



PHOTO: PRINON MOSTOFA FAHAD

## What it takes to get into DU “CHA” UNIT

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It was during the middle of my higher secondary education when I started to realise that I wanted to continue my academic education in fine art. I basically just felt the urge to paint consistently for some years or more. Painting helps me feel alive and momentarily stops me from thinking about anything else. I knew I loved how it felt despite all the struggles of the process or any looming stress over my head.

Being an ex-cadet, I had to face a lot of social prejudices when I decided to get admitted into a fine art academy. People around me expected that I would be studying engineering, medical subjects, or some reputed subject at Dhaka University (DU).

A vast majority of people in this country still have some questionable ideas about the students who study fine arts. These are silly ideas, and I couldn't care less. In later years, I came across many kinds of stories from my classmates about how they ended up at the Faculty of Fine Art, DU. The mix is diverse – many wonderful artists and designers have been engaged in creative pursuit since a very early age and some people had never even tried to draw a single scratch of anything before deciding to take preparation for the admission test.

The Faculty of Fine Art comprises eight different departments: Drawing & Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, Graphic Design, Oriental Art, Ceramics, Craft, and History of Art. Applying for the admission test for the “Cha” unit can be a good option for anyone looking forward to pursuing a career based on any of these subjects.

Exam strategies are open to change every year, so the applicants must stay updated about that. Usually, the exam has two methods of evaluation. Firstly, there's the multiple-choice questions (MCQ) part for evaluating the theoretical knowledge of the applicants. The second part is a drawing test. Marks distribution of the MCQ and drawing test can be 40-60 or 50-70 on average if we look at the questions of the past few years, meaning both of the tests are equally important.

For the MCQ part, my personal opinion is that following the NCTB textbooks, especially for Bangla, English, and Literature segments,

is the best strategy. These books are often overlooked by the admission coaching centres when it comes to “Cha” unit preparation. After analysing the questions of recent years, I found that the textbooks can even help a little with the general knowledge part of the MCQ questions.

Then comes the MCQs based on art history, art materials, folklore, and the biographies of prominent artists from national and international peripheries. Solving the previous year's questions can actually give a lot of hints about these topics. One can also use the internet for further research. Ultimately, I do think a mentor or proper guidance from somewhere is needed for a lot of students as art is not something we are very accustomed to through our earlier academic experiences. Since there's a time limit during the stressful journey of the admission tests, guided preparation can help to navigate the time constraint.

The practical or drawing part is always tougher than it looks. The drawing exams hold a lot of marks, where meeting certain requirements of academic drawing is of utmost importance if we want to pass this test properly. However, it must be noted that the Faculty of Fine Art doesn't expect us to be master artists when we sit for their entrance exam. But one must have some basic knowledge about the academic process of drawing before starting the journey of graduation in fine arts. So, the drawing on the exam sheet might not be a very good drawing or not even complete, but it should portray the steps that show the student's control and confidence over the pencil lines, sense of proportion, light shade, composition, and a three-dimensional understanding of the subject. An overall artistic depiction on top of all that might make it look close to complete.

These are all easier said than done, especially when it comes to live drawings of human figures or any other subject. One might have previous experiences drawing or painting with colours, but exhibiting all those qualities in a pencil drawing is usually a result of some kind of academic orientation and a great deal of hard work. This is where many applicants face issues, as there aren't a lot of coaching centres in this country which can help them

take preparation for the admission test.

But every year, the senior students of the Faculties of Fine Art from DU and other prominent universities organise workshops for those who are eager to get into the education of fine art. These might be the best places for “Cha” unit preparation. But these facilities are mostly available in Dhaka, and the students who cannot attend the workshops from other parts of the country can find it difficult to take preparation. Finding an experienced mentor might be a good option for them. Guidebooks are published from the workshops as well including detailed instructions just before the exams every year. Collecting the books from the online pages of those workshops can be helpful too. A lot of personal research on how to improve my drawings from the internet besides attending the workshop helped me in my case.

Freaking out before exams doesn't help, as stress always makes the situation worse. Starting from the easier parts and moving to the difficult ones can make the process more effective. This goes both for the study and the stay in the exam hall. Trying to cram before the exam and forcing yourself to take in all kinds of information will only result in exhaustion and confusion in the exam hall. Starting to study the easiest topic and trying to learn as much as possible from then on can help a student keep cool before any exam.

Above all, I strongly emphasise maintaining good health, eating nutritious food, and drinking a lot of water before exams. The stress of an admission test or anything shouldn't be more important than someone's health. It's just not worth it. Every student has their individual journey and needs. This write-up might not be effective for everyone. But all a student can do at a time like admission tests is to try their hardest in their individual situations and hope for the best. For the “Cha” unit, an admission exam might go right or wrong, but it can never define someone's worth and potential as an artist.

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## The problem with too much discipline in schools

INQIAD BIN ALI

Back in class six, a boy came into class sporting long hair. That day, the school prefects, who were ninth graders, came to our class for a routine attire check. Seeing the boy with long hair, they humiliated him in front of everyone by tying his hair with a hairband. This episode, albeit frightening in hindsight, elicited no noteworthy reaction from me.

Students spending hours in the sun or classrooms as detention wasn't uncommon in my school. They were harshly punished for things as innocuous as the watches they wore, the colour of their shoes, or even for not attending assembly properly. Such draconian disciplinary measures are quite common in schools and have extensive consequences.

As teachers instil a sense of fear in children on the pretext of maintaining discipline, their relationship with students takes a toxic edge. Instead of a relationship built upon trust, mentorship, and affection, the teacher-student dynamic veers to something unhealthy. Students might be put off from interacting with teachers even in class, thinking of the potential repercussions if their attire wasn't perfect.

The implementation of absolute discipline might make students wear their name tags and do the drills correctly but at the cost of the interpersonal relations which make our school lives worthwhile. In turn, they might start to loathe schools altogether. Many of my classmates who left school echoed the same thoughts.

I have seen my classmates wear proper uniforms when the teachers were around and as soon as they left, normal service resumed. Over time, fuelled by changes during adolescence, students might even resort to morally questionable activities to challenge the existing social norms.

The toughness might make students temporarily adhere to rules, but it does more harm than good. Excessive discipline ultimately makes students drift away from the concept, undoing any progress they might have made in terms of maintaining discipline.

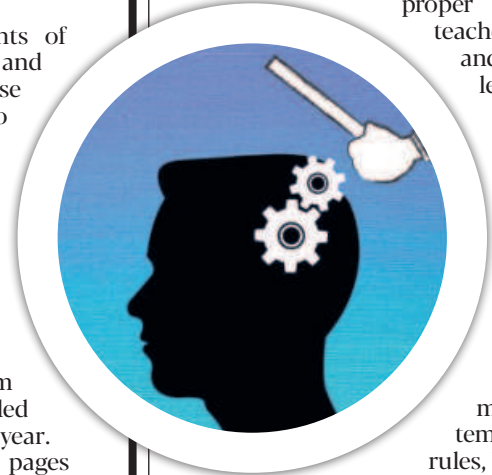
Growing up in a state of total discipline, the fear instilled in some children prevents them from being expressive, especially in fashion and the arts. They fear the potential punishment they would be subjected to for simply trying out a new hairstyle or look, writing, or drawing something new.

For this, their creative senses are left in limbo due to the absence of defined personal styles. Identity crisis can be damaging to a teen's self-confidence and might haunt them for the rest of their lives.

This fear might also make it tough for them to adapt to lives outside campus. This is something I have painfully experienced after leaving school. Having spent my schooling in an iron grip, I had a tough time adapting to life outside school once I left.

I don't mean to imply schools shouldn't uphold discipline. Rather, it should be balanced and rational. Humiliating students publicly is never the solution. Students must be allowed to express themselves reasonably, gently guided by their teachers and senior peers. Schools should also be a place students look back upon fondly, not a totalitarian regime they would grow up to hate for the rest of their lives.

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## Why there's a lack of English medium students applying to public universities

NOYOLEE MUNIM

Public university admission season is right around the corner, so prepare for an influx of worried parents waiting outside of exam centres and sitting in traffic for hours. Students from all backgrounds gear up for one of the most significant exams of their lives. However, it's commonly seen that participation from English medium students is comparatively much lower. I'll attempt to shed light on a few of the major reasons why.

Going abroad

A common trend for most English medium students is that they tend to pursue their higher education abroad. They're fixated on applying to foreign universities, completing the Common Application, and writing personal statements. Some have financial backing while others go the extra mile to get scholarships. Since that is their main priority, applying and prepping for public universities takes a back seat.

After I graduated, I saw 80 percent of



PHOTO: STAR

my friends leave for overseas while the rest opted for private universities in the country. There's a logical reason for that, too. The distinction between private and public universities is that the system of the former is more in line with foreign universities. It is

easier to transfer credits and shift abroad later. Those who did not get a chance to enrol abroad straight after high school can do so after studying in the country for a year or two without losing any time. This flexibility appeals to them and incentivises

many to opt for private.

The admission exam

The admission exam of public universities complements the contents of HSC, not A levels. While the core concepts remain the same, the question pattern varies. For example, the admission exam for science subjects requires more formula derivation whereas A level syllabus focuses more on the application of the theories. Hence, English medium students find it more difficult to learn new content, that too in such a short period of time.

Moreover, there are very few coaching centres dedicated to preparing English Medium students for the test. Since the syllabus is unfamiliar to them, they need more guidance to fill in their knowledge gaps and learn time-saving techniques. However, most coaching centres cater to the vast National Curriculum majority, leaving the others feeling a little lost.

The environment

Rumours about the hostile and unsafe

environments of public universities are often whispered, especially highlighting the rag culture. While some of them may be true, many are exaggerated. Nevertheless, it creates fear among parents and students alike. A fear that prevents them from even trying out for the said institutions and analysing by themselves if those stories are true.

Despite the anxiety being understandable, it is also worth noting that the situation isn't as grave compared to 15 years ago. The fact is, every institution, even every department, has its own culture – some have a wonderfully wholesome environment whereas others do not. It would be a mistake to throw them all under the same umbrella.

While all the reasons are valid, I think English medium students would benefit by trying out for public universities. It could act as a backup if the going abroad mission fails and, when given a proper chance, it could turn out to be a great experience.

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