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CAMPUS

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THE LIVES OF INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

TV SERIES

DAREDEVIL: BORN AGAIN

SHOWS THAT MCU CAN DEAL WITH REAL-WORLD ISSUES

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

Daredevil: Born Again is a revival of Netflix's *Daredevil*, a show that ran for three seasons and stands as the most critically acclaimed television series in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

The story takes place several years after the ending of the original series. Matt Murdock, having abandoned his superhero identity, is compelled to return when Wilson Fisk (The Kingpin) becomes New York's mayor and begins a conspiracy to outlaw masked vigilantes while expanding his criminal empire.

Before starting the critical analysis, it is important to note that halfway through production, the show went through a complete creative overhaul. The show's resulting mixture of two different visions is apparent, with episodes clearly distinguishable as pre- and post-overhaul.

The weakest parts of the show are the pre-overhaul episodes. While it starts off solid, the plot progresses very slowly, with Matt not suiting up as Daredevil for quite a long time. The newer supporting characters are not as nuanced or likeable as Foggy Nelson and Karen Page from the original series, and it is even more evident when those characters eventually show up here.

That being said, the rest of the show proves why Charlie Cox's Daredevil remains arguably the best-written hero in the MCU. His rivalry and dynamic with Vincent D'Onofrio's Kingpin continues to be iconic, and the expert cinematography and visual storytelling of the scenes just add icing on the cake to their respective character arcs. Despite the slow build, the character development and overall narrative make the show amazing.

The major problem with MCU heroes, such as the Avengers, is that they seldom deal with "real" problems that affect everyday people. *Daredevil* actually deals with grounded issues, and this show in particular parallels real-world issues of corrupt people becoming politicians and exploiting average citizens.

Despite a few weaknesses, like the pacing issues and inconsistent episode quality, *Daredevil: Born Again* is a fantastic show with compelling characters, a narrative that strays away from the standard superhero fare in favour of realistic world building. It is undoubtedly one of the best projects in the MCU in the past few years, and a worthy follow-up to the fan-favourite Netflix show.

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THE MONASH WAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

In the highly competitive world that we live in today, international education certainly gives students an edge in building successful careers. However, many students in Bangladesh find the path to pursuing higher education abroad full of challenges. Visa limitations, language barriers, and higher costs are just some of the many hindrances they face.

But if you choose globally renowned institutions like Monash University, Universal College Bangladesh (UCBD), the country's first transnational education hub, provides unmatched opportunities by offering seamless pathway programs to help students with diverse academic qualifications to live their dream of international education.

Located in Australia and Malaysia, Monash University has established pathway programs for higher education, delivered through more than 30 partners worldwide, including Universal College Bangladesh. Through these pathway programs, they aim to create cultural diversity and build global talent by allowing students to begin their international education in their home countries.

This transforms how students access global education. Instead of going overseas right away, students can start their Monash degree from right here in Bangladesh from the very first year, making a smoother transition towards international study.

Tram Nguyen, Director of Marketing, Monash College addressing UCBD students.

UCBD mainly offers two pathway programs that provide direct entry to Monash University:

Monash University Foundation Year (MUFY)

MUFY is an international pre-university program specifically designed for international students intending to pursue studies at Monash University. It guarantees entry into the first-year undergraduate program in any of the 10 faculties at Monash University. The curriculum includes subjects like Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Mathematics, Physics, and Global Studies.

Monash UCBD Graduation Convocation 2024 at Sheraton, Dhaka.

Monash College Diploma (MCD)

MCD is equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree at Monash University and ensures entry into the second year of selected undergraduate programs across seven disciplines. The program duration ranges from 9 to 12 months, depending on the discipline (Business, Engineering, and Information Technology).

What is particularly valuable about these programs is that they are founded upon the same curriculum and assessment requirements as Monash University. The annual teaching plan, semester breakdown, learning objectives, curriculum, testing, and evaluation process for the UCBD Monash programs are directed and monitored by Monash itself, ensuring academic quality and rigour. With accessible teachers and resources, it is taught in a supportive college environment.

Moreover, students who go through the UCBD pathway programs are not limited to the traditional field of studies. Bangladeshi students have pursued non-traditional disciplines like Culinary Arts, Dentistry, Architecture, Fashion Design, and more. This flexibility allows students to follow their interests rather than being limited to traditional educational routes.

These pathway programs are also much more advantageous than the regular pathway to international education. Securing a student visa has to be one of the most challenging aspects of international education. Students who follow the regular pathway often get rejected for a visa. However, as a part of UCBD's MUFY/MCD programs, students are Monash students from day one, which significantly eases the visa procurement process and reduces the possibility of rejection.

The financial aspect of it is also advantageous for the students. They receive a bursary of AUD 10,000 in their first year at Monash (second year of bachelor's studies). Additionally, by starting their studies at UCBD, students save approximately 70 percent of the cost of studying the first year abroad.

Notably, Monash University ranks at 54 in the QS Graduate Employability Rankings, which indicates that graduates have excellent career prospects. The university's global reputation (37th in the QS World University Rankings 2025) also makes the degree valuable in the international job market.

Starting the Monash experience at UCBD provides students with the time to adapt to international academic standards while remaining in a familiar cultural environment. This transition helps reduce shock and prepares students more effectively for the international experience. Through this highly successful approach, eight batches of students from Bangladesh have already benefited from skills and knowledge before transitioning to the Monash University campus in Australia or Malaysia.

UCBD and Monash University's partnership is not merely an academic connection but a bridge between Bangladeshi talent and global opportunities. For students wishing to acquire a world-class education, UCBD pathway programs offer a guided, affordable, and guaranteed means of achieving their academic and professional goals through one of the world's most prestigious universities.

The upcoming MUFY intakes are July, August 2025 and January 2026; and MCD intakes are June, October 2025, and February 2026.

For more details, please contact: +8801886333222; +8801886412222; or +8801896013882; and visit ucbd.edu.bd

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CAMPUS LIFE

The lives of international medical students in Bangladesh

Every year, hundreds of international students come to Bangladesh to study medicine. How do they adjust to the culture, language, and people? And can the nation become a hub for medical education?

MEHRAB JAMEE

Many of us have thought of pursuing a degree abroad. If we were to set aside the practical aspects of this process and instead shift our focus on to the emotional toll that it takes on a student, we would notice phases of excitement mixed with dashes of fear and anxiety. Excitement because the student would get to experience a whole new country – all on their own – possibly for the first time in their life. Fear precisely because they would be in a whole new country, all alone, thousands of miles away from their loved ones. It could be one of the most unique experiences in a student's life. Now imagine if the country the student is flying into was Bangladesh.

Many of the universities in Bangladesh have foreign students studying a range of subjects. But by far, the degree most foreign students come to pursue is a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS). Currently, 221 out of 5380 seats are reserved for foreign students in government colleges. In private colleges, a large fraction of the intake can be foreign students. Currently, there are over 10,000 medical students only from India. Students from Pakistan, Nepal, Jammu and Kashmir, and even Palestine come to study MBBS here. To get an overview of their experiences, Campus reached out to a few international students and had them discuss numerous aspects of their lives in Bangladesh.

"Everything about leaving your country and your comfort zone and moving to a different part of the world is challenging. A big challenge is adjusting to the environment and culture," said Isaaq N Namoura, A fifth-year student from Palestine studying at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College.

"There's a language barrier present here. When I started off, I didn't know that classes would be in Bangla. I didn't get to take a Bangla course when I first came over. English was challenging too as it isn't my first language, and neither is it for my teachers'. So, we struggled to communicate a lot in the beginning. Now that I've learned Bangla though, conversing has become much easier. However, the curriculum should definitely include an introductory course in Bangla," he added.

Another student from Assam, Angela Shirin, studying at Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College said, "MBBS is tough, and being away from home, especially when you see your mates going home every weekend, is super hard. For instance, if I get homesick right now, I need to cross an entire country to go home. And the hardest part is you never know if things at home are going to be the same as when you left. The constant fear and worry about my family take a toll on me. Among the challenges I've had to overcome and adapt to, the climate ranks number one.

PHOTOS: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

It's way too hot and humid out here. The language barrier had been a problem, but with time I got a handle on it. All you need to do is learn these words: mama, baam pashe, daan pashe, shomosshha nai."

When asked about her clinical experience and interacting with patients, she said, "I remember a humorous interaction where I was asked to palpate the liver of a middle-aged man. I struggled toask him to move his shirt aside. I blurted out something close in Bangla, but the patient didn't quite understand what I was trying to say. He proceeded to reply in a different dialect perhaps, but I couldn't grasp it. So, I acted out what I wanted him to do, which was when he finally understood."

"I think the Bangla word for lung is very funny. I chuckle a bit every time I come across a patient with some lung pathology," she added.

Having a social life, making friends, or finding job opportunities for some extra cash is made difficult not only by the language barrier but by the cultural barrier as well. Settling into hostel culture and interacting with locals poses its own set of challenges.

Regarding this, Isaaq said, "The whole new experience, the whole new set of regulations, culture, and people is exciting to me. The other thing I didn't even realise is I'd enjoy electricity and running water 24/7. This isn't a privilege we always have in Palestine. So, it really provides some much-needed perspective."

Naveed Shahrier, a final-year student from Kashmir said, "Managing your social life is something that isn't addressed enough. It starts with your hostel roommates and batch mates. Often, what begins as congenial friendships grow colder over time.

Most of the time, you feel a burden of loneliness. It's a situation that cannot be easily communicated to someone who hasn't experienced being in a foreign land."

He also spoke about the availability of job opportunities for foreign students, "If you see a Kashmiri in the streets of Dhaka, he's either a shawl vendor selling our renowned shawls or a medical student studying in a private medical college. For pocket money, a few foreign students have found a niche as social media influencers. It's apparently a good source of income. One of my juniors, Abhishek Jajariya, a Rajasthani third-year student, has been doing inspirational work. He's cashing in six figures a month providing online tutoring to junior students and acting as a consultant. Besides this, many students vlog about their experience here and get endorsement deals. Many Kashmiris are also sought by modelling agencies to pose for local brands."

As for the quality of education and cooperation from faculty members, Angela remarked that faculty members from her college have been friendly and considerate. "They always consider granting us additional leave, empathise with us, and also understand the difficulties of living so far from home for long stretches," she said.

Looking back at the tumultuous times of the July uprising in 2024, she explained, "I was really touched (by the faculty members' conduct) when chaos built up in Bangladesh last year. All colleges were shut down and we were stuck here. A few of the teachers were really concerned and made sure we got home safely. In addition, we addressed our concerns about not resuming classes right away."

"Not only were they considerate enough to postpone the items (daily viva exams) till we arrived but also assured us that we could take the exams online or when we came back to Bangladesh, if we missed it. I have always openly shared my problems, be it personal or academic, with some of the teachers, and they have always been helpful," she said.

Although Bangladesh welcomes a considerable number of medical students every year, there still remains a lot to account for if we truly want to be a hub for medical education. The Directorate General for Health Services (DGHS), for instance, could take steps to improve the experience of foreign students pursuing an MBBS degree in Bangladesh.

Munna Yadav, a student from Nepal at Dhaka Medical College said, "Bangladesh is a prime destination for medical education, as there is good clinical exposure here with high patient flow. Yet some hurdles persist. Foreign students doing internships at government medical colleges do not receive any compensation. Some private colleges do pay, but there is a lack of uniformity there as well."

"Besides, private medical colleges don't provide enough information about their institutions online or in circulars, which makes the process of direct admission tough. It also forces many to rely on consultancies. The country often goes through spells of political turmoil but there is no government body or special unit from the DGHS to counsel or reassure foreign students about their safety. These issues are holding this sector back and need to be addressed," he elaborated.

Prof. Md Mustafizur Rahman, former Vice-Principal of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, stated that Bangladesh is a hub for medical education in South Asia due to the quality of education being offered, exposure to a broad spectrum of clinical cases, and the low cost at which the education is being offered. However, there is still room for improvement.

"Our faculty members are very conscious about the needs of international students, even more so than our domestic students sometimes because we acknowledge international students may have a hard time fitting in here and naturally may require closer attention and care. Yes, we have space for improvement when it comes to accommodation and one-stop services for these students. We hope by incorporating these facilities in the future, Bangladesh will secure its place as an ideal destination for medical education," he said.

As things stand, we are offering quality medical education at a competitive price compared to the global market. However, a unified and transparent approach to the admission process for foreign nationals, which would be applicable to all medical colleges, is of utmost necessity. Special counsellors also have to be assigned by the DGHS for any emergency needs the students may have. And though the medium of education will remain in English, incorporating an introductory Bangla language course for foreign students will go a long way in helping them interact with patients better.

The place where one completes their undergraduate becomes a second home of sorts. With that in mind, it should be our holistic goal to provide these individuals – who have left their homelands to study in our medical colleges – a standardised academic experience as well as an amiable social experience. It is our hope that if they return to their homelands, they will remember their alma mater with fondness and Bangladesh as a second home.

Mehrab Jamee is a fifth-year student at Mugda Medical College, and writes to keep himself sane. Reach him at mehrabjamee@gmail.com

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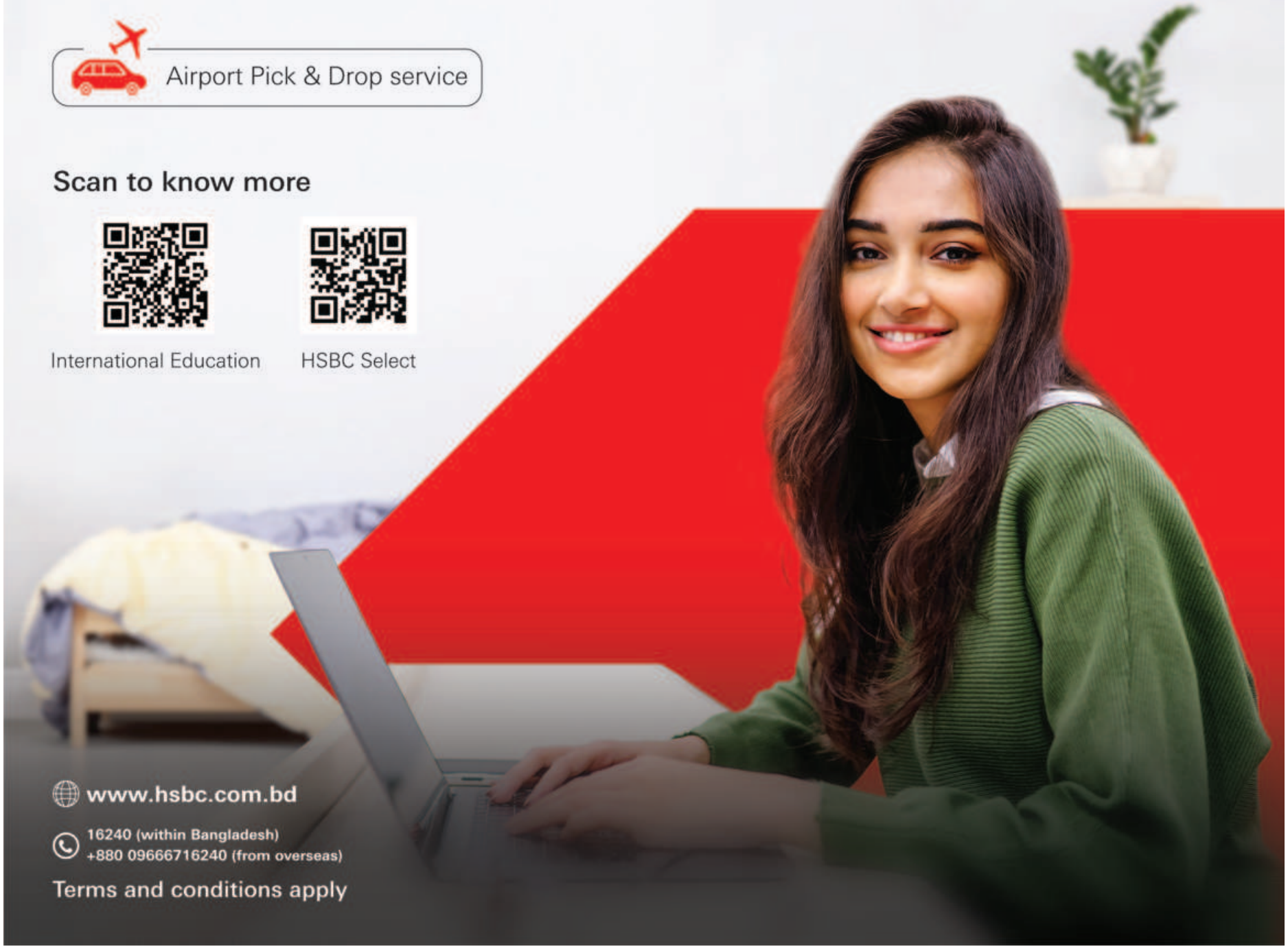

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STUDY ABROAD

SEMESTER ABROAD AS AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT: The prospects and challenges

FARIHA LAMISA

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

Studying abroad for a semester can be a life-changing experience for students as it allows them to experience life in a completely different place. While this practice is yet to become widespread in Bangladesh, there are a few programmes that offer Bangladeshi students the opportunity to study abroad for a semester under different international collaborations.

Tanfia Khan Disha, a student of Biochemistry and Biotechnology at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), completed a semester abroad under the Erasmus Exchange Program. The programme, funded by the European Union (EU), allows students from the EU and associated countries to study abroad for one to two semesters. During the programme, Tanfia was placed at the University of Maribor in Slovenia.

In Maribor, she experienced a robust academic culture, which was guided by discipline and apt resources, something that is not always accessible in her home institution. Recollecting her experience, Tanfia said, "Initially I was taken aback by the culture of punctuality in Slovenia. Classes started on time and we were not allowed to be late at all. It pushed me to be more disciplined in terms of academics. Besides, academic standards were higher without being excruciatingly overbearing."

This programme allows students to complete a semester in one of the partner foreign universities of OSUN. While participating in the programme he found himself to be fascinated with the academic culture of Europe as he felt it is more oriented toward application and practicality.

Tanfia feels that her host institution applied the approach of positive reinforcement. She pointed out, "In Maribor, if someone fails to get their expected result, they will be able to sit for the exam as many times as they prefer, and only the best mark out of these will be counted. So, they do not need to stress themselves at the prospect of retaking a course."

While Tanfia's experience highlights the academic rigour and cultural discipline in Europe, Adiba Islam Tamim's journey in the United States sheds light on the personal growth and social challenges that exchange students tend to face. Adiba, a Disaster Management major from Dhaka University, studied a semester abroad through the Global UGRAD Program at Southeast Missouri State University which was sponsored by the United States Department of State. She credited the programme for having a transformative impact on her overall personality.

Adiba explained, "The programme has made me a whole new person. First, I had to stay there all alone without any parental supervision and I got to do many things for the first time by myself which included a lot of travelling, opening a bank account, and booking a hotel. All these experiences have allowed me to become more confident in myself. Besides that, I feel that due to my experience there, I have grown to become a more empathetic person. Now, I try to put myself in the shoes of another person while thinking about any issue."

However, things have not always been easy for Adiba. As a Bangladeshi foreign student, she has faced exclusion from group projects in certain classes. She said, "Sometimes, I'd notice local students forming groups within themselves. Foreign students from other South Asian countries would also collaborate within their demographic. As a result, I felt left out. I also felt that some people assumed that I would have certain biases based on my religious beliefs."

Like Tanfia and Adiba, Wasif Kayum, a student of Economics from BRAC University, also experienced a unique academic culture during his semester abroad. Wasif completed a semester abroad at Central European University (CEU) in Austria, through the OSUN Undergraduate Student Mobility opportunity, organised by the Open Society University Network (OSUN).

This programme allows students to complete a semester in one of the partner foreign universities of OSUN. While participating in the programme he found himself to be fascinated with the academic culture of Europe as he felt it is more oriented toward application and practicality. He said, "In CEU, academics are more centred around assignments rather than quizzes and exams. Consequently, I was able to focus more on research which improved my critical thinking abilities. Along with that, I liked the practice of weekly class discussions, where within a close-knit group, students were able to discuss the application of economics with the course instructor."

Nonetheless, he emphasised that students practice being more conscious regarding their choice of course in host institutions. "It is extremely important to check if the courses you are choosing at your host university have equivalent courses back at the home institution. Otherwise, the credits you have earned from the study abroad programme will not be helpful in terms of the course count at your home institution," cautioned Wasif.

In spite of providing a plethora of development and challenging opportunities, Bangladeshi students tend to face some drawbacks in their home institutions due to systemic inflexibility regarding credit transfer procedures. In public universities, students may not be able to transfer their credits from foreign institutions.

As Adiba stated, "I will not be able to transfer any credits from Kent State University to my university, which will only prolong the duration of my undergraduate degree."

Although private universities are more flexible in terms of the credit transferring process, the process can still be complicated.

As Wasif stated, credits earned from CEU will not be added until the eleventh hour of his undergraduate degree, which creates complications for him during the advising period. "My university will add the credits right before my graduation, which lowers the number of credits I have completed. As a result, sometimes, signing up for certain courses becomes difficult as people with more credits get to do their advising before I can," he explained.

Needless to say, studying abroad for a semester can present enormous prospects through cross-cultural learning experiences. However, the lack of flexibility to transfer credits back home might create some difficulties. While choosing to apply for these programmes, an applicant should weigh in all these factors and make their decision based on what caters best to their long-term academic and career goals.

Fariha Lamisa is a chronic procrastinator and a struggling student. She is praying to be a graduate by catastrophe. Please send your consolation via email to flamisa2020@gmail.com

EDUCATION

HOW TO DO WELL
in your A level exams

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

The past two years of my life have been a hectic rollercoaster consisting almost entirely of long hours of studying, grinding out past papers, and catching tiny pockets of sleep and recreation in between. O levels were pretty much a breeze – it was two years of minimal studying followed by examinations that followed the exact pattern of questions as in previous years. Going into A levels with four subjects was, therefore, a sheer shock to my senses.

A levels are tough; there are no two ways about it. Instead of skimming across the surface of the topics, we suddenly took alarming deep dives into the underbellies of these subjects. The adjustment period was difficult because I had suddenly gone from scoring full marks on my O level papers to barely getting an A on my A level tests. It was bizarre and upsetting, and getting used to the massive workload took some time. However, when I finally settled into the groove of A levels, the key to doing well clicked: it was simply a matter of significant determination and conscientiousness. This has been my mantra for the past two years. And, I would say, it has worked out pretty well for me. After all, I came out of the hellish waters of A levels with four A*s, two world-highest scores, a country-highest score, and a "Best Across" award.

One of the first things I realised upon entering A levels was that there was no room for me to allow my work to pile up. Unlike O levels, I couldn't afford to try to study and solve papers within the last four months before the exams and expect to come out unscathed. As soon as a topic was covered in class, either at school or at coaching, I delved into the theory using textbooks and external resources. For each topic-wise test, I completed a set number of past papers to adequately familiarise myself with the question and marking patterns. Consistent effort was an absolute necessity if I didn't want to drown in work right before the board exams. Arjjay Meghdoot, a recent graduate of Maple Leaf International School and a current student at the University of Oxford, fully agrees, "I took every class test very seriously, sitting for each like it was a do-or-die situation. So, as the full mocks and actual examinations rolled in, I had most of the syllabus covered already thanks to the topic-wise tests and monthly tests I studied for."

A levels are very conceptual, and this cannot be disputed. "Knowing and understanding the course material is extremely important," advises Irfan Parvez, a freshman at Hong Kong University and a member of the Sunnydale School class of 2024 who graduated with four A*s.

Learning all of the nitty-gritty of the course content by using the officially published syllabi as a guide or checklist was immensely helpful when I later moved on to solving papers. It was crucial, too, to not simply learn but to also comprehend all of the things I was learning.

Memorisation or rote learning are terrible strategies for A levels, particularly if you are taking subjects like Biology or Physics that have extremely case-based questions. With the A level examinations, especially the sciences and mathematics, increasing in difficulty in recent years, understanding the subject content has never been more necessary. Answering these more difficult questions will require a good level of understanding of what is being taught.

Many of the concepts we are taught in A levels are initially hard to grasp and being confused about them is pretty natural. However, I did not let any doubts or half-understood ideas linger for long. Any confusion I had, I dealt with it promptly by asking for clarifications from my teachers or by looking through online resources. This allowed me to ensure that I was truly internalising the topic I was learning before moving to the next one.

The question now arises of where exactly this course material that you are supposed to be studying can be found. Using the coursebook to make your notes can help a lot since theoretical concepts are not only explained well but key definitions and explanations are written in a point-by-point manner, in the exact same wording as the mark schemes. However, while the coursebooks are well-written, they can sometimes seem to be filled with redundant information. It is necessary to use the syllabus as a guide to filter these contents out.

Aranyo Rishi Chowdhury graduated A levels from SFX Greenherald International School with three A*s. On resources, he opines, "I think limiting your support system to just teachers is a bad idea because most don't give enough individual attention to students' needs. Finding resources online, such as YouTube videos that solve questions and explain content, educational websites that compile notes concisely from all chapters of a subject, or forums like subreddits that make all these resources more accessible, helps a ton."

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

Learning the theory doesn't amount to much if you are unable to implement your knowledge during the examination. This is where solving papers comes into the picture. Familiarising yourself with the pattern, i.e. what types of questions tend to come on the actual exam day, can make or break your grade. There is a certain trend for every paper, and doing a lot of past papers helps subconsciously identify these trends. It also helps you feel less nervous on exam day because you have a good idea of what types of questions may show up. Raida Haque, a Cambridge awardee with a country-highest in Further Mathematics and a world-highest in Mathematics, is a recent graduate of Sunnydale School and is, perhaps, one of the best people to vouch for this approach. She says, "Solving a tremendously large volume of past papers makes the tests extremely predictable. Hence, it becomes easier to do well in them."

Lastly, giving A levels can quickly escalate to becoming a terribly stressful time if you don't try to maintain a healthy balance between work and fun. When studying got too monotonous or tiresome, I made sure to remove myself from it for long enough to refresh my mind. Spending time with friends or doing things that bring you fulfilment are never bad ideas. Being burnt out by continuously pushing yourself to your limits like a machine will cause more long-term detriments than good. Efficient time management by micro-dosing studying throughout the year instead of taking on the full brunt of the workload right before the exams is a good method to prevent burnout. It was helpful as well to set achievable, bite-sized goals for each day and to create a reward system to incentivise myself to reach those daily goals. Finishing three past papers would earn me two hours of *House MD*, for example. Additionally, I tried to make my study periods enjoyable by solving papers with music or a podcast playing in the background.

Doing well in A levels is a matter of discipline, hard work and not letting yourself get crushed under pressure. These are just some of the things that worked for us and each student will certainly have individual preferences. Trial-and-error is the only way to work out a methodology and schedule you feel comfortable with.