

■ SKILLS ■

Professional networking for people who do not like university clubs

IRINA JAHAN

In university, it is valuable to build connections. Sometimes, not bolting out of the classroom a millisecond after the professor dismisses you pays off. Staying back may allow you to strike up important conversation, make new friends, and even meet people with similar career ambitions. While the conventional approach to this involves joining a university club, this route does not resonate with everyone's preferences.

A university club sure helps with building team spirit and seeking out internship opportunities, but not a lot of people are willing to invest the time it requires to thrive in one.

Alternatively, you may fall into the category of individuals who are new to networking and wish to explore avenues beyond the conventional club setting. Networking involves copious amounts of communication and follow-up, which can be daunting and out of your comfort zone in the age of social media. While engaging with people from different professions is crucial, having clarity about your own ambitions can enhance these interactions significantly.

Being more curious can make the process less daunting. Change your mindset of having to prove yourself or feeling obligated to meet ambitious people. Simply choose to be a learner. Explore venues where you can inquire and learn about the experiences of individuals who have tread similar pathways. Attending seminars is a good way to do this. Most universities hold many interesting seminars and discussions for their students, take advantage if you have the access.

If you find the prospect of sitting through two or three hours of seminars tiresome, volunteering is an excellent alternative. Volunteering in seminars or workshops gives people more room to engage beyond just being an observer.

Better yet, take part in competitions. Not only do they provide excitement and hands-on experience but also offer the potential to connect with a mentor in the field. Most competitions organise roadshows — a small event which is typically an introduction to what they are looking for. If you're not sure if a particular competition is the right fit for you, attend a roadshow and get to know what it has to offer.

Lastly, we shouldn't underestimate the power of leveraging our social media. While checking LinkedIn to see if there is any update on your application every single day can be disheartening, many people have been able to land amazing internship opportunities through LinkedIn connections or other social media platforms. Even if we manage to be only a small part of an emerging company, it's still a learning experience. However, it's crucial to recognise that while online platforms serve as valuable tools, they should complement, not replace, traditional networking efforts.

Networking is a great skill to learn even if you aren't landing a job offer every other month through the people you know. Contrary to what people may think, it isn't embarrassing to network with people in the hopes of exposure to opportunities that aren't readily available. It may not exactly be the secret sauce in the recipe of success as many people would put it, but it certainly helps to know a lot of people and to put yourself out there. In the end it's our ability to present our skills and put our best foot forward to others which will become an indispensable asset for the future.

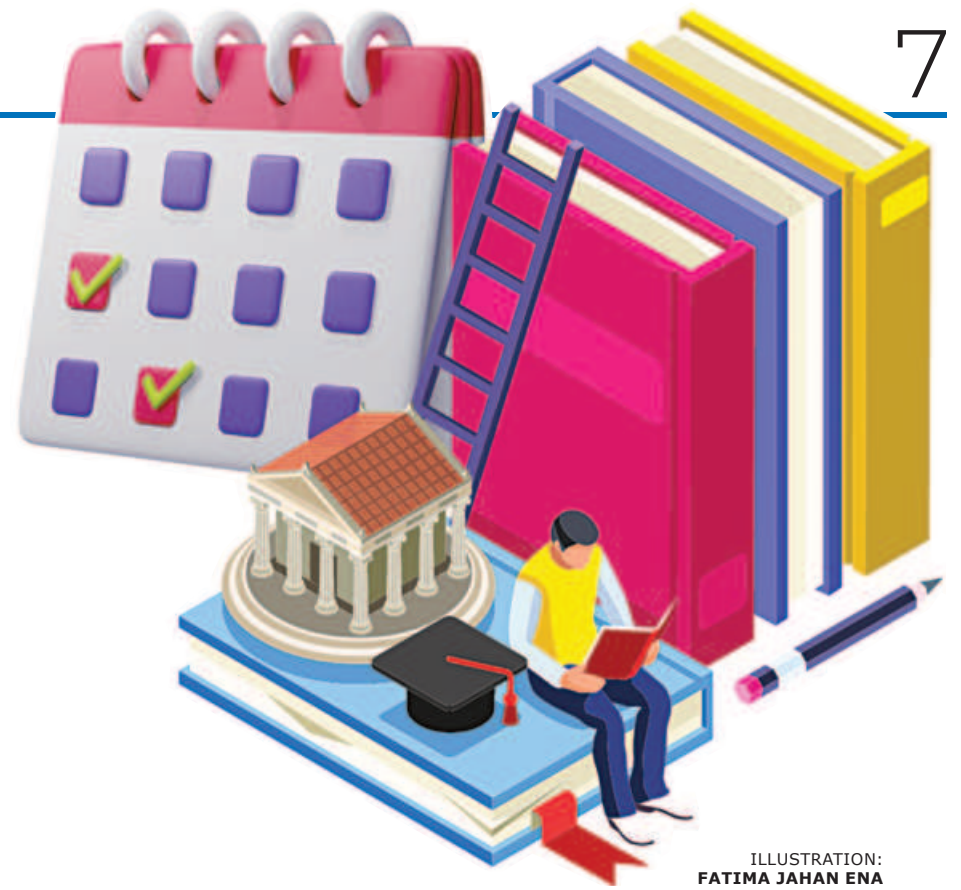


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The pros and cons of the fixed credit system

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There are a lot of factors to consider before choosing which university to attend – the reputability of the institution, the location, and the facilities amongst other things. However, there is another factor to keep in mind before getting admitted to an institution, which is finding out whether the university offers an open or fixed credit system. Regardless of whether this information significantly changes your opinion about a particular programme or institution, exploring the offered credit system can help you understand what you can expect from your university life.

In Bangladesh, the open or fixed credit systems are somewhat dependent on whether you're attending a private or a public institution with the exception of medical colleges, of course. Most private universities offer open credit systems for the majority of their offered programmes, and public universities in Bangladesh generally follow fixed credit systems.

While fixed credit systems are pretty straightforward, they do have some advantages that are often not visible. Let's look into both the positives and the negatives of fixed credit systems for reference.

Pros of fixed credit systems

The most obvious upside of a fixed credit system is that all your courses are predetermined for you. While some may dislike this inflexibility, it also means you won't have to worry about advising and pre-advising every semester. It's also unlikely that you'll end up with a terribly inconvenient schedule on particular weekdays, and even if you do, at least you won't be the only one.

In open credit systems, it can be a bit of a struggle to avail the courses you want for the semester, which can often lead to having to complete beginner-level courses much later on. Fixed credit systems, in comparison, have fewer students, and a spot is always available

for you by default. For programmes with higher total credit, it can be difficult for the students to coordinate everything themselves.

While you aren't granted the luxury of taking things at your own pace in fixed credit systems, you do have a set timeframe for when you'll be graduating. Unless you fall victim to a session jam, it's unlikely that your graduation will be postponed.

Social life might not be your primary concern, but it's much easier to make friends in fixed credit systems. People in your year and department will be in the same batch or class as you, which means there is greater scope for socialisation.

Cons of fixed credit systems

It's easy to guess what the cons are from the pros themselves. You don't get to be the one who regulates the academic load. Whatever the university decides, that's what you'll have to go with. Fixed credit systems often deal with a lot of courses at the same time, so your schedule is out of your hands too. Taking a gap semester is also not an option for most, because if you drop a semester, you may have to lag behind for an entire year.

Another significant drawback is that you may not have a lot of options in terms of electives, even though most universities do try to maintain some flexibility in Gen Ed courses. With fixed credit, it can become difficult to have a part-time job or a side hustle due to inflexibility. Overall, you don't get as much control over how you navigate university life in fixed credit systems.

Fixed credit and open credit both have their own merits, so it's up to you to figure out what works better for you. For example, you won't have to work too hard to synchronise your and your friend's routines, but if you end up having a fight, you're stuck with them for the next four years so, choose wisely.

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