

■ **EDU GUIDE** ■

Navigating the transition from **SCIENCE TO COMMERCE**



ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

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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.

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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.

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