in which they are taught is different, even the expectations of your teachers are different. The stakes are much higher, and everything is going to happen on a much larger scale. If you have been a great student so far, be extra careful. Letting prior success go to your head is the surest way of getting started on the wrong foot. If you have had wonderful grades through twelve years of school, you probably have a good amount of self-discipline and know how to manage your time to get all your work done. This will help, but only if you actively use these gifts and keep abreast of what is being covered in class. Complacence and excellence cannot coexist at this level of education. If you think getting good grades will be easy, it will become that much harder. To those of you who believe they have never quite performed as good as they could have in school, don't lose heart and assume it will be the same story in university as well.

Firstly, you will have to understand one thing: university is much bigger than your last school, regardless of which school you went to. The course contents are different, the manner in which they are taught is different, even the expectations of your teachers are different. The stakes are much higher, and everything is going to happen on a much larger scale.

This writer himself is testament to the fact that you can perform much better in university than you ever did in school and college. All it takes is the right approach. Keep track of what is taught in class, make sure you understand, really understand, the topics covered and feel free to consult a peer or the teacher himself whenever you have confusions. Lastly, do this NOW. Don't wait for the week before exam. As soon as you understand you have a problem, take steps to solve it. Don't let it accumulate. Remember this: often understanding today's class is integral to even getting through ten minutes of the next one. Don't make it worse for yourself by throwing things in the back burner. Attend all classes, take notes and make sure you understand. Last but not the least: go home and read the textbook. This habit will be, or should be, your biggest difference with those others who just choose to complain about how nothing they are taught in class ever helps during the exams.

Now, to a very important aspect of most science and engineering courses a final project. A good number of these courses require the student to work on a project where s/he needs to implement all or most of the techniques taught in the theory lectures. If you have always been schooled in Bangladesh, there is a very good chance this will be a completely novel experience for you. So here are some tips on how to draw first blood in this mammoth task: make sure you have a good plan of how you will get started, how much you would like to get done in what amount of time and, if working in a group, which member will tackle which part of the work. Don't kid yourself, though. This plan will not be anything final, not by a long shot. As you work on the project, there will be unexpected issues popping up every now and then, problems that will need to be taken care of and changes that will need to be made. There is no shortcut to this, however.

The only way you can get better at making and implementing plans is by doing it often enough.