

OFF CAMPUS

Getting into the Cambridge Rising Women Leaders Programme

ZARRIN TASNIM

From a young age, I have always sought out opportunities to challenge myself. Even as I transitioned into full-time employment, this hunger persisted. It was during this time that I stumbled upon the Cambridge Rising Women Leaders Programme – an opportunity tailor-made for competitive corporate women with leadership aspirations. It is catered to corporate women managers, with a minimum requirement of three years of professional experience. To participate, it is important to align one's goals with the programme's purpose.

The programme runs in four cohorts each year, – March, June, September, and November. The application form asks for one's current role and responsibilities at their workplace and focuses greatly on the applicant's purpose to attend the programme. It is important to be detailed and specific in the application form as those selected for the interview can be asked to elaborate on those details.

is an esteemed accolade reserved for only one participant per cohort. To be considered, one needed a professional nomination outlining why they deserved the scholarship. Fortunately, I had the unwavering support of my line manager, who graciously nominated me. Much to my surprise and gratitude, I was awarded with the scholarship.

The three-day programme took place at the prestigious Cambridge Judge Business School, where I found myself among 28 esteemed participants from all around the world. As the youngest and sole representative from Bangladesh, I felt an immense sense of pride in sharing my culture with such a diverse group of women leaders. Among us were professionals from renowned organisations such as Apple, Google, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Led by Cambridge professors and alumni, the programme offered insightful leadership courses and facilitated heartfelt conversations. These sessions taught us to build on strength-based leadership and create a positive workforce for the new generations. The leadership courses were open discussions where



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For the interview, each shortlisted applicant receives an online meeting invite. The interview helps the organisers to know the candidate well. Here, I was asked about my plan regarding my professional life after attending the programme. I shared my vision of breaking stereotypes in a developing country like Bangladesh. I also shared how I aim to preach the knowledge I gain from the programme to my peers and help them be more confident in the workplace.

It was a pleasure when they shared that they would love to have someone from Bangladesh in the cohort after hearing about my purpose and plans.

After the interview, I received the welcome news of my selection for the programme. Following the selection, we had to submit a bio which was later shared with all the cohort participants so that we could stay connected with each other even after the event. The bio was based on our professional experience and personality.

To my delight, I also learned of a scholarship opportunity covering the programme's expenses, sponsored by the 30% Club United Kingdom. It

we learnt that currently, most organisations have Gen Zs in their workforce who are more purpose-based. We discussed and shared different ideas, and it felt quite relevant because, in our daily lives, we barely talk about the cultural change that comes with the generation gap.

We had sessions that not only focused on our verbal negotiation skills but also pinpointed on strengthening our physical presence as female leaders. It was a poignant realisation that women from all corners of the globe – both from developed and developing nations – faced similar challenges in their careers. This shared experience fostered a sense of camaraderie and solidarity, highlighting the power of unity and positivity in effecting change.

Through the programme, I underwent a profound transformation, shedding the cloak of self-doubt that had previously shrouded my ambitions. Now, armed with newfound confidence and insights, my goal is to pay it forward by imparting these learnings to others. I plan to coach and mentor aspiring leaders through formal sessions, spreading the message of empowerment and resilience that I have embraced.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zarrin Tasnim completed her BSc in Electrical and Electronic Engineering from Islamic University of Technology (IUT) in 2021. After graduation, she joined British American Tobacco Bangladesh as a Global Graduate in Operations.

Currently Zarrin is working as a Commercial Sustainability Manager at the same company. She believes in teamwork and winning together, and practices empowerment regardless of gender.

Zarrin also aspires to give back to the society, and dreams to be a leader and an active voice for the nation.

