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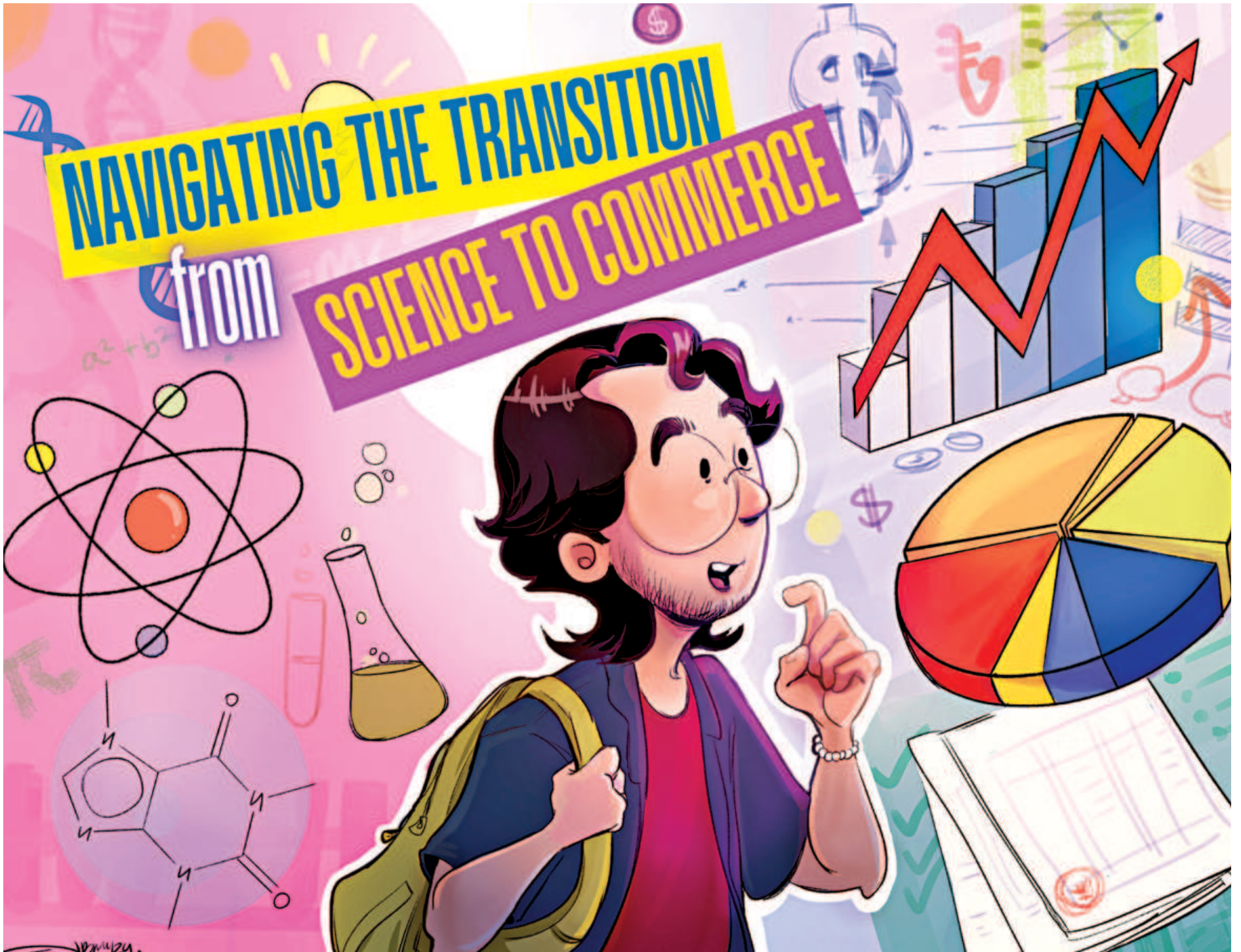


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২০ লক্ষ টাকা

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২০ লক্ষ টাকা

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■ TV SERIES ■

PACHINKO SEASON 2

Mostly lacklustre, sometimes effective

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Telling the story of a Sunja and how an entire family stands on the sacrifices she and her generation made, *Pachinko* Season 1 captivated me like no other series in a long time. The screenplay, the cinematography, and especially the performances of the first season blew me away, getting me to finally pick up Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*, the book on which the series is based.

The second season picks up where the first season left off, with the bombings in Japan at the end of the Second World War and Sunja being offered to move out of the city by Koh Hansu. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, as the family deals with socio-economic changes occurring in newborn Korea, it also struggles to stay united as the turbulence in their personal lives affects the family.

As the first season covered around one-fourth of the book, creator Soo Hugh took the creative liberty of expanding on certain aspects of the series. However, due to the brilliant screenwriting, those expansions blended with the flavour of the book beautifully and the entire first season felt seamless.

However, in the second season, the



director creates further sub-plots out of those previous expansions which feel irrelevant and just prolong the episodes unnecessarily in some cases. Moreover, the second season doesn't have much flesh, apart from the final episode.

The creators failed to understand what pulled the audience towards *Pachinko* in the first place. The story of Sunja and her struggle was the driving force of the book and not the subplot of her grandson Solomon. The audience is left wanting more from Sunja's storyline, only to be left disappointed.

The performances from the cast still work wonders. Although the screenplay falls flat at times, the emotional turbulence and conflicts are handled beautifully enough for the characters to resonate with the audience. The final episode works as a cherry on top and intrigues us enough to hook us in for the next season.

This season might have been a bit underwhelming compared to the first one, but it's still good enough for you to want to come back to the world of Sunja as the story takes a sharp turn in the final episode.



OPPORTUNITIES



IDLC - Specialist (HR Business Partner & Communication)

ELIGIBILITY

Bachelor's or Master's degree in Human Resources/Finance/Accounting/Management.

HR tools Certification will be given preference.

Visit apps.idlc.com/career#careers to learn more.

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 2, 2024



WellDev - UI & UX Designer

ELIGIBILITY

At least 3 years of work experience in UI/UX Design.

Strong English communication skills are a must.

Portfolio of UI/UX design projects.

Up-to-date knowledge of design tools: Figma, Adobe XD.

Visit welldev.io/careers to learn more.

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 31, 2024



Optimizely - Intern (Software Engineering)

ELIGIBILITY

Completion of BSc in Computer Science.

Programming knowledge, core software engineering concepts e.g. SOLID / OOP

Knowledge of algorithms and data structures, and programming frameworks.

Visit careers.optimizely.com to learn more.

DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED

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CAREER

Career prospects for **ECONOMICS GRADUATES**

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

The true nature of economics as a discipline, despite being classified as a social science, has been disputed for decades. Is it a science stream because of its emphasis on facts and data? It has real-world applications for business, so it must be a branch? Or maybe it's an art form given how it studies human behaviour?

While this debate continues, the very multifaceted nature of economics presents a multitude of career choices for Economics students. For those who are yet to figure out what they plan to do with their Economics degree, here are some career choices that can help steer your mind in the right direction.

Data analyst

For an Economics student, it is quite feasible to transition to a career in data science. After all, economics is all about analysing data to make informed decisions. With data analysis, regardless of your niche, your primary tasks will be collecting, cleaning, modelling, and interpreting data. The goal is to find solutions or patterns, and then present your findings through visualisations.

While a bachelor's degree is necessary and a master's degree is attractive for a career in data analysis, thoroughly acquainting yourself with programming languages such as R or Python, database tools such as Microsoft Excel, and being adept in maths and statistics are integral to becoming a successful data analyst.

Academic researcher

If a career in academia sparks your interest then you may pursue the path to become an economic researcher in think tanks, university research institutes, or research centre. In this position, your duties would be to conduct independent or collaborative research, write literature reviews, gather and analyse data, and publish your findings.

For researchers, while an undergraduate degree might suffice in certain cases, a master's degree and a PhD are recommended. Additionally, you will need a strong grasp of qualitative analysis. For instance, you might need to learn R and Stata.

Consultant

As an economic consultant, you will be generally required to apply economic theories, econometrics, and data analysis to identify the economic ramifications of a problem as well as conduct research and assessments. Your primary aim will be to deliver data-centric



DESIGN: **ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM**

strategies that shape public policies or business decisions, typically for law firms, government, and regulatory bodies.

A bachelor's degree in Economics or any other relevant discipline such as Statistics or Public Policy is the minimum requirement for a career as an economic consultant.

Journalist

If writing and communication are your forte, you can always opt for business and economic journalism. This sub-branch entangles complex data and transforms it into accessible narratives, usually to foster public discourse. Through in-depth knowledge of macro and microeconomics, business trends, global markets, etc., economic journalists offer insights that help the masses understand the economy better.

Generally, a bachelor's degree in Economics along with a minor in English or Journalism is favourable for an economic journalist. More and more people are also acquiring a master's degree to get into this field.

Economist

The roles of economists are extremely varied depending

on the niche they go for. However, the general duties are researching economic issues and offering potential solutions, collecting and analysing data, interpreting and forecasting market trends, developing economic models, and providing advice to government bodies and business institutions.

For economists, aside from a bachelor's degree, a master's degree is generally an entry-level requirement. A PhD is also recommended to further solidify their expertise.

The choices mentioned above are only a handful of the career prospects in the field of Economics. There are numerous others, just in the adjacent realm of banking and finance. Thus, if your Economics degree results in multiple sleepless nights or a deep hatred for numbers, know there is always going to be something that works out for you. Whether your interests lie in social causes, problem-solving, or plain old maths, you will find your footing. And who knows, if you aim high enough, you might just become the chief advisor of the government.

Anica Bushra Rahmaan, a student of Economics, used this article as a loophole to figure out what she plans to do with her degree. Reach her at anicarahmaan@gmail.com

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■ **CAMPUS LIFE** ■

AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION

The mental health crisis among students



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

After a month of intense protests, I returned to class, expecting life to go back to normal. But when someone rang the department doorbell, the sound triggered a wave of panic in me. It wasn't supposed to be this way. I thought that once I resumed my classes, everything would settle. But at that moment, I realised something was wrong.

ADRIN SARWAR

Sabbir Bin Abdul Latif, a final-year Computer Science student at BRAC University, shares his experience as he continues to struggle to adjust to normalcy, "Some of us are still suffering from what happened, but why is nobody talking about it? Many others must be feeling the same, but the mental toll we're facing is being barely discussed."

Participating in or witnessing violent protests can lead to long-term psychological effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and heightened levels of anger and stress.

Nayeema Islam Antora, Psychologist and Project Coordinator, the Disabled Child Foundation (DCF) reflects on this matter, "Research indicates that individuals exposed to violence may experience intrusive thoughts, emotional numbness, or difficulty concentrating. These effects can persist over time, affecting academic performance, and overall well-being."

One can recognise the symptoms of PTSD through specific symptoms. "Symptoms of protest-related trauma or anxiety include flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of reminders related to the event, irritability, difficulty sleeping, or feelings of detachment," Nayeema Islam opines. She also emphasises the importance of early intervention regarding this matter.

Often, some damages from protests are tangible – broken windows, injuries, and vandalised property. But the unseen struggles, the psychological wounds, are rarely spoken about. A space where students can openly talk about their emotions without fear or judgment is essential.

"Universities can create safer spaces by offering mental health support, including counselling services and peer support groups. Institutions should provide regular workshops on trauma management, encouraging open dialogues, and ensuring confidentiality," says Nayeema Islam.

Abu Bakar Siddik Shakib, a student from Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET), recounts his experience

after returning to Khulna following the reopening of his institution, "When I came back from Dhaka, no one was talking about the protests. It seemed like nothing had happened, and everyone just moved on with their lives."

Afiya Ibnath Ayshi, a final-year student of Dhaka University (DU) shares, "Even after a month, whenever I pass by Dhanmondi Star Kabab, I get flashbacks of the protest. We had to rush into the building to protect ourselves."

"All my senses are alerted the moment I hear a loud thud on the road. For a minute, I fear gunshots are being fired!" she added.

A meta-analysis of 52 studies by The Australian and New Zealand journal of psychiatry on protests and riots revealed a consistent link between violent protests and mental health issues which indicated a rise in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, regardless of direct participation.

Sabbir recalls the constant fear he lived with during the protests, "I was terrified of raids. I kept hearing about police raids at my friends' homes. Every time a police car passed by, I would peek through the curtains, fearing they had come for me. It led to countless sleepless nights. I still get nightmares and wake up screaming."

For many students, like Zaki Tajwar, a third-year student at DU, joining protests felt like a moral duty. Standing against perceived injustice often comes with a risk – both physical and psychological. Zaki found himself facing both after actively participating in the movement.

Zaki highlights the emotional isolation that comes with standing up for one's beliefs during trying times, "From the beginning, I was active in the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement. Even though I was a member of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), I supported the quota reform movement. On July 16, I resigned from the BCL to protest the attacks on students. After that, I was accused in a case of vandalism and arson at the Bogura District Awami League office."

While some are struggling at a personal level to cope with fear and anxiety, others are facing a different but equally isolating challenge – feeling abandoned. Despite

standing for what he believed was right, Zaki found himself without the camaraderie he expected from his classmates. "I'm considering dropping out for a year rather than continuing my studies with people who look at me like I've done something wrong when I haven't. I can guess what the situation will be like once classes resume. The essential interactions with classmates will be disrupted," he says.

Nayeema Islam prioritises peer support for those undergoing a state of distress. She says, "Peer support is essential for recovery, as it helps students feel validated and less isolated in their experiences. Effective peer support can include listening without judgment, sharing resources, and encouraging each other to seek professional help when needed."

Support from the faculty can also make a significant difference. "The teachers were understanding," Sabbir says. "They check in on us regularly and recognise how hard it is to concentrate right now. They've been lenient with coursework. The university authority arranged counselling sessions, which we appreciate."

Zaki's experience, however, was different. He says, "The case that has been filed against me has still not been resolved. You can find my name in the detective branch's search list. I am afraid if things go on like this, I may face difficulties in the future with visa proceedings, police verification, and any other legal proceedings. I sought help from my faculty members, but it did not make any difference."

Students like Sabbir and Zaki are still trying to find a sense of normalcy, but the mental wounds from protests will linger unless society acknowledges the invisible scars left behind. We cannot stay stuck in this state forever, but we also cannot ignore the fact that many are still suffering.

Reference:

The Australian and New Zealand journal of psychiatry (2020). *Mental health during and after protests, riots and revolutions: A systematic review.*

Sarwar is a final-year student, surviving on tea and the hope that graduation is real.

■ **EDU GUIDE** ■

Navigating the transition from **SCIENCE TO COMMERCE**



ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

Many undergraduate students with a science background achieve impressive academic results and succeed in business by setting goals and consistently working towards them. Ettesam highlighted the importance of thorough revision, “I made a rule for myself that I would thoroughly revise whatever subject I was studying which is why I was able to remember most of what I had learned when sitting for the exams.”

NUSRAT MEHERIN FAIZA

Switching from a science background to a business one is a journey many students in Bangladesh navigate. For years, science subjects have been seen as the top choice, offering pathways to esteemed careers in engineering, medicine, and technology. However, there’s a growing interest in Business majors at the undergraduate level. This is due to the fast-tracked careers, attractive salaries, and greater awareness of the advanced study opportunities in business education. Transitioning from studying Science to pursuing Business Studies presents challenges, but the right strategies can lead to a rewarding outcome.

In Bangladesh, many students choose science in schools and colleges of their own volition or due to parental pressure. A fraction of those who do study science in school later shift their field of study upon entering higher education.

Ettesam Bari Rio, an assistant financial manager in a renowned private company, said, “I never really wanted to study science. My parents pushed me to do it. After high school, I switched to a business major because I realised I wanted to work in finance.”

There is a common misconception that science is more challenging than other fields and offers better career opportunities. Consequently, parents force their kids to pursue STEM subjects and some even plan out their careers based on said misconceptions.

Anika Tabassum Riki, a fourth-year student from the Department of Finance and Marketing at North South University, stated, “I took science in school because I had heard from seniors and family members that science would provide me with numerous future career options.” While this idea may hold some truth, delving into Business Administration reveals a different reality.

Business Administration covers many subjects which require a solid grasp of complex concepts and applying them in real-world scenarios. In fact, one of the biggest hurdles of business studies is adjusting to a very different academic style. Although there are overlaps between the kind of skills that science and commerce students require, how they use these skills are different. Subjects like

Accounting, Finance, and Strategic Management involve understanding financial statements, cost accounting, and the time value of money. It’s about comprehending how these elements interconnect within the broader business environment. Despite the differences, many students find that their backgrounds in science have helped them.

“Succeeding in business studies requires understanding the basics and practising formulas rather than memorising, especially for those from a science background,” said Anika. She also highlighted that it’s achievable to excel after switching fields with consistent effort. “Many universities offer foundational business courses to help students from science backgrounds, such as introductory economics, accounting, and marketing courses which help to gain basic knowledge, making the transition easier,” she added.

Ettesam shared, “My science background made business studies much easier to understand, especially the maths courses. I quickly grasped the theories since it felt much easier than the theories I learned in science.” However, he did point out that this advantage is not exclusive to science students. “Being good at maths is a result of practice, which anyone in business can grasp easily,” he added.

Many undergraduate students with a science background achieve impressive academic results and succeed in business by setting goals and consistently working towards them. Ettesam highlighted the importance of thorough revision, “I made a rule for myself that I would thoroughly revise whatever subject I was studying which is why I was able to remember most of what I had learned when sitting for the exams.”

Transitioning from science to business significantly impacts one’s career prospects because it often requires having to forgo the belief that science degrees are more prestigious. Many students who do transition, however, find it rewarding, especially in the corporate world. Ettesam explained, “My career has been impacted in a very positive way as I am working in finance, which is what I wanted to do throughout my university life.”

Despite the increasing opportunities in business, it may not be the right choice for everyone. Sarah Hamid, a sophomore studying Accounting at the Faculty of Business Studies (FBS), Dhaka University, was passionate about science but opted for a safer path. “I had the opportunity to pursue something I was passionate about, like chemistry and biology,” she shared. “But I let the fear of uncertainty push me into business school,” Sarah echoed.

This is a common scenario for students who choose business studies despite having a natural affinity for other subjects. Many students, like Sarah, find themselves torn between the promise of stable careers in business and their genuine interest in different fields. Reflecting on her journey, she wishes she had given more thought to what genuinely excited her instead of following the safer, more traditional path. While it’s true that business education opens doors to various sectors, it also requires a particular mindset and interest to excel.

There is no basis to think that a business degree will be any “easier” than a degree in STEM. Regardless of the challenges that business degrees pose, a little consistency and awareness will ensure academic success. And for those who have successfully made the transition, their experiences remind them that career satisfaction comes from following one’s passion and not adhering to notions of prestige.

Nusrat Meherin Faiza is a writer, tutor, and chronic overthinker. Reach out to fuel her overthinking at nmfaiza15@gmail.com



“ICCA 2024: A Global Platform for Computing Advancements” concludes successfully at AIUB

The International Conference on Computing Advancements (ICCA) 2024, organised by the American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), successfully concluded on October 18. The two-day event brought together leading researchers, scientists, academics, and industry professionals from around the world to discuss and present cutting-edge research in computing and technology.

The ICCA 2024 saw an overwhelming response with 411 paper submissions from 12 countries, with 145 of these papers being accepted for presentation. In total, 688 authors from prestigious institutions worldwide participated in the conference, representing 107 institutions from countries such as Bangladesh, the US, the UK, India, Malaysia, Japan, Canada, and so on.

This year's event highlighted the diversity and international scope of the conference, with eight keynote speeches, 39 technical sessions, and contributions from experts in fields such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT), cybersecurity, and data science. The accepted papers were reviewed by 296 reviewers from Bangladesh and abroad, ensuring a high standard of quality.

The keynote sessions were a highlight of ICCA 2024,

featuring talks from eminent researchers and industry leaders. Some of the keynote speakers included Prof. Dr Md Saidur Rahman, an ACM Distinguished Speaker, who delivered a talk on “Graph Drawing Algorithms in VLSI Design Automation”, and other keynote speakers, who shared their insights on advancements in AI, big data, and the future of computing.

The keynote speeches addressed some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities in the field of computing, inspiring the next generation of innovators.

The inauguration ceremony of ICCA 2024 was graced by Dr Carmen Z Lamagna, the Chief Patron of ICCA 2024 and former Vice-Chancellor of AIUB, who delivered the welcome speech. Other distinguished guests included Prof. Dr Khandaker Tabin Hasan, the Conference Chair, Prof. Dr Md Abdur Rahman, Pro-Vice Chancellor of AIUB, and Prof. Dr Saiful Islam, the current Vice-Chancellor of AIUB, who served as the Chief Guest.

The closing ceremony featured Nadia Anwar, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at AIUB, as the Chief Guest, with Prof. Dr Dip Nandi delivering the vote of thanks and debriefing on ICCA 2024 by Prof. Dr Md Asraf Ali. The ceremonies underscored the significance

of global cooperation and innovation in shaping the future of technology.

The conference featured paper presentations on topics ranging from AI and machine learning to IoT and blockchain technology. Notably, 39 session chairs ensured that the parallel technical sessions were conducted smoothly. The presentations were not only a testament to the breadth of research being conducted globally but also highlighted Bangladesh's growing prominence in the field of computing research.

ICCA 2024 reaffirmed its position as a leading international forum for sharing advancements in computing and technology. The exchange of ideas, collaborative discussions, and groundbreaking research presented during the conference will undoubtedly contribute to shaping the future of the global tech landscape.

AIUB, the proud host of ICCA 2024, looks forward to continuing its tradition of fostering global collaborations and advancing research in computing. The university eagerly anticipates ICCA 2026, where it will once again welcome thought leaders, researchers, and professionals from across the globe to push the boundaries of technological innovation.

NSU's Department of Architecture hosts Spring 2024 final-year thesis jury

The Department of Architecture at North South University (NSU) commenced its Spring 2024 final-year thesis jury on October 17. The three-day event is going on at the department's open space, the Sky Gallery, and will continue till October 20, from 9:30 AM to 6:30 PM each day.

The first day saw participation from several esteemed architects and academicians serving as jurors. Notable among them were Dr S M Najmul Imam, Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET); Ar Rafiq Azam; Ar Md Nazmul Haq Bulbul, Secretary of Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Centre; Ar Md Shafique Rahman; Ar Golam Mohammad Mohiuddin; Md Maruf Hossain Khan; Khan Mohammad Mahfuzul Huq, Vice-President of IAB; and Ar Ziaul Sharif, Secretary of Heritage and Culture of IAB.

Dr Shazzad Hosain, Dean of the School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, NSU, Dr Nandini Awal, Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Architecture, NSU, and other faculty members, were also present at the event.

This year's jury showcased innovative student work, integrating AI and simulation-based design processes, elevating the creativity and technical rigour of the projects. The work received praise from the jurors and the audience for its creativity and innovation.



■ **EDU GUIDE** ■

Building a scholarship profile for higher studies abroad

Do you really need an academic break for achieving overseas scholarships? This Erasmus scholar says no. But you need to start working on your scholarship profile early.

FAHIM ABRAR ABID

A commonly accepted idea among most Bangladeshi students looking to pursue higher education abroad is that securing an overseas scholarship necessarily requires professional work experience after their undergrad in addition to strong academic merit. As a result, there is a high tendency to take a two to three-year break from education to build a scholarship profile. Often, such academic breaks last longer than initially anticipated as students get trapped in the web of their respective professional lives.

Every scholarship has its own assessment criteria. In fact, scholarships like the Chevening or Commonwealth Scholarships indeed look for candidates with at least two years of work experience. However, securing various other reputed scholarships is no longer impossible right after completing a bachelor's degree. Among them, the most prestigious one is the Erasmus Mundus. While this particular scholarship also prioritises candidates with practical experience, it can be cracked without any academic break if proper strategies and tactics are applied.

As a scholarship awardee of not only the Erasmus Mundus but also three other scholarships in the very next admission cycle right after my graduation, I found immense potential in the Bangladeshi youth to represent the country on the global stage. The journey was challenging but also very rewarding. I remember my peers being concerned. Most of them claimed that I was being 'too ambitious' specifically because I had not even completed my bachelor's and was targeting top universities. Although my confidence was a bit shaken at first because of their concerns, I focused on crafting my application, and eventually secured a fully-funded scholarship worth BDT 95 lacs in a programme consisting of a top 50-ranked Law university.

The first step towards breaking the myth is early preparation. I was fully determined about my goal and decided early on what I wanted. The preparation starts with finding the desired and best-fit programmes and potential scholarships, and critically assessing the requirements. One can visit the designated websites or reach out to alumni of those programmes or scholarships via LinkedIn to better understand the requirements. Unfortunately, most applicants usually give up at this stage because the gap between their profiles and the requirements for securing scholarships is often too wide. And that's where the first

point comes, and the 'myth' continues.

The most significant advantage of starting early is having enough time to cover up the gap by participating in relevant activities according to the requirements. Nowadays, university students in Bangladesh are actively involved in co-curricular activities in addition to their academics. Almost every mainstream university provides facilities for club and subject-oriented activities that are evaluated as voluntary or leadership experiences.

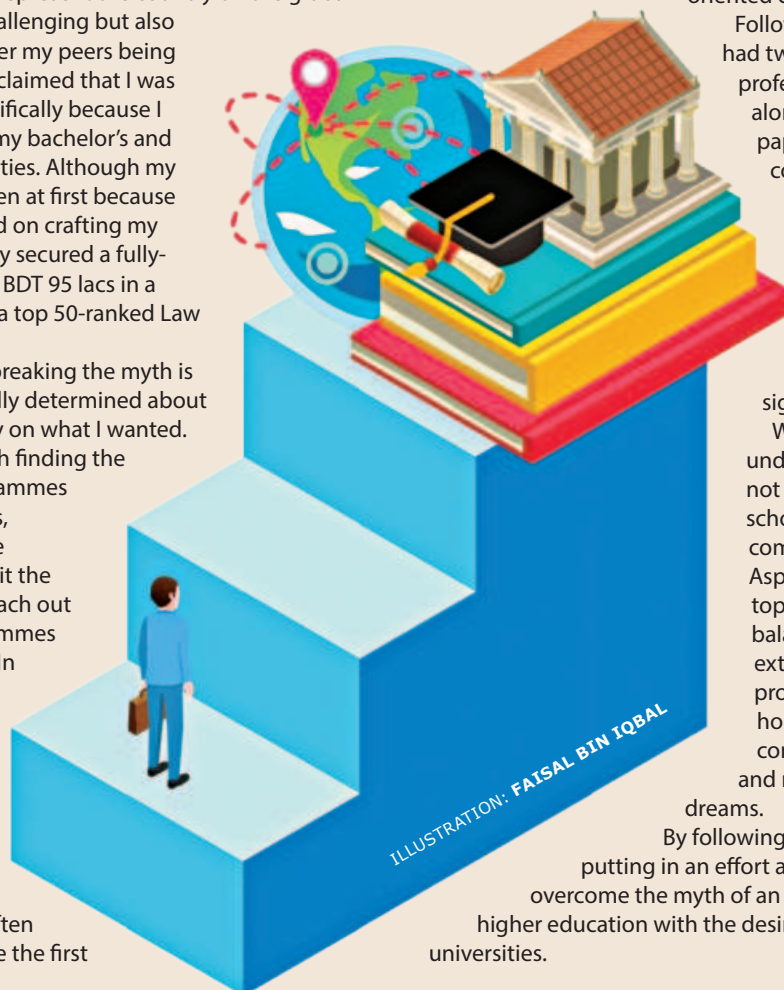
Moreover, some universities have incorporated mandatory internship completion at the end of their degree programmes to provide valuable experience to their students. However, not all these activities necessarily provide one with professional work experience, so one must put effort beyond the university-provided facilities to make a compelling case since all the scholarships are highly competitive.

Hence, to strategically prepare for prestigious scholarships like Erasmus Mundus from the onset of undergraduate studies, potential applicants should seek opportunities to gain real-life work experience relevant to their desired programmes and scholarships. This may include research assistantships, attending conferences, participating in relevant online or summer courses, writing for journals or newspapers, and taking part in subject-oriented competitions.

Following this pathway, I already had two-and-a-half years of professional work experience alongside two conference papers, one international competition award, and three research awards by the time I graduated. Finding such opportunities can often be difficult, but steadily growing a strong LinkedIn network in one's own discipline can significantly alleviate this issue.

While academic merit is undeniably important, it is not the sole factor in securing scholarships in today's competitive landscape. Aspiring students aiming for top institutions must strike a balance between academics, extra-curricular activities, and professional experience. This holistic approach is crucial for competing on the global stage and realising their academic dreams.

By following an early approach and putting in an effort accordingly, they can overcome the myth of an academic break and pursue higher education with the desired scholarships at top universities.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fahim Abrar Abid is a Law graduate from BRAC University and was an OSUN undergraduate visiting scholar at the Central European University in Vienna, Austria.

Currently, Fahim is an Erasmus Mundus scholar of the International Law of Global Security, Peace and Development programme at the University of Glasgow, the United Kingdom, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI), Spain, and the University of Tartu, Estonia.

Fahim is also serving as the Coordinator of the Bangladesh campaign at Global Human Rights Defence – a UN ECOSOC NGO human rights organisation in the Netherlands.

EDUCATION

UoL to revert to closed-book examinations: What it means for students

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

For those who aspire to pursue legal careers in Bangladesh, qualifying as a British barrister offers a fair share of advantages along with some lucrative opportunities. However, students who wish to receive their call to the bar at any of the Inns of Court in London must first have undergraduate qualifications, or their equivalent, in English law.

A popular, cost-effective way of achieving this is by completing one's LLB degree under the University of London (UoL), studying at one of their recognised teaching centres in Bangladesh, such as London College of Legal Studies (LCLS) (South), British School of Law (BSL), and others. However, this year, with the UoL deciding to revert back to closed-book examinations from 2025, many students habituated to open-book exams are understandably bracing for a rough transition.

Open-book examinations were first started by the UoL in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. From that time onwards till this year's October/November session, students have been allowed to carry desired hard copy study material during exams—books, teachers' handouts, and personal notes. The exams also went from being pen and paper-based to computer-based, being conducted via the InSpera exam portal. In addition to that, the examination time, which used to be three hours and thirty minutes, was increased to four hours and fifteen minutes.

However, it would be a mistake to simply classify the open-book exams taken in these years as being "easier" than the closed-book ones in the years prior. Indeed, the average marks scored by students have remained consistent with those in examinations conducted in closed-book conditions. The reason for this could be that the students' works have been held against a higher standard and that cases of plagiarism were swiftly detected and severely punished.

With students not required to memorise a great number of cases to tackle problem questions, the focus of assessment entirely shifted to how well students could understand the question, how fast they could locate the relevant information, and how critically they could apply the information to the facts. On the other hand, with students not being encumbered by the memorisation of a great deal of information in order to write essays, the skill of the student was instead judged based on the clarity and coherence of arguments, the depth of research, and whether the work was properly referenced or not.

However, with closed-book examinations making a return, the pendulum has once again swung in the direction of information retention and memorisation.

Additionally, while the exams will remain typed and continue to be held on laptops and computers, the exam durations have been revised back to three hours and thirty minutes. To compensate for these tremendous changes, many students and teachers believe that examiners are going to be less harsh with how they mark candidates' scripts. Nonetheless, a transition like this is bound to cause some anxiety for students.

Thus, there are plenty of students who are critical of this shift. They argue that in a world where the internet puts every piece of information right at our fingertips, information retention has become far less important in comparison to skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, which they feel are better judged through open-book examinations. Meftahul Jannat Mehek, a second-year student of LCLS (South), agrees with this idea. Sharing her views regarding closed-book examinations, she says, "Closed book exams often seem to prioritise memorisation over actual understanding, which can limit their effectiveness as a gauge for measuring

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are also those students who stand in favour of the change to closed book examinations despite the challenges it poses to them. Najif Al Abdullah, a student of BSL, is one of them. He argues that open-book exams, by allowing students to depend on essays they have prepared at home, have hampered the development of quick-thinking skills in students.

He says, "I personally believe that the common practice of pre-writing your essays is more damaging than good. It is a way of closing your brain and confining it to a box. I think that closed-book exams, where you can only rely on your own mind, possess better attributes to encourage on-the-spot thinking, a skill that is quite on brand for the legal career."

Yet, regardless of the benefits and drawbacks that closed-book examinations may have, and irrespective of whether they prefer it or not, retaining copious amounts of information and memorising many tons of case names are challenges every student must face from now onwards.

Dr Khaled Hamid Chowdhury, FCI Arb, Advocate, Appellate Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh and the Head of Laws, LCLS (South), however, feels that students have absolutely nothing to worry about. On how LCLS (SOUTH) aims to prepare its students, he says, "We intend to arrange for more class tests, assignments, and practice works to prepare students and reduce their dependence on looking at materials while sitting for the exam.

Teaching will be more in-depth, comprehensive, and practice-oriented. The greatest challenge would be to convince everyone to get rid of their fears and to remind them that with practice and proper guidance, the upcoming exams will not be hurdles to pass but rather achievements we can all be proud of."

Nayeem is a student of law at LCLS(S) and a contributing writer for the Daily Star

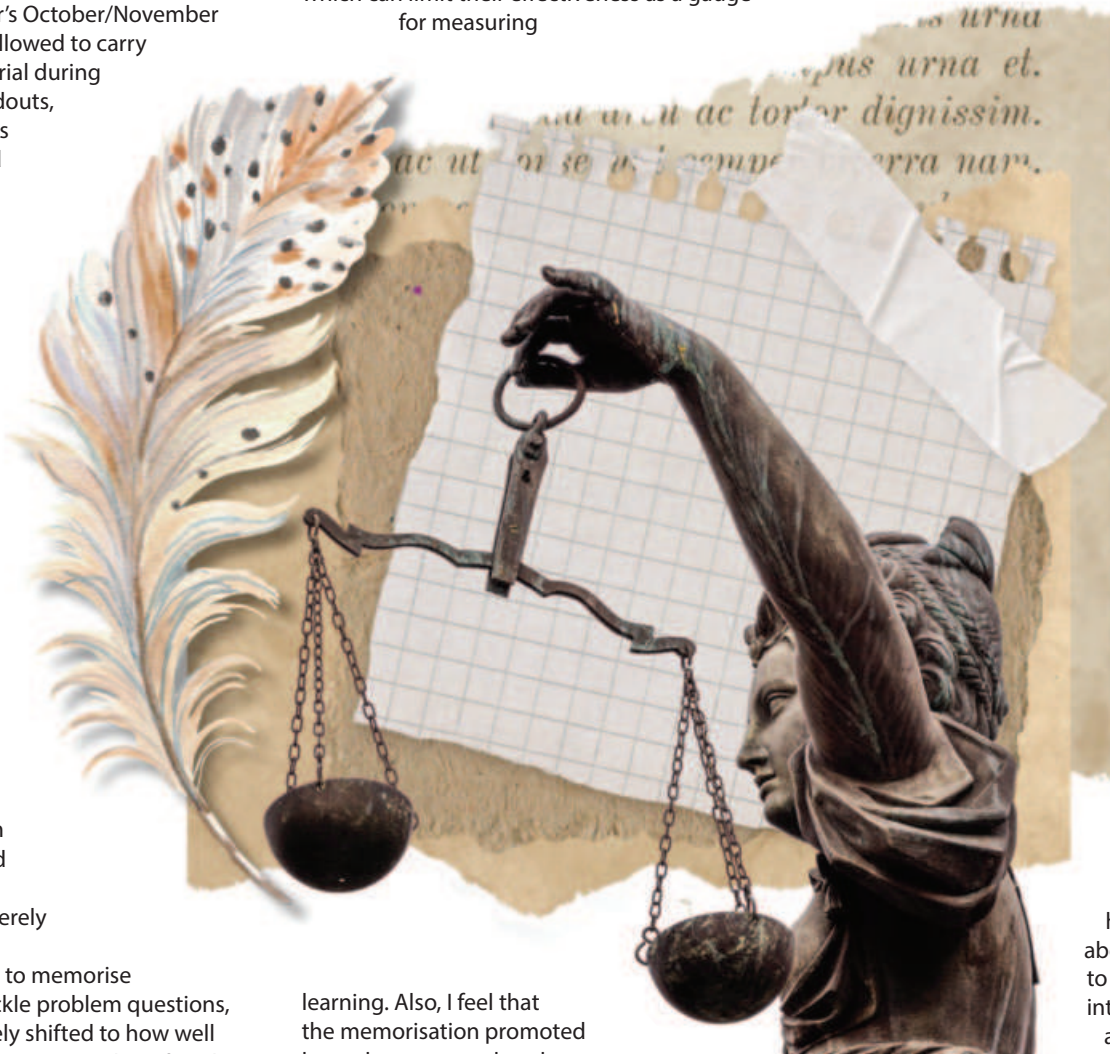


ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

learning. Also, I feel that the memorisation promoted by such exams tends to be short-term, not necessarily translating into long-term retention of knowledge."

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