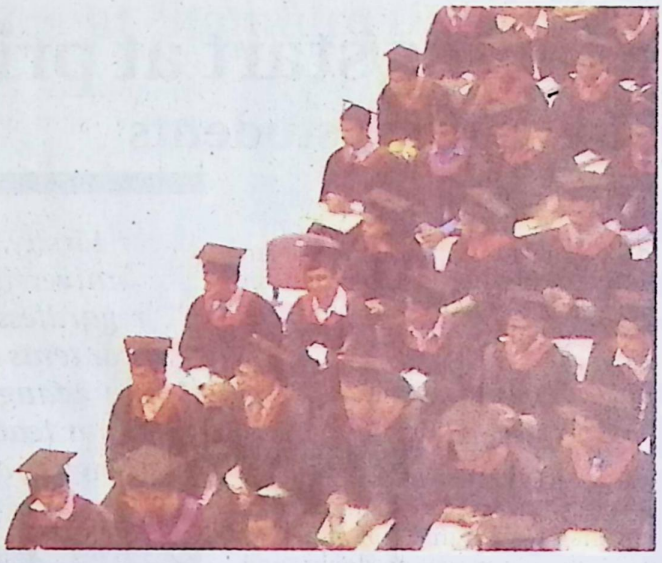


As soon as you are given a project, draw up plans and get to work. Check to make sure you will be able to meet deadlines, and also make sure you keep records of any unforeseen problems that creep up, for later reference. I will try and explain more about this keeping records business in a separate article.

Presentations are no longer the headache of business majors only. Even engineering students need to make a lot of presentations these days, which of course makes perfect sense. Unless you are able to explain your work and defend it in front of teachers and peers, what good is that work? By the way, don't let anyone convince you that if you are smart enough with your work people will value you anyway. They might, if you invent something like calculus or the general theory of relativity. Otherwise, you better be ready to do some talking as well.

This brings me to another important issue: how to structure your presentations. Most important, make sure you mention any source that helped your work in the reference section. Failure to mention an important source might spark unsavory occurrences like being accused of plagiarism. No matter how miniscule the contribution, be nice enough and mention the person, paper or book. Believe me; no decent faculty member will hold it against you if you have a list of references two pages long. On the contrary, it will give the impression you really worked hard and went to the trouble of doing a good deal of reading and research for getting done with the task at hand. Next, always mention a background for your work why this work is important, what work has already been done in this area and so on. This is important so that someone not from the same line of work can still appreciate your efforts. Don't just bombard the Electronics major with your findings on the best method for Systems Analysis; tell him why your work is important and how professionals can benefit from it. Otherwise he might even assume you're just trying to impress him with technical jargon and big words that have no bearing whatsoever in the real world not a good thing if he has a say about your grades, right? Also, before you wrap up the presentation, mention where your work stands in comparison to others and how it can be improved further. Don't grow a big head and declare there is no scope for improvement there always is, and someone will always know. Lastly, don't walk into the presentation with the intention to improvise your way through it. Take my word for it: at least one person in the class will be listening intently, taking notes and when question-answer time comes, that one person might be able to bring down your whole castle of sands with one well-placed question. Don't leave loopholes. Rehearse your presentation. Make sure your voice is heard in all corners of the room. Feel free to write down important points in the whiteboard instead of having to rush through it in the middle of the presentation. The faculty members will usually allow you access to the venue a few days ahead of the actual presentation. Use this time wisely and prepare yourself for the big event.

Ok, so that was about how to deal with the courses, the projects and presentations. Now a few general tips on how to act more consciously in university.

1.Ask questions. As soon as you feel lost, raise your hand and ask for clarification. Don't bother about the rest of the class; chances are they don't even know there is a problem.

2.If you simply cannot bring yourself to ask in class, meet the teacher in person and put your confusions at rest. Again, do this NOW!

3.Participate in class ask questions as well as answer them. A good number of teachers appreciate the gesture and are more receptive of ideas and questions from students who actively take part in class.

4.Stay updated. Check the course website (if there is one) frequently and make sure you have all the relevant resources. Read the notice board first thing every morning. Meet the teacher in person if all else fails and you still need a clarification.

So, that was me trying to give some pointers about how to cope with the demands of university life. Hope these will be of some use to you, as you get started on your path towards becoming a graduate. Whether you benefit from my ideas or not, remember you are attending university in a country where higher education is not an option for most people. You have been given a gift. Use it responsibly. All the best.