CAMPUS

PURSUING A **MASTER'S DEGREE IN** AUSTRALIA

ILLUSTRATION: **RAKEEB RAZZAQ**

■ ANIME ■

Orb: On the Movements of the Earth

An ode to the wonders of human curiosity

LAKUM MURSALUN

Picture a world where defying conventional beliefs could cost you your life if you are caught by the inquisitors. Claiming a simple fact – like the earth revolves around the sun – could brand you a heretic and lead to your execution. However, even amidst the turmoil, a handful of bold visionaries emerge who dare to challenge prevailing narratives. The story of *Orb: On the Movements of the Earth* is set in this very harrowing era of sixteenth-century Europe in an imaginary nation called "P".

The anime starts off with 13-year-old Rafal set to pursue theological studies at university despite his young age, though his true curiosity lies in astronomy. He eventually crosses paths with Hubert, a heretic pretending to have renounced his works on heliocentrism – an astronomical model that posits that all the planets, including the Earth, orbit around the Sun.

Through the lens of astronomical exploration, the world of *Orb* focuses on humans' inherent curiosity for exploring

the unknown and the unwavering quest for truth, despite knowing that they have to pay the ultimate price for it. The thoughtfully portrayed main characters are driven by their own personal motivations, and each of them has a separate story to tell.

Produced by Madhouse, this 25-episode anime is a direct adaptation of mangaka Uoto's 2020 manga of the same name. The show's stellar animation offers exquisite starry nightscapes, revealing the vastness of the cosmos. The anime also subtly touches issues surrounding scholarly ethics, such as authorship of research or giving due credit

to the contributor. More importantly, it also sheds light on the hurdles women used to face when they tried to enter academia as well as the oppression they were subjected to for having unorthodox views.

Orb is not just an anime about astronomy and faith, and setting them at odds. It's about all the fearless, curious minds who dare to challenge the norms and seek the truth relentlessly. It's an ode to the sacrifice of all the unsung heroes who have dared to be sceptical and contributed to the progress of humanity.

ART BY JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM
SCRIPT BY ABIR HOSSAIN

CAREER

DATA SCIENCE VS DATA ANALYSIS:
What's the difference?

SILWAT QUADER

From social media posts and advertisements to influencing what we think and which information we consume, data plays a dominating role. It is both fascinating and a little unsettling how our digital footprints are recorded and transformed into refined information for the platforms we addictively consume.

In simple terms, data is information; it is the figures and statistics that are collected and analysed which is then transformed into knowledge. This manipulation of data into knowledge and insight is made possible through the disciplines of Data Science and Data Analysis.

Data scientists use machine learning techniques, statistical models, and algorithms to make sense of large datasets, identifying trends and patterns that serve specific purposes. In the case of social media platforms, it serves to create personalised strategies.

On the other hand, data analysts focus on interpreting the data to guide decisions, such as how to improve user experience and maximise platform performance.

As data is now a key player in service sectors worldwide, the demand for data analysts and scientists is gradually rising. Both fields are multidisciplinary and require expert knowledge and skills from areas of Statistics, Computer Science, etc. to produce informed decisions and predictive data models.

However, although Data Science and Data Analysis share the same end goal, the paths to achieving said goal differ to some extent. Several key differences separate the job profile of a data analyst from that of a data scientist.

A background in a quantitative field such as Statistics, Mathematics, Computer Science, or Economics might be the optimal path forward. However, the key is to build proficiency in essential tools. This can be done with the help of available resources and learning platforms that offer legitimate certifications widely recognised by employers.

Data analytics revolves around analysing existing data to forecast trends and recommend actions to solve problems. Analysts use tools like Microsoft Excel, Tableau, and Microsoft Power BI to spot patterns, predict sales, study customer behaviour, and develop strategies.

Data scientists, on the other hand, use more advanced technologies, such as machine learning and AI, to analyse big, complex data sets. A data scientist's job would be to study and investigate the collected data and design and implement analytical models and algorithms. To do so, data scientists use programming languages like Python and R, and various data visualisation, AI, and machine learning techniques.

Proficiency in programming languages and machine learning models is essential in the field of Data Science. Big data analysis also requires the use of tools like Apache Spark. Additionally, advanced knowledge of Mathematics and Statistics plays a major part in the field.
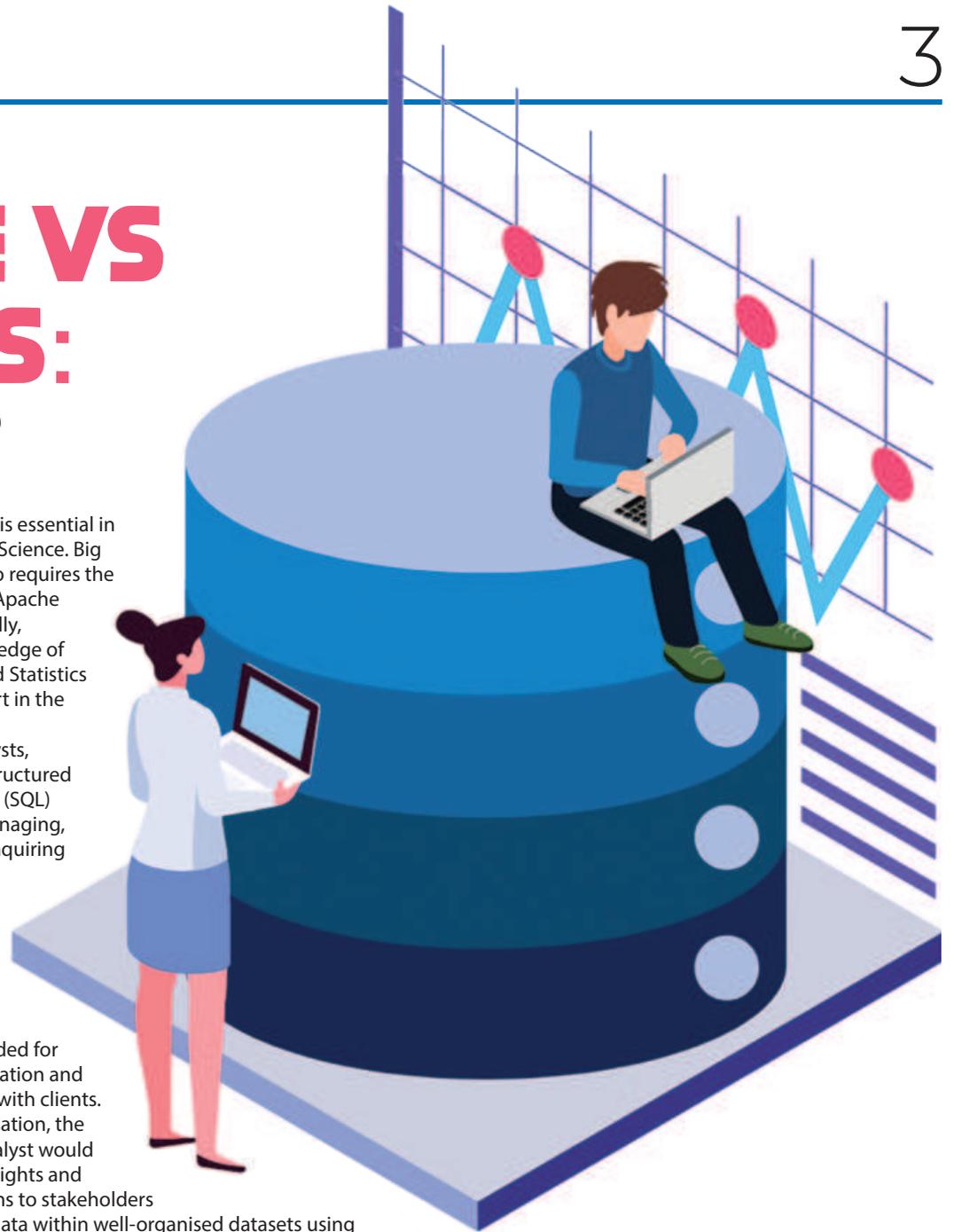
For data analysts, knowledge of Structured Query Language (SQL) is needed for managing, retrieving, and inquiring data. Advanced Excel skills and expertise in data visualisation tools, like Power BI and Tableau, are needed for effective presentation and communication with clients.

In any organisation, the role of a data analyst would be to provide insights and recommendations to stakeholders by interpreting data within well-organised datasets using statistical tools and highlighting emerging trends and findings. Analysts also have to create dashboards and visualisations in addition to managing data governance policies and improving data integration. In summary, they work to maximise and better company performance by leveraging past information or data.

Data scientists, on the other hand, develop and aid in making business decisions based on their findings and conclusions from typically unstructured or scattered data. They interpret results and manage the data infrastructure by employing programming languages, and statistical and software tools. They need more extensive skills to effectively collect, pre-process data, design algorithms, and build predictive models.

Data scientists and analysts are expected to have a broader set of technical competencies and qualifications and are not just limited to expertise in these core tools.

Even though data science and analytics fields don't require strict academic routes, having a background in a quantitative field is always considered an advantage. Irrespective of educational background, anyone interested and passionate about these fields can learn from online platforms such as Coursera. These platforms provide flexible learning hours, making it particularly convenient for those with existing academic or professional commitments.

A career in the data field also demands a solid grasp of transferrable skills such as critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, etc. Professionals working in this arena have to communicate and collaborate with team members, business partners, stakeholders, engineers, and higher officials, translating technical findings into simpler terms in meetings.

Although a career as a data scientist or data analyst might seem glamorous and is no doubt highly rewarding, it requires a strong foundation and understanding of technical and analytical skills and a commitment to continuous learning. The field is both intellectually demanding and constantly evolving. Success in this field often comes down to a genuine interest in organising and working with complex data sets and producing solutions to existing and future problems.

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FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

■ **STUDY ABROAD** ■

PURSUING A MASTER'S DEGREE IN AUSTRALIA

What you should know

People from all over the world flock to Australia to explore its unique wildlife and experience a harmonious balance between work and life. Australia has also become the go-to destination for many young Bangladeshis looking to pursue higher studies abroad. But what is it actually like living Down Under?

This article will hopefully answer all burning questions regarding pursuing higher education in Australia and what comes along with it.

Now, why choose Australia in the first place?

Australia is home to 43 universities—37 public universities and 6 private universities—and over 170 higher educational institutions. Several of these universities are highly ranked globally. Additionally, Australia offers one of the best work environments. Companies operating within the country's borders are known to emphasise work-life balance, inclusivity, and friendly and relaxed work environments. The country is also known for providing a high quality of life and favourable weather conditions, making it one of the top destinations for higher studies for international students.

Anor Ghosh, an Australian resident and an IT graduate from Western Sydney University, shares why he chose Australia as his study destination, "I was looking for a place where I could study and live decently without breaking the bank. One of my biggest deciding factors was the comfortable weather here. We have no harsh winters or sweltering summers, so I can walk around in a light jacket, and the experience has been great so far."

Postgraduate degrees in Australia take about one to two years to complete, while a PhD may take three or more, depending on the kind of research one is doing. Admissions here are conducted in multiple intakes, with the most popular one being the February intake. The February intake in Australia typically falls between the months of October to November. The application timeline for the July intake is April to March, and August to September is the time to reign in the less popular November intake.

Students looking to study here typically need a minimum CGPA of 3.00 (on a scale of 4.00) in their bachelor's to be considered for top master's programmes. However, in general, a CGPA between 2.50 and 2.75, on the same scale, should suffice.

Australia also has an English proficiency requirement that varies from university to university, but at the very least, a 6.5 in IELTS or any equivalent test puts you in the running for consideration. Some programmes or universities also require a proper expression of interest (EOI) or a statement of purpose for the application.

Like many countries, Australia also offers two kinds of master's degrees, one being a master's by research (MRes), which may require applicants to submit standardised test results, and the other being a master's by coursework. Other than academics, proper documents, a Genuine Temporary Entrant (GTE) document, a Confirmation of Enrolment (COE), bank statements, and verified or audited assets of the sponsor may be required for the visa processing, as is required by most other countries for those looking to study there.

Australia's Home Affairs department provides a list of specialised and in-demand subjects and professions that immigrants can use to match with their courses. Healthcare, teaching, IT, construction, engineering, and hospitality are some of the sectors in high demand at the moment.

Sayeed Abdullah, a master's student at Monash University, explains why he chose to pursue teaching as a prospective career in Australia, "There's a high scarcity of teachers in Australia, and teaching is a very in-demand subject."

Anor is pursuing a second bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of South Australia because of the rising demand for the subject.

When choosing a university, one needs to consider all the aspects. Sadiya Afrin Snigdha, who is pursuing a master's in Information Systems at Deakin University, asserts, "I chose Deakin because of its high QS ranking, good alumni network, and thorough curriculum. Not only that, but the university provided me with a decent scholarship and an on-campus job, which solidified my decision."

If you are planning to get a master's degree in Australia, you might have to spend somewhere between AUD 44,000 to more than AUD 100,000 for a two-year programme. In other words, the cost of studying in Australia is not light on the wallet. It is worth noting that an annual cost of AUD 20,000 to AUD 25,000 might be expected to be expended, as living costs depend upon one's lifestyle and place of accommodation. Furthermore, most universities have an AUD 100 to AUD 200 non-refundable application fee for master's programmes, which may also put a strain on your pocket. The Australian government has an official website where one can calculate their estimated expenditure during their time in the country.

As an international student, a scholarship can take a huge chunk of the monetary load off your shoulders. While it doesn't allow for an extravagant lifestyle, the extra money saved makes day-to-day life a little easier and more comfortable.

"A scholarship made a huge difference in my master's journey," says Fariha Kabir, a Dean's Honor List awardee and Economics graduate from Monash University. "It precipitated my path towards a fully funded PhD."

Usually, these scholarships are issued before the start of the course and are presented based on the stellar academic excellence and financial standing of the applicant. Most universities in Australia offer institutional scholarships ranging from 20 to 100 percent but it varies from university to university. Scholarships are highly competitive, and a fully funded offer is hard to come by unless you show extreme academic rigour and prowess.

Academics aside, international students face two major challenges in the country – housing and employment.

Sidratul Oiisurjo, who is pursuing a master's in International Relations from Monash University, remarks, "Unless you have people willing to help you, getting a house here is extremely difficult because of all the additional documents that you have to provide. Shared housing is available if one can adjust to living with roommates, but student housing is extremely expensive on its own."

Besides, many landlords in Australia require the tenant's rental history, fixed income sheet, pay slip, or a recommendation letter from a previous landlord. As a result, house-hunting becomes an extremely difficult task for those new in the country.

Finding a job, on the other hand, is no easy feat either. However, it is not impossible. Australia offers a work restriction of up to 48 hours per fortnight during the school term, with a pay rate of around AUD 20 to AUD 25 per hour.

The work itself isn't necessarily easy. "I juggle two part-time jobs in my day-to-day life, which really keeps me on my toes. I had to look on various job sites and even do walk-in interviews until things fell in place," says Faria Hossain, a postgrad Business Analytics student at Macquarie University.

"One of the biggest mistakes people make when coming to Australia is underestimating the mindset shift required. Many arrive with certain expectations, only to find the reality more emotionally and physically demanding," reflects Syed Rakib Hassan, who is currently working as a marketing professional in Australia. "What we consider menial work in Bangladesh might be a good source of income in Australia. The only hurdle in getting and not getting a job is our mindset."

With the right mindset, preparation, and curiosity, Australia can offer far more than education. "Make meaningful connections," suggests Fariha. "Expanding your network and working smart can open doors that might have otherwise remained closed."

"For anyone willing to come to Australia, be prepared to work hard. Australia gives you the freedom to do anything, but with that comes great responsibility," affirms Faria.

Anor adds to this discussion, "Reach out to universities, talk to professors, make friends, and do everything to make life a little bearable. Amidst all the struggles, it is easy to get distracted, but the anchor and focus behind all the hard work should be your studies."
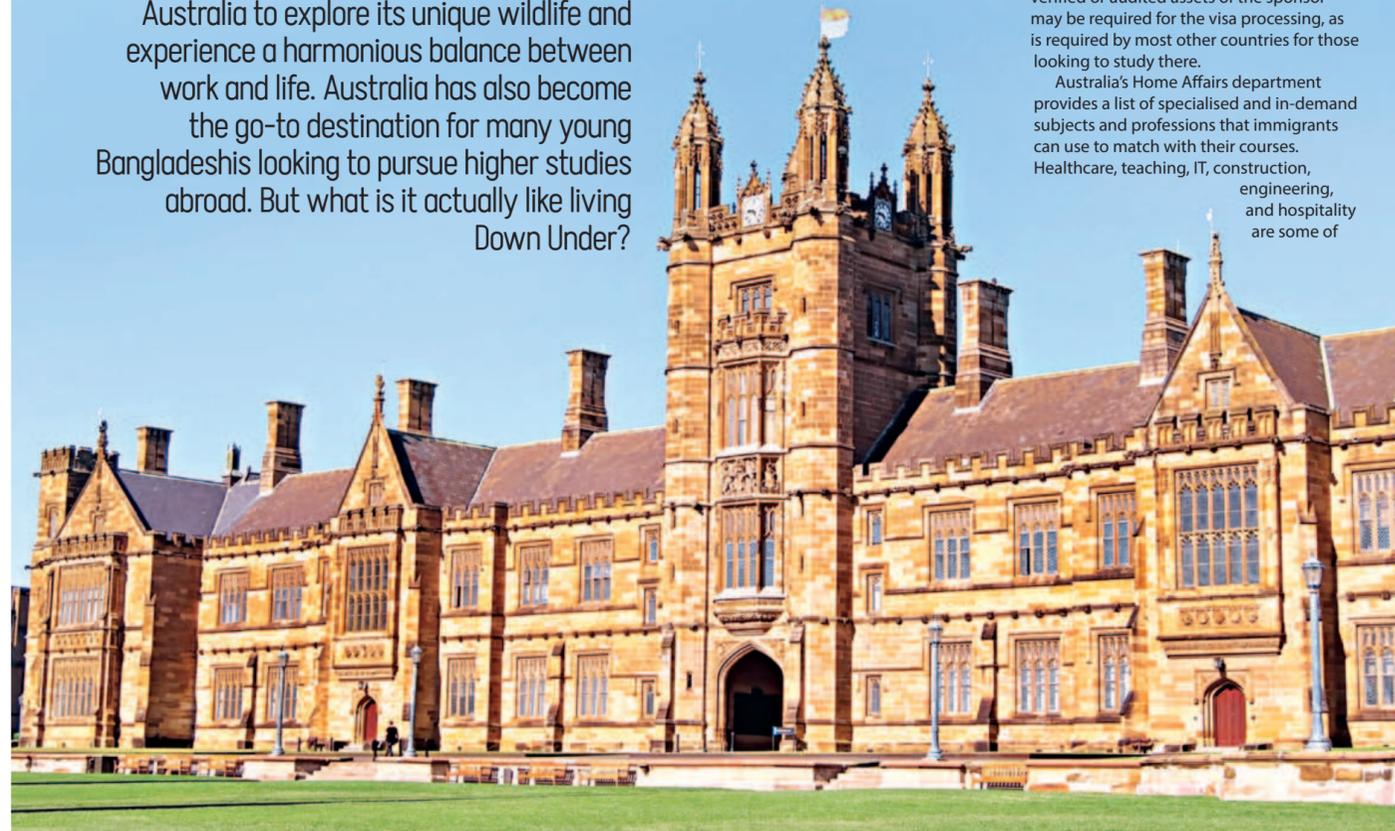
QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2026
Top universities in Australia

Global Ranking / University Name	19 The University of Melbourne	20 The University of New South Wales	25 The University of Sydney	32 Australian National University	36 Monash University
	42 The University of Queensland	77 The University of Western Australia	82 Adelaide University	96 University of Technology Sydney	125 RMIT University	138 Macquarie University

BRAC University partners with SOAS, UK on joint PhD in global development

BRAC University and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London have jointly announced the launch of an innovative collaborative PhD programme aimed at nurturing a new generation of scholars dedicated to transformative global development.

The new equitable partnership builds on a long-established relationship between BRAC University and SOAS and will offer a joint PhD in the political economy of development, delivered by BRAC University's BRAC Institute of Governance and Development and SOAS's Department of Economics and Department of Development Studies.

This joint PhD will explore critical themes such as sustainable governance, social development, and inclusive economic growth. It uniquely blends BRAC University's established expertise in practical, field-based research in Bangladesh and connections in other parts of Asia and Africa with SOAS's global academic perspectives.

This marks BRAC University's first partnership at the doctoral level with a university abroad. Since preparations began in the summer of 2023, the two institutions have worked closely to establish a robust international quality assurance framework.

This pioneering initiative will enhance accessibility for students from the region, particularly in Bangladesh, and support the growth of PhD enrolments.

Designed with flexibility and inclusivity in mind, the programme will be jointly taught and supervised by academics at BRAC University and SOAS. Students will also be able to engage in fieldwork using the extensive BRAC facilities across Bangladesh. Students can also choose to be based either in London or Dhaka at BRAC University, based on their individual needs and research objectives.

Commenting on the launch of the programme, the Chief Adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, said, "It's a wonderful initiative. I am very happy to see this academic collaboration between two distinguished Bangladesh and British institutions—BRAC University and SOAS—get off the ground and wish it a grand success."

Tamara Hasan Abed, Chairperson of BRAC University's Board of Trustees, said, "This initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to promote equitable development through evidence-based research. It provides an unparalleled opportunity for Bangladeshi and international students to

deeply engage with critical development challenges and contribute to shaping global policy."

SOAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Habib said, "Our new collaboration embodies a shared vision to remove barriers to research-led scholarship and support sustainable and inclusive approaches to global development. Together with BRAC University, we look forward to using this joint programme to create an environment that is conducive to addressing our most urgent collective global challenges."

The official launch ceremony occurred simultaneously at SOAS in London and at BRAC University's campus in Dhaka on June 16. Tamara Hasan Abed and Professor Habib formally signed the agreement in London, while Abida Islam, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK, was present as an honorary guest.

Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University, led the celebratory event in Dhaka, which was attended by Professor Syed Muhammed Abul Faiz, Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh, Sarah Cooke, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and representatives of the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh and British Council.

QS World University Rankings 2026: Where did Bangladeshi universities rank?

Dhaka University (DU) has topped the list of best universities in Bangladesh according to the QS World University Rankings 2026 released earlier today. DU ranked 584th globally.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and North South University (NSU) have secured the second and third position in Bangladesh according to the rankings. Globally, BUET has been placed in the 761-770 bracket while NSU has been placed in the 951-1000 bracket.

Daffodil International University follows NSU in the

list and has been placed in the 1001-1200 bracket.

BRAC University (BRACU), Islamic University of

Technology (IUT), Jahangirnagar University (JU), and Rajshahi University have been placed in the 1201-1400 bracket. American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET), East West University (EWU), Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Khulna University (KU), Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET), and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET) have been placed in the 1401+ bracket.

A roadmap for aspiring game artists in Bangladesh

RAYHAN SHARIF

Did you know the gaming industry now generates more revenue than the film, television, and music industries combined? With a global market that's worth over USD 200 billion, gaming has become a force to be reckoned with.

The Bangladeshi gaming market is also on the rise, with several mobile games gaining significant popularity and computer games getting attention internationally. Many of us still remember *Dhaka Racing* and *Arunodoyer Agnishikha* from 2004, a milestone in Bangladeshi gaming history. Fast-forward to today, titles like *Zero Hour* are making waves in the industry. It's clear that the domestic market has come a long way, but there remains a lot more to do, especially in the realm of PC games.

I am a vehicle artist working at Cloud Imperium Games in Manchester, United Kingdom. I began my career by creating the *Agontuk* prototype with my friends, after which I joined an art outsourcing studio. Further down the line, I worked remotely in game development. I have production experience on *Immortals of Aveum, Open Roads, Angelic*, and other titles. I have also worked as a contract artist on projects with NVIDIA and Adobe Substance 3D.

With nearly eight years in the industry, I've closely

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

PHOTO: **COURTESY**

observed the game development process. Working with various studios has shown me what it takes to create high-quality games. If I were to compare the resources that studios abroad have with the tools at Bangladesh's disposal, I could confidently claim that we're well-equipped to take our game industry forward. With a small push, we can unlock the vast potential of our youth.

Many young people today enjoy playing video gaming. Many of them, at some point, might even aspire to become a part of the industry, just like I did. I started playing video games back in class three. Over the years, I've felt a strong desire to be involved in the game development process itself.

While not every single gamer might want to become a developer, there are many others who do. The gap I've noticed is that the journey starts and ends with merely playing video games for most individuals. Behind the scenes, however, there's untapped potential. There's a world of fascinating skills and workflows involved in building an AAA game. From design to development, there are numerous roles one can learn to be part of the team that builds these virtual worlds. And once they're involved in that process, they begin to see games through a new lens.

Like any other field, this industry also values specialisation – whether it be in art design, programming, IT, user experience, or branding. It's best to choose a skill that aligns with your interests. However, this article will mostly focus on the art side of game development.

In today's digital age, learning 3D modelling is easier than ever. 3ds Max, Maya, and Blender are the most widely used tools in game development. As beginners, it's a good idea to start by mastering any one of these.

Here are some of the easiest and beginner-friendly tutorials to ease you in. For 3ds Max, check out

ChamferZone's Ultimate Weapon Tutorial (free on YouTube), Arrimus 3D, and the official documentation. For Maya, which is great for animation and modelling, 3DEx and Mike Hermes (MH Tutorials) offer excellent tutorials. For Blender, beginners can start with BlenderGuru, while Polygon Runway covers basic modelling, and Josh Gambrell is great for intermediate learners.

It helps if you can stay updated by following game development communities like 80 Level, Game Artist UK, and The Rookies.

Now, mastering 3D modelling is just the beginning. To advance further, learning shaders, procedural tools, and optimisation techniques is essential. Understanding game engines like Unreal or Unity and how materials (e.g., ground, wall, grass) work along with creating them from scratch can also be beneficial. Even if not used daily, this knowledge helps you master your craft.

In game art, we are essentially recreating reality to some extent thus, a good sense of scale and accurate metrics is important. It's helpful to learn basic architectural dimensions and human ergonomics to maintain accuracy in your work. My technique is to import a properly scaled human figure into the scene and use it as a reference to ensure accurate proportions.

As a vehicle artist, my main role is to model vehicles based on concept designs, balancing creativity with functionality to ensure each element is both imaginative and practical.

The workflow at my workplace is built for efficiency. We use reusable materials instead of manual texturing to achieve high-quality results quickly. The vehicle creation process typically follows these steps: starting with an idea and briefing, followed by concept art and white-boxing to block out the form. We then move to the grey box stage to refine shapes and choose materials, before creating the detailed high-quality model (Level of Detail 0). Finally, we add tertiary details and polish the asset. Each stage includes reviews to maintain quality with strong collaboration between teams throughout.

Many newcomers focus on creating visually impressive assets, which is important. However, I believe it's important to evolve deeper thought and creativity in the age of AI. A unique art style works as a personality. It is surely achievable through consistent hard work. For instance, if one's designing a prop or an environment, it's best to start with real-world references.

In the starting phase, one can take photos and study details to replicate the original. After this, one can start

experimenting by modifying elements to create different ambience. Gradually, the modifications start creating environments that are unique to the artist. While I agree that this route takes a longer time, it does help master the art to the point that it becomes noticeable and almost identical to what the artist imagined.

After repeating the process a couple of times, one can create a collection of personal projects. An enriched portfolio showcases a variety of personal projects and can be your best friend in job and work opportunities. When creating a portfolio, choose projects that reflect your skills and knowledge.

Demonstrate thorough research and creativity. Use it as a chance to develop new workflows and showcase your expertise. Projects in your portfolio must align with your art style and expertise. For example, if your specialisation is in weapons, your profile should highlight your skills as a weapon artist. While you can include other projects, it is best to align with hard surface modelling. Similarly, if you focus on environments, showcase multiple projects so viewers can easily identify your area of expertise.

Many believe strong technical skills are enough for a career, but soft skills are just as important, especially in the highly competitive and collaborative game industry. Effective communication and teamwork are essential, as artists often work closely with designers, other artists, and developers. Being open to feedback and adaptable helps build strong teams. Organising your work and seeking feedback early on from online game art communities like Experience Points and Dynasty Empire can be valuable as well. These platforms offer support, guidance, and help with networking. A balance of hard and soft skills makes one a better artist.

Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, passion and love for gaming can be a huge inspiration for beginners, as it will give them a good idea of the results they would like to see as players.

In terms of the industry, most of the subjects that the Bangladeshi youth choose to pursue have highly saturated job markets. In contrast, the gaming industry is comparatively untapped in the local market. I believe if we can channel our inner creativity and hard work into our areas of interest, like video games, we can shape a booming industry.

The author is a vehicle artist at Cloud Imperium Games, working on Star Citizen with AAA and indie experience on Immortals of Aveum, Open Roads, and more.

INTERVIEWS

WHERE AMBITION MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Asifuzzaman's path from BUP to Microsoft

RAIYAN BIN SARWAR

Mohammad Asifuzzaman, an alumnus of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), pursued his undergraduate studies in Information and Communication Engineering. He is currently serving as an operations lead at Microsoft for the Microsoft 365 division.

Raised in Mirpur, Dhaka, Asifuzzaman's childhood was filled with dreams of becoming a pilot, an army officer, and even a scientist — dreams fueled by a curiosity for technology sparked from reading tech magazines at a young age. He began his educational journey at BCIC School in Mirpur, earning a scholarship in the eighth grade and securing GPA-5 in his SSC exams. Later, Asifuzzaman completed his HSC from Birshreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public College. His academic excellence continued at BUP, where he graduated with a CGPA of 3.57. His global outlook was shaped further through a stint at Valencia College, USA, where he earned a perfect CGPA of 4.00 along with the President's Honor.

Campus sat down with Asifuzzaman for an interview where he walked us through the milestones and moments that shaped his path to Microsoft.

Campus (C): Can you share a bit about your journey from BUP to becoming an operations lead at Microsoft?

Asifuzzaman (A): I will take you back to 2014 when I attended a one-day app development workshop at Microsoft Bangladesh. It was conducted by Microsoft Student Partners, where all the participants were undergraduate students from IT, CSE, and EEE backgrounds. I was only in class seven, but that day sparked a dream: to become a student partner when I reached university. I fulfilled that dream in 2020 during my second year at BUP by becoming a Microsoft Learn Student Ambassador (MLSA). That platform gave me a bridge to global tech developments. Even in 2020, I was exploring cloud infrastructure and security while they were still emerging in Bangladesh.

I founded the MLSA Chapter at BUP, and this foundation enabled me to compete globally, eventually leading me to the United States. There, I networked with tech leaders in Florida, Atlanta, and Washington. I gained hands-on experience through internships and projects that made me industry-ready.

By the final semester of university, I was actively interviewing with companies including Microsoft, Kyndryl, OVHcloud, Cisco, Emirates Telecom, and Deloitte. In August 2023, I cleared the rounds for a Technical Support Engineer role at Microsoft in the Small and Medium Business (SMB) segment. I was promoted to Technical Lead, especially for my expertise in Microsoft 365, within two months.

Soon after, a restructuring at the company created an opening for an operations lead position, and with my technical expertise, business acumen, and cross-cultural leadership experience, I transitioned into that role. I scaled our advisory operations from the US to across the world within three months. Everything I learned, starting from my university days, contributed to getting me where I am today.

C: You've recently worked on Microsoft Copilot. What was

PHOTO: **COURTESY**

your role in that project, and how did it contribute to the overall success of the initiative?

A: My involvement with Copilot started in early 2024. Back then, I was leading the Microsoft 365 segment, and Copilot was still being explored. We received a critical directive: ensure every Microsoft 365 customer understands Copilot and its potential.

We adopted a product-led growth strategy by leveraging machine learning to extract business and technical goals from customer interactions in real time and recommend relevant use cases. Though not a sales campaign, it surpassed traditional strategies in North America and is now being scaled globally.

My role here was pivotal. I provided technical cues to developers to fine-tune the models and trained our customer-facing engineers to adopt a "trusted advisor" mindset. We gathered extensive customer feedback, which is actively informing improvements made by the Microsoft AI team.

C: What experiences at Microsoft Learn Student Ambassadors or ECAs helped you prepare for your current role?

A: My current role demands a blend of process management, critical thinking, and multi-layered leadership. One key ECA was my work with the NGO Community Development for Peace, where I collaborated with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Special Branch. That taught me to endure high-pressure situations and multitask with patience.

My involvement with MLSA enabled me to work with cutting-edge technologies, like cloud and virtualisation,

swiftly and then communicate them to large audiences. That experience mirrors my current role – mobilising teams, aligning them with goals, and driving rapid deployments.

C: In your experience, does CGPA act as a barrier when applying to top tech companies like Microsoft, especially for fresh graduates?

A: By the time you're applying to top tech firms, your focus should be on what you've built – projects, hackathons, and experiments that reflect your passion and capability. CGPA may be a factor for roles tied to academia, such as research. For example, engineering roles at Microsoft prioritise your adaptability, scalability mindset, and sustainable coding practices. However, if you're pursuing research-focused positions, then academic records carry more weight.

That said, CGPA can be a barrier in specific regions or roles, like military tech roles where CGPA requirements are strict. My advice is to maintain decent grades early on so you can shift focus to hands-on skills in later semesters without compromising your overall academic record.

C: Many students only aim for software engineering roles, but your journey as an operations lead shows there are diverse paths in tech. Could you share guidance for students interested in roles beyond software development?

A: It's true that most students follow the software engineering track because it's a proven career path. But as you explore, you'll discover your strengths and preferences.

Take Microsoft 365, for instance. It involves software engineers, product managers, data analysts, support strategists, and more.

My advice here is to be good with technology and quick to learn. Know whether you prefer behind-the-scenes work, customer interactions, or strategic planning. Self-awareness will shape your career path and, eventually, help you reach a strategic position where you become indispensable in your track.

C: What advice would you give students or young professionals interested in working in operations or tech leadership roles?

A: I would say spend quality time understanding the technologies you want to work with. It's a rapidly evolving field, so understanding architectures and principles is essential.

On the leadership front, begin the moment you commit to mastering your domain. Get involved in programmes like Microsoft Learn Student Ambassadors or GitHub Campus Experts. But remember, execution is key.

Practice leadership through clubs and community roles. As for operations, it's highly organisational. While certifications or an MBA might help, the true asset is your ability to lead large-scale initiatives, manage budgets, and coordinate complex collaborations.

In tech, operations and leadership must be rooted in solid technical understanding. Don't skip that; it's what separates a good leader from a great one.

Raiyan Bin Sarwar is a Campus Ambassador for The Daily Star from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).