

EDU GUIDE

Your guide to the British Council Women in STEM Scholarship

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Growing up in Darjeeling, I attended Mount Hermon School, a boarding school in the city, as part of a family tradition. My upbringing, living far from home, nurtured my love for learning and extracurricular activities (ECAs). I then returned to my family in Bangladesh and attended school at Scholastica. My academic journey eventually led me to BRAC University (BRACU), where I earned my undergraduate degree in Computer Science.

My love for coding, discovered during my A levels, and my enthusiasm for mathematics and problem-solving guided my path. I was an active member of the university's robotics club and went on to pursue internships at Robi Axiata Limited, and then at Banglalink Digital Communications Ltd., eventually securing a position as a big data specialist engineer over there.

These industry experiences fuelled my desire to return to academia and pursue a master's degree. Discovering the British Council Women in STEM Scholarship motivated me to take the next step in my academic interests.

Why the British Council Women in STEM Scholarship?

The British Council Women in STEM Scholarship aims to address the gender imbalance in STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – fields. Educating and hiring more women in STEM can lead to better scientific and financial outcomes, enhancing diversity and bringing a variety of perspectives and ideas.

During my professional days, I was the only woman in the big data team and have always been one of the few girls in almost every room I entered, whether it was my university's robotics club or any other professional experience that I had.

I was, however, fortunate to be mentored by two strong women in the corporate industry through mentorship programmes offered by Grameenphone and Banglalink. This inspired me to set an example for other women in this field.

The application process

You can start your application process for the British Council Women in STEM Scholarship as early as January when the application portal opens. Deadlines for applications differ according to the university. As per the 2024 scholarship application dates, the earliest deadline is around late March while the latest is near the end of April. These deadlines, however, may vary from year to year, so it's important to stay updated with the scholarship or British Council website.

Before you can apply for the scholarship, you first need to have an unconditional offer from one of the listed universities offering this scholarship in partnership with the British Council. This means you will need to meet all the initial conditions set by the university

when you apply, such as previous degree certificates and English language certificates.

Typically, you need to write two essays: one for the university to attain the offer letter and one for the scholarship application.

An important aspect to keep in mind is that this scholarship is provided with the expectation that the recipient will return to their home country after completing their degree to serve in the STEM field for a minimum of two years.

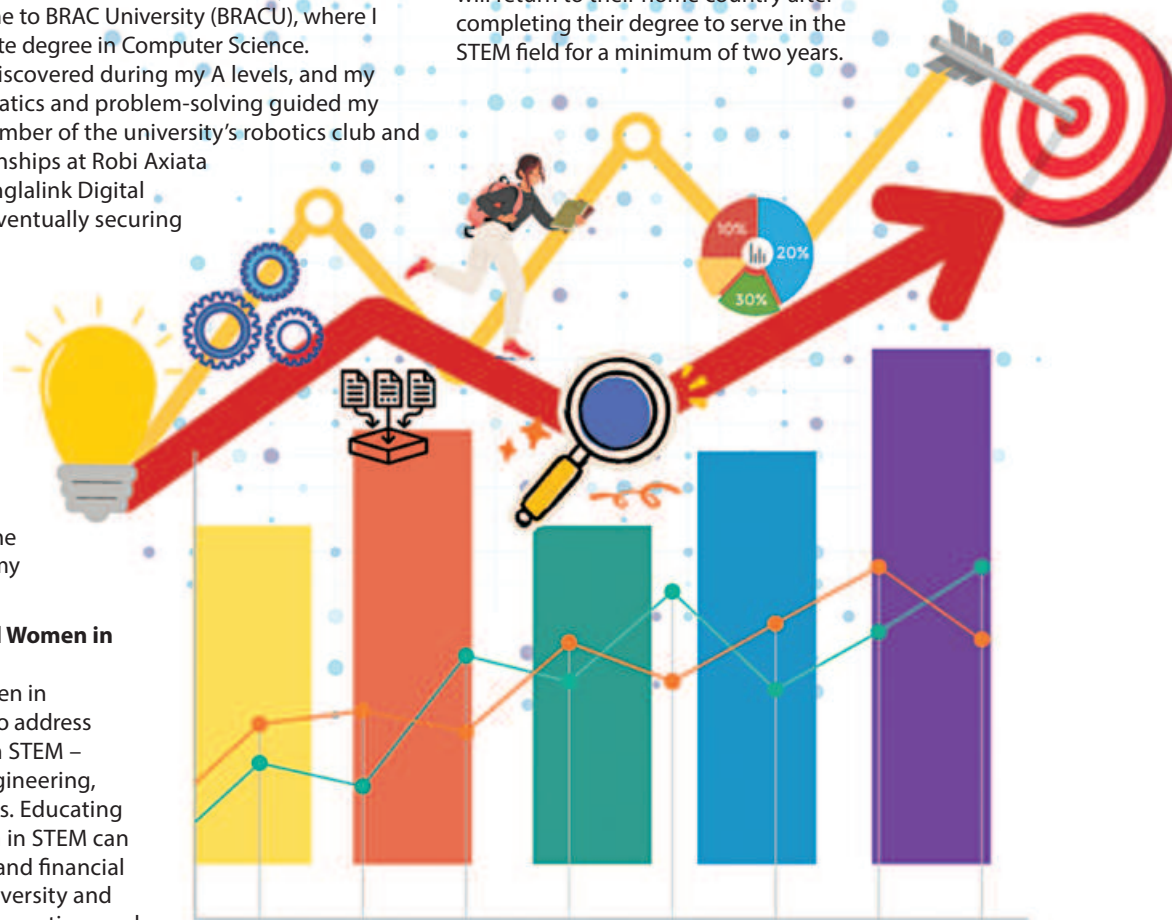


ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

My suggestions for a stellar application

For a great application, I suggest being proactive in your preferred STEM field. What helped me here was the fact that I had worked for a year as a big data engineer at Banglalink and also served as the assistant director of BRACU's robotics club. I also worked as a student mentor and tutor during my undergraduate studies at BRACU and was active in robotics competitions and events and even anchored international events during my free time. Given that I was constantly active in such STEM-related fields and activities, it helped me showcase how dedicated I was towards the field.

Also, more than just maintaining good grades, it's important to show a genuine interest in your specific STEM field and be your authentic self. In my application, I outlined my specific goals, divided into small milestones leading to a larger goal within a realistic timeline. I even reached out to previous recipients of the scholarship through LinkedIn to proofread my essay. I ensured that my claims were backed by statistics and proper references.

Finally, I personally believe that before gaining anything, one must give their best and enjoy the journey. The result is not the focus but can be inevitable because when you enjoy the journey, you have a good story to tell, and storytelling is everything.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

UNIVERSITY

University of Southampton, England

PROGRAMME

Master of Science (MSc) in Data and Decision Analytics, funded by the British Council under the British Council Women in STEM Scholarship programme

PREVIOUS PROGRAMME AND UNIVERSITY

Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Computer Science from BRAC University; Graduated with a CGPA of 3.73 on a scale of 4.00; High Distinction

HOBBY

Swimming, dancing, and anything to do with robotics

