



WALK THE TALK

The Daily Star talks to leading private universities in Bangladesh to explore how they are transforming themselves as education providers and preparing their students to meet the demands of the fourth industrial revolution.

The future of higher education in Bangladesh

Professor Atique Islam

Vice Chancellor, North South University



North South University is continuously working on developing employability skills for our students with a dedicated Career Placement Center (CPC). Here, our students are engaged in rigorous workshops and skill-building seminars to help equip them with the current demands of relevant industries and to meet the expected benchmark for fresh graduates. This improves the rate of placement, as we have gained the trust of our employers globally, and are consequently helping our graduates to secure a job right after graduation. CPC arranges internships and job placement opportunities, career counselling, job training, and works for professional development. An employer survey report is also generated every year, helping us further our mission to place our alumni around the world. The recently held National Career Fair, where over 130 companies from around the world participated, was a successful step toward enabling our graduates to connect with various industries, showcase their potential, and prepare themselves to embark on their professional career.

Setting the benchmark also has its fair share of challenges, such as recruitment of quality faculty members who have PhDs. To counter this obstacle, we only invite foreign degree holders from internationally accredited and reputed institutions, preferably in the related discipline.

The most recent update from UGC is that they will only approve one course per programme in a year. As a result, the current policy can limit institutions from evolving, which can work as an impediment to an institution's adaptability to the demands of the industry. Under such bottlenecks, it is not easy to launch a new course. We would like to request UGC to take some initiatives to expedite the overall approval process. But we are also fully aware of the limitations UGC has in terms of personnel.

To foster entrepreneurship, we have launched a support platform named 'Startup Incubator' within the campus to enhance its co-operation to help entrepreneurs to the highest level possible. It aims to provide advisory support, high-quality mentoring, and access networks and strategic support to the portfolio companies, etc. Stories of several successful entrepreneurs among our alumni have become very well-known in the nation today.

Md Sabur Khan

Chairman, Daffodil International University

The main problem with the existing skills gap is our outdated education system. There is no analysis done by universities, government or research bodies in identifying the kind of skills needed in accordance to the market demand. Masters in Cyber Security, Social Security, Social Business, Digital Marketing, Agro-Business, Entrepreneurship, are all important for Bangladesh currently. An entrepreneurial mindset is required to seize the right opportunities. Change can be brought about if proper governance is in place when dealing with affiliated bodies. Most research analysis is done by private organisations, but it is the duty of the government to make the general public aware about issues concerning skills gap in the country. The government should also allocate the number of job recruitments for each sector.

One of our biggest battles that we fight as the representatives of universities is keeping the level of unemployment of our students as low as possible. We take full responsibility for this situation and work directly with the unemployed students to identify what needs to be done.

We award three credits to students who can launch an innovative product into the market. The students should focus on gaining knowledge and skills that will aid them in their future careers. The lack of endorsement by the government restricts students from having enough faith to try out something new. We are trying our best to endorse our subjects to the private, public and other sectors, in an attempt to reduce the number of unemployed students.

We are forming a student congress consisting of 2,500 students where the unemployed students will be given a chance to provide an explanation for their unemployment. I believe there is a lack of soft skills among the individuals. Current and past students interested in learning soft skills will be recommended by our university to other places with waivers to gain training. We have also introduced other development programmes such as EDF (Entrepreneurship Development Fund), which will facilitate a no interest loan of 10,000 to 200,000 taka for student entrepreneurs. We have also organised an innovation lab which contains a maker space for the entrepreneurs to make products and sell them at any price. The lab has 3D printers, CLC cutting machines, RMD, animation and design facilities, and test labs. We also host a monthly programme called startup market where we encourage students to sell their products.



Professor M Sekandar Khan

Vice-Chancellor, East Delta University

The gap between information need and availability to make business decisions is very high in the country. The unavailability of the right talent and skills in Bangladesh is making it challenging to bridge this gap. To fill this gap, EDU offers customised courses, professional and executive training programmes, workshops and seminars, with the help of faculty members and trainers/experts from both home and abroad to meet the needs of its students.

To build and create the best higher education environment that is required for the development of academic and institutional excellence and to increase competent individuals, to serve the needs of the nation and the world, the university is committed to serving the best learning opportunities for every student. International Graduate Leadership Program is one such platform that aims to provide an opportunity for students for doing business internationally. The programme focuses on the influence of diverse cultures, politics, institutions and local practices, and their impact on business decisions and managerial behaviour across international borders. The programme also comprises of on-campus pre-learning and off-campus seminars and company visits in a foreign country to meet business and government leaders and discuss business practices.

Under the current practices of UGC, private universities can only facilitate one new course per year. In the 21st century, universities are required to introduce new and innovative undergraduate and post-graduate courses to serve the human resource requirements in the diverse job market of the country. UGC should plan to transform private university operations by creating the tier system that can eventually provide more benefits to the private universities, which have already shifted to their permanent campuses and are serving the higher education industry with integrity and honesty. Such a tier system can distinguish good private universities from the ordinary ones. Universities can also operate more efficiently by introducing innovative courses more than once in a year.

We have established EDU Startup Foundry recently, which guides early-stage startups through a defined process. This helps teams to rapidly take their ideas and test them with customers to discard, change and build a business model. The programme welcomes the entire EDU community, to help build and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit of students, faculties, staff and alumni.

We focus on lifelong learning and leadership roles by helping students attain excellence through curriculum, research, facilities, entrepreneurship and job placements.



Professor Dr Shahid Akhtar Hossain

Vice Chancellor, Eastern University



Universities cannot take full responsibility for bridging the skills gap among students. There are many instances where students who have passed the secondary and higher secondary education are not qualified enough to attain higher education at universities. University and their faculty members work hard to shape students to help unleash their potential. Yet, despite extra endeavours, the necessary skills are lacking amongst students to use in the practical field. In light of such reality, we have designed a mandatory course titled Career Management Course to address the mismatch between academia and industry. It helps students make informed choices through aspects such as know-how of CV writing, job hunting, interview preparation, code of conduct, corporate cultures. Other necessary skills such as teamwork, leadership, and analytical skills based on the local and global labour market needs are also included in this course.

We have also made it compulsory for every student to learn Excel. We have signed an MOU with Creative IT, to train our students with the required industry courses, with emphasis on digital marketing. Besides, we have more than 18 clubs where students can acquire adequate life and employability skills. We are also changing the curriculum to meet the present workplace demands after discussing with industry experts and introducing new avenues of subjects.

The objective of introducing new courses is not only to create a good image of the university in the market but also to help students adapt to new knowledge and technology. However, obstacles such as the process of approval from UGC are tedious and time-consuming. UGC has some set rules and policies about offering certain courses as mandatory. After excluding those courses, the university has a few options to search for new courses. However, UGC is taking initiatives

to enhance the quality of education by creating a Quality Assurance Cell at every university and recommending all to bring together some new courses.

The issue of approving new subjects after full operations of university's activities at the permanent campus is not realistic. It requires substantial financial strength which a middle-class university can hardly meet. In addition, skilled and trained faculties for trendy subjects are challenging to find. For example, we have decided to start a major in data science and analytics. Unfortunately, few experts are available in the market for teaching this subject, as most qualified people in this arena live abroad. ICT ministry can take initiatives to fill this gap.

We offer courses and arrange fairs to encourage entrepreneurship among students and some of them even represent their startups in international conferences.

ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR SPRING 2020

MBA

BBA

BSc in
Engineering

MA
in English

BA
in English

LLM

LLB



CHITTAGONG
INDEPENDENT
UNIVERSITY (CIU)

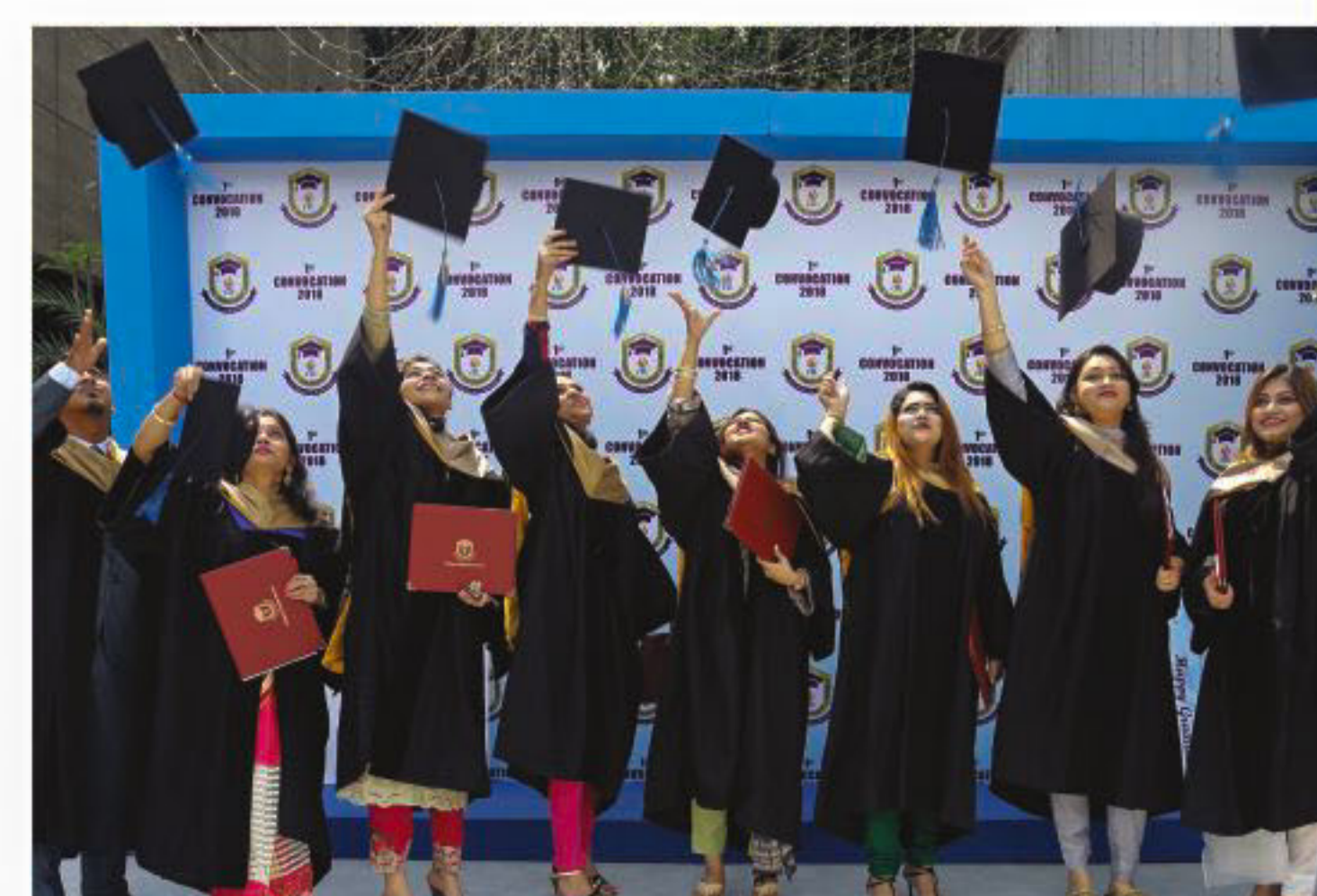
Salient Features:

- CIU is established by ESTCDT, the founder of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB);
- Full-time PhD and Foreign trained Faculty Members in all the Schools;
- Enriched Library and State-of-the-Art Lab Facilities;
- Hosts American Corner of US Embassy on its Campus;
- A wide spectrum of Student Club activities, societal and corporate engagement programs for more practical learning experience;

Generous Scholarships:

- ▷ 20%-100% Scholarship on the basis of SSC/HSC/O Level/A Level/Semester Result*
 - ▷ 50% Tuition Fees Discount for Siblings/Spouse;
 - ▷ Need based Scholarships for deserving female candidates;
- *Conditions Apply

Collaborations with:



Application Deadline: Sunday, 05 January 2020
Admission Test: Monday, 06 January 2020

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