



What it takes to get into BUET

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HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

My BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) journey started right after I failed to get a Golden A+ on my SSC exams. I let this fake standard of academic excellence, the mythical "Golden A+", get into my head and was completely devastated. While my friends celebrated their success, I thought that the only way I could regain my self-confidence was by getting into the most reputed institution in the country.

As wrong as my motivation was behind aspiring for BUET, it shaped the next two years of my life.

After HSC, a student gets roughly three months before the BUET admission tests. Previously just a 600-mark written exam, the BUET admission test has now been divided into two parts – preliminary MCQs and a written part. However, the preparation strategy remains roughly the same.

For me, the preparation started right from the first day of college, which made things easier in the three months before the entrance exam where I could just focus on revisions, solve previous years' questions, and polish my problem solving capabilities. During my two years of college, right after I finished any chapter, I

spent a particular amount of time solving problems from previous years' admission test questions from that chapter. This helped me not get overwhelmed during the admission season. Sure, we've all heard legends of someone cracking the exam by working hard in the three months after HSC, but for commoners like me, consistency is more important than the last-hour grind.

However, the preparation procedure certainly varies from individual to individual. I had friends who were much quicker than me when it came to solving problems and didn't have to invest half the time I had to. While that might seem demotivating, what's crucial to comprehend is that it all comes down to accuracy and delivering the best as per one's capabilities. In the admission test, it's almost impossible that someone would be able to even attempt all 60 questions, let alone get them right. So, the ones you attempt must be attempted correctly.

The months before the entrance exam should be put into getting better at what you already know and not imposing any new burden upon yourself. While some of my contemporaries followed the higher mathematics book written by Ketab Uddin which contains more difficult problems

than other books, I solely completed my preparation based on the book I followed during my college years along with previous years' questions. At the end of the day, things worked out for both me and my contemporaries. You must analyse the previous years' questions yourself and base your preparations on your own analytics rather than following others blindly.

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It is crucial that you get the motivation right. The admission period is undoubtedly one of the most difficult times in a student's life and to grind that hard, day after day despite all the failures and the competition, takes a lot of mental spirit. The right sort of motivation is crucial to get you through these days and into an institution of your choice.

But it's important to not let that motivation turn into an unhealthy fixation. When the motivation for getting into BUET turns solely into getting the label of the institution rather than

pursuing engineering, it ends up causing harm in the future. At the end of the day, BUET or any other prestigious institution is merely a platform and a stepping stone for your career. The toxic institutional pride that's so prevalent around us goes back to the false narrative preached among aspirants that getting into a particular institution is going to set you up for life. By the time university students realise the lie behind the statement, it's often too late.

In the pilot episode of *Kota Factory*, Jeetu Bhaiya, played by Jeetendra Kumar, tells his student, "Children leave Kota in two years but Kota doesn't leave the children for years." Making the aspiration for BUET the sole element in your college life can never be healthy. Your mental health deteriorates, and anxiety and panic attacks become a part of your daily routine. Sure, it should be a key driving factor in building up your routine, and practising discipline and punctuality, that's so very important during the admission period. But when you raise the stakes this high in your head, the recovery from failure takes years and one can't help but fall into a constant state of depression.

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The scars of childhood bullying that never go away

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

In 2011, I was unanimously chosen as a sacrificial lamb for the entertainment of our class. It is difficult to recall the finer details of what happened, nor can I put my finger on the exact length of time it went on for. But there is one thing I'm certain of – the trauma of those weeks or months, coupled with that of many that followed throughout the years, has fundamentally shaped who I am today.

Everything was my fault. Every bad word, every act of violence, just about every sort of misbehaviour and misdemeanour, all began to originate with me. For all crimes conceivable by a small child, I was punished especially if I didn't do them. Thus, many times a week, or perhaps every day, I would be forced to play the defendant in that classroom-turned courtroom, with the verdict being the same at the end of each trial. I was always guilty.

Even amongst small children inside a classroom, politics has a way of becoming the dominant force once introduced. The orchestrator of my bullying was universally adored by our teachers, thanks to him being the best student in class, and he, even at that tender age, would weaponise their blatant favouritism to make himself feared and obeyed. The others, being his loyal subjects, could only follow.

Thus, I became acquainted with a feeling I had never known before, which I wouldn't be able to describe until years later. It was a crippling, all-consuming loneliness – a sensation that no child should ever have to experience.

The day came when the children finally grew bored of their favourite sport and I breathed a sigh of relief, thinking it was all over, not knowing that what had just concluded was merely the prologue. From jeering and name-calling to outright social ostracisation, the bullying would continue intermittently, spanning over half a decade. Childishly fearing that everywhere would be the same, I endured, never asking my parents to change my school or section. And once it ended for good, I could only stare at the emptiness of what lay behind me and that which lay within.

It has been many years since I was last tormented in that way. Yet, even now, the trauma from those times still rears its ugly head occasionally. Whenever anybody does anything wrong, my first impulse is always to double-check whether it wasn't me instead. There's also the small, irrational part of me that still lives in cynical anticipation of the day I'll once more be isolated, cornered, and punished for things I never did.

Today, my former bully is a close friend of mine, and I can no longer hate him for the nightmares he put me through when we were both kids. Yet, no matter how hard I try, I can't forget the horrific helplessness of being a marionette in another person's puppet show. That has become one of my worst fears, a terror I wish to never know again.

Even now, this story of mine feels awfully anticlimactic. For me, there was no triumph, no justice, and no closure. But it is poetic in a sense, given that it ended just as it began – suddenly and without any reason. Afterwards, all I had left was to pick up the pieces and silently move on.

Nayeem's life is full of regrets and stupid mistakes. Help him reminisce at nayeemhaider90@gmail.com



How getting rid of D unit in Dhaka University is affecting admission candidates

NOYOLEE MUNIM

This year Dhaka University (DU) has made some significant changes to its admission process, including removing the D unit.

Previously, the D unit was the exchange unit where students from different backgrounds could change their academic tracks. If a student from a Science background wanted to study in the Business faculty at DU, they would sit for the D unit exam. Similarly, commerce students wishing to switch to Science or Humanities majors, D unit also was the gateway into the Social Science departments.

Overall, the D unit would allow you to access a variety of faculties by sitting for only one exam.

From 2023, this gateway has been abolished. The new system requires students to sit for exams of the respective faculties. That means, regardless of your background if you want to access a Business Studies department, you have to sit for the Business Studies unit (C unit). The same applies to Science (A unit) and Humanities, Law, and Social Science (B unit).

Admission candidates have enough on their plate as it is. Adding multiple exams, all with their own set of syllabuses to study makes their lives unnecessarily harder. Students do not simply prepare for one



university's admission test. They tend to branch out and attempt entrance exams for several universities. Similarly, students tend to attempt more than one unit to increase their chances of getting in. Aggregating the different requirements, syllabuses, and

ways of preparation for each school and unit becomes overwhelming for students.

Moreover, since this is the first time exams are being held without a transfer unit, many admission coaching centres may not be prepared with adequate resources.

They often rely on past papers to formulate their mock questions, which they can't do this time around. It will also become more complicated to teach because the exam questions and options vary according to the background of the student (i.e., science,

commerce, or humanities background). Students who do not attend coaching and instead prefer to take advice from known seniors may face trouble too, as there are no past experiences to hear from.

Overall, the new structure has created a lot of confusion among students and tutors alike.

However, there is a silver lining here.

Having independent exams for each unit means there are more opportunities for students to do well. For example, if someone suddenly falls sick the day before the A unit exam and cannot give their best, it will only affect the result of that particular unit. They will still have the chance to ace the other units they registered for. Merit positions will also be distinct. A person might be on the waiting list in one unit but high up on the merit list of another. In this way, the chances of succeeding are actually higher.

There is no doubt that admission tests are life-altering. The current candidates are the guinea pigs of this new system. Despite the burden of the seemingly endless syllabuses to cram, the students who strategically make the most out of this opportunity will come out on top.

Noyolee is either sleeping or procrastinating or both. Tell her to stop overthinking at nunimns13@gmail.com